

Report to Resources Committee

3 May 2016



Title: People Strategy 2015-2020

Report of: Support Services Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with a People Strategy 2015-2020 for approval by the Board.

Background

2. Human Resources and Organisational Development is managed within Corporate Services by the Support Services Manager.
3. 'Investing in our employees and developing new and innovative ways of working to deliver the plan' is one of the four key strategic objectives that underpin TGHC's five year strategic plan 2015 -2020.
4. The existing strategies for Human Resources and Learning and Development have been reviewed and a single People Strategy developed to work alongside TGHC's five year Strategic Plan.
5. A draft People Strategy 2015-2020 is attached as an Appendix to this report.

Summary

6. The overall vision of the People Strategy is to work in partnership with the Strategic Management Team, managers, employees and partners to provide workforce solutions that make TGHC a great place to work.
7. We will develop our workforce so they achieve results and put customers at the heart of their work.
8. There are a number of workforce challenges that influence our People Strategy including:
 - continuing to review the way we work and deliver services
 - continue to make sure we are organised in a fit-for purpose way and our resources are linked to priorities

- Develop learning and skills programmes for employees to meet our corporate objectives
 - Maximise the benefits of ICT
 - Ensure a flexible approach to our plans to react to changes in government policy
9. To achieve our key challenges we have eight over-arching People priorities as follows:
- Develop our leaders, managers and employees
 - Manage performance and capability
 - Create a positive organisational change culture
 - Develop a reward and recognition strategy
 - Develop our Health and Wellbeing initiatives and focus on how we will build resilience in our employees
 - Develop a workforce for the future
 - Attract, recruit and retain a quality workforce
 - Ensure communication with our people is effective and timely
10. The Support Services Manager will be responsible to develop a service plan to detail how we will achieve the aims and objectives of the strategy and for ensuring that the plan is implemented, delivered and reviewed.

Link to values

5. This report links to company values of being: -
- Fair
 - Customer focused
 - Open and honest
 - Accountable
 - Inclusive, valuing diversity
 - Innovative
 - Passionate about what we do

Impact on Customers

6. Creating a positive organisation culture and investing in our leaders, managers and employees will help us to provide effective and efficient services where employees have the competencies and behaviours that enable them to provide quality homes and customer focussed services in Gateshead.

Risk Management Implications

7. We need to have a firm understanding of the challenges and issues we are likely to face over the coming five years so we can align our workforce and resources accordingly.
8. Protecting the reputation of the company is an important part of the work of human resources, organisational development and employees through compliance with legislation and policies and procedures

Financial Implications

49. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The costs associated with all People activity will be met from existing budgets.

Equality and Diversity Implications

50. Understanding the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 reminds us of the consequences of difference on effective service delivery and cannot be avoided for either the provider or user.
51. The Company's commitment to being an equal opportunities employer is an integral part of every aspect of the company's activities.
52. We are committed to the principles of Stonewall and recognise that lesbian, gay, bi and trans people bring value to our organisation by providing a different set of experiences and perspective. We know that these perspectives will influence our services for the better and benefit all employees, service users and members of the community.

Value for Money implications

53. Value for money principles are followed in all aspects of activity to include ways of working, work life balance, recruitment and selection and learning and development.

Health Implications

54. Initiatives and developments will aim to have a positive impact on the health of our employees. The clearest measure of this is the achievement of Investors in People (IiP) and Health and Wellbeing Award and the North East Better Health at Work Silver Award which progresses to Gold Award in July 2016.

Environmental Implications

55. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Consultation carried out

56. Unions, managers and employees have been consulted on the People Strategy.

Recommendation

57. The Committee is recommended to request the Board approve the People Strategy 2015-2020.

The Gateshead Housing Company

People Strategy

2015 to 2020



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1. Introduction

We are delighted with the recent approval of Gateshead Council to extend our management agreement by a further five years to March 2020.

In the development of our five year strategic plan we have been talking with our customers, employees, Gateshead Council and other key stakeholders to develop a vision for the future that continues to be ambitious and aspirational.

Our people are by far the most important and valuable asset we have and we know our success depends heavily on the quality of our workforce to deliver on the ambitious and aspirational strategic objectives.

2. Background

Who We Are

We were established in 2004 as an Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to have responsibility for the day-to-day management and maintenance of Gateshead Council's 20,000 housing stock.

Whilst being an independent not-for-profit company, we are committed to working in partnership with Gateshead Council and the communities in which we work to deliver high-quality housing services to the people of Gateshead.

By taking a tailored approach to help the most vulnerable, we have developed a strong track record in delivering customer-focused services that transform lives and offer value for money. From our inception, we have been more than a provider of traditional landlord services. We are proud of our achievements over the past ten years that have included repeated accreditation of Investors in People and Customer Service Excellence.

3. The Purpose and scope of the strategy

We are committed to continuing to work closely with Gateshead Council to ensure that we maximise the opportunities for improved services for our customers and the wider population of Gateshead.

We will make sure over the next five years that we combine our social ethos with a forward-thinking commercial approach which will allow us, in partnership with Gateshead Council, to deliver services to the highest possible standard.

We have set our People Strategy over a five year period to coincide with the lifespan of our current strategic plan. It applies to all our employees, current and prospective employees, TGHC and Keelman Homes Board Members and employees.

The purpose of our People Strategy is to set out how we will ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills, at the right time, and in the right numbers, to achieve success.

We will focus attention on the activities that will make a positive difference to our people and the impact they will make on the customer experience.

Our strategy outlines how we will meet our organisations strategic objectives through effective leadership and people management. With involvement from employees, customers, Gateshead Council and other key stakeholders a new vision, mission statement and values were developed in March 2015 to reflect the future direction and priorities for the Company.

4. Our corporate strategic objectives:

The following four strategic objectives underpin our strategy and will ensure we start to address the challenges we face:

1. Investing in our employees and developing new and innovative ways of working to deliver the plan
2. Protecting Housing Revenue Account income and investment made in the stock
3. Supporting tenants and sustaining tenancies and neighbourhoods
4. Partnership working with Gateshead Council and others to support the delivery of quality homes and customer-focussed services

Our Vision

To provide quality homes and customer-focused services in Gateshead

Our Mission Statement

To be successful in the provision of quality homes and customer-focused services we must work effectively in partnership and invest in our employees.

Our Values Are

To be:

Fair

Customer focused

Open and honest

Accountable

Inclusive, valuing diversity

Innovative

Passionate about what we do

Our core values are at the heart of our business and are the principles and standards that influence the way we work and behave. They make a positive difference by giving us a sense of pride and belonging, they show we care and are committed to people and the work we do.

We understand that the embedding of our values will take time and we will ensure that our work streams link to the values in terms of what we do, how we do it and the behaviours needed to achieve tasks.

5. Our People Strategy vision

We have set ourselves a vision for what we aim to have achieved through the strategy by 2020.

Our overall vision is to 'work in partnership with the Strategic Management Team, managers, individual employees and our partners to provide workforce solutions that make The Gateshead Housing Company (TGHC) a great place to work. We will develop our workforce so they achieve results and put customers at the heart of their work.'

When we set out to develop our strategy, we considered a number of key national and local drivers which includes Investors in People, The 100 Best Companies engagement survey, our commitment to The Better Health at Work award and our partnership working with Gateshead Council.

6. Employee survey – what our employees told us

Since 2011, we have asked our employees to take part in The 100 Best Companies engagement survey. In addition to this, we have been assessed against the Investors in People (IiP) standard in 2008, 2011 and 2014. Our employee surveys and IiP tell us:

- There is a need for a management competency framework
- Recognition through empowerment is important
- We should develop a coaching culture
- Feedback from consultation is vital
- We need a clear learning and development offering covering the whole employee lifecycle

This valuable feedback helps us to focus on the things that matter and make the difference to employees wanting to be at work rather than having to be at work.

In 2015 the overall level of employee engagement was 77%. We aim to increase the level of engagement and address the themes that emerged from the survey. We will continue to survey employees annually to assess our progress with our People Strategy plans and initiatives.

7. Looking back at our achievements so far

Positive about Disability employer	2015
Investors in People (IiP) accreditation	2014
Mindful Employer annual assessment	2014
Increased our position with Stonewall	2014
Better Health at Work Award Silver	2014
Signed the Carer Association Pledge	2014
Finalist CIPD North East HR&D Awards and Engagement and Wellbeing Award	2013
Signed the Governments Skills Pledge	2010

8. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Investors in People (IIP) standard

We have followed the IIP framework since 2008. In 2011 we were assessed against the IIP standard and achieved GOLD accreditation. This placed us with 1% of organisations nationally achieving this level of accreditation. Since that time our organisation has had significant challenges in relation to our future as an ALMO)and the impact of Government policy, particularly in relation to housing reforms. We are pleased that we continued to follow the IIP standards and were reaccredited in 2014.

The IIP accreditation is a sign of excellence and a great employer. In 2015 a new standard was launched that explores practices and outcomes within an organisation under three key performance indicator headings: leading, supporting and improving.

The three areas of the framework around the outside of the diagram show the criteria that organisations, like us, who are committed to the principles of IIP, should be working to everyday. At the heart of the diagram, and the ethos, is organisation ambition as “we invest in people to improve performance [so] the aims and ambitions of the organisation are at the heart of the Investors in People framework.” (First Edition of the Sixth Generation Investors in People Standard 2015)

Our vision, mission and values detail our organisations ambition, so by adopting the IIP framework as a way of working, we will be supported to achieve our vision for the future.



Source :<https://www.investorsinpeople.com/iip-standard> (2015)

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 challenges organisations to know how age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, and sexual orientation describe the experiences of local communities, both individually and collectively. Thinking about the relationship between these 'protected characteristics' explains the difficulties and opportunities arising from the diversity of local areas.

They are a reminder to us of the consequences of difference on effective service delivery and cannot be avoided for either the provider or the user. This is embedded in our Single Equality Scheme.

Gender Pay Gap

In April 2017 we will continue to monitor the gender pay gap ahead of the publication of government league tables in April 2018. We will be required to reveal the number of men and women in each pay range to show where pay gaps are at their widest and to take action to reduce the pay gap.

Stonewall

We are committed to the principles of Stonewall and recognise that lesbian, gay, bi and trans people bring value to our organisation by providing a different set of experiences and perspectives. We know that these perspectives will influence our services for the better and benefit all employees, service users and members of the community.

9. THE LOCAL CONTEXT

TGHC Five-year strategic plan 2015-2020

Our five year strategic plan sets out our key priorities and provides our organisation and customers with an overview of our challenges and priorities.

The People Strategy underpins the success of the plan as we recognise that our workforce is vital to the achievement of our ambitions and aspirations.

TGHC ICT Strategy

We need to make sure our processes can be delivered efficiently and effectively through the use of ICT and Northgate, our housing management system.

We will continue to extend our approach to mobile working and learn from our experiences to date to ensure our investment in this area is delivering results.

In February 2016, we will see the introduction of the new HR and payroll system 'iTrent'. This employee self-service system will provide employees with the tools to manage updates to their personal details, request annual leave and to view salary advice slips. This will bring positive changes for managers who will be required to control attendance, absence and performance via a workflow system.

We will provide a range of e-learning and work with our partners, Gateshead Council, to provide training via on-line platforms that is cost effective and high quality. This is particularly important for Adult and Children's Safeguarding training.

10. Understanding our workforce profile and future challenges

We currently employ 425 (April 2015) people across two service areas, this number includes 96 people who joined us from Gateshead Council following TUPE transfer in April 2016. Customers and Communities provide a front-facing customer service and Corporate Services provides a back office service.

There are a number of workforce challenges that will influence our People Strategy. Our approach must ensure that we:

- Continually review the way we work and deliver services
- Continue to make sure we are organised in a fit-for-purpose way and our resources are linked to priorities
- Develop learning and skills programmes for employees to meet our corporate objectives
- Maximise the benefits of ICT
- Ensure a flexible approach to our plans to react to changes in government policy

In order to achieve our key challenges we have eight over-arching People priorities as follows:

1. Develop our leaders, managers and employees so every person contributes to our four strategic objectives
2. Manage performance and capability through measureable competencies and behaviours
3. Create a positive organisational change culture
4. Develop a reward and recognition strategy so employees see their contribution matters and adds value to our customer service delivery
5. Develop our Health and Wellbeing initiatives and focus on how we will build resilience in our employees so they bounce back from the challenges ahead
6. Develop a workforce for the future (e.g. talent management, succession planning and apprentices etc.) that is responsive, flexible, innovative and creative
7. Attract, recruit and retain a quality workforce so that each appointment adds value to our delivery of customer focused services
8. Ensure communication with our people is effective and timely

10.1 Developing our leaders and managers

To enable our organisation to succeed in the future we will need to continue to invest time and resources to ensure that we have highly skilled, responsive leaders to support our business and our people through their future Personal Development Plans (PDP's).

We know that our future success is dependant, in part, on the leadership capability of our employees to respond to the increasing challenges ahead of us, as outlined earlier in this report. We need our leaders to perform to the best of their ability and

we will develop a leadership and management framework to bring together mandatory and desirable training. We will continue to offer core training which includes health and safety, maximising attendance and managing the employment relationship.

Additionally, we recognise that there will be a need from time to time for specialist courses, bespoke training, conferences and learning from other organisations. Where such a need exists, we will explore value for money options and return on investment potential when allocating funding.

We will consider the importance of ability and psychometric testing for new and existing leaders and managers to inform current and future career development and PDP's through increased levels of self-awareness.

10.2 Performance management and capability

Our leaders will need to be supported by competent and skilled managers, so we want to ensure that our people have the necessary skills, competencies and behaviours to carry out their job effectively and efficiently. To do this, we need to have an effective approach to performance management and combine this with a supportive culture that actively promotes and encourages personal learning and development.

We know that from time to time some people may experience difficulties that result in unsatisfactory performance. When this happens it is the responsibility of managers to ensure that those who are not performing to the required levels swiftly receive the necessary support and guidance to enable them to improve.

Our managers tell us that managing poor performance is not easy with competing workload priorities and other operational requirements however, we know that early intervention and support is essential. Performance should be the highest priority for all involved in the process. It is clear that unsatisfactory performance adversely affects the quality of services delivered and this has an impact on other employee's morale and engagement.

We are keen to improve the process and we will work with managers to develop our processes and support so that early identification and intervention has a positive impact and is consistently applied across the organisation.

We will therefore review our capability policy and performance management training in order to work towards developing a competency framework and measurable competencies during the life of the People Strategy. This will help us to measure beyond technical ability only and help us to measure competence through behaviours and attitudes, as these have a major impact on the customer experience. The importance of behaviour will be as important as achieving task-oriented objectives and targets and is the responsibility of all employees.

10.3 Creating a positive organisational culture

The culture of our workplace is extremely important as this can directly affect employee motivation and can have a significant impact on the levels of engagement

and our overall performance. Our workplace culture represents the way we do things and therefore it is important that it is an attractive and focused environment that gets the best out of our people and ensures they are willing go the extra mile for customers and colleagues.

We aim to achieve a positive workplace where diversity is valued and people are encouraged to be themselves and where everyone is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Key to the success of the organisation and its employees is ensuring that people are equipped to deal with change and that change is seen as an opportunity, not something to be feared. At the heart of this is the culture of the organisation. We aim to ensure that fostering an entrepreneurial outlook where it is the norm for suggestions to be made, considered and implemented and opportunities for change are actively sought. This will be critical during the life of this strategy as opportunities for TUPE transfer and secondments result in the movement between organisations and the joining of different organisational cultures and ways of working.

We know from experience that our people have great ideas on how to improve the way we do things. We will continue to capture this and give consideration to the ideas and recognise the contribution through employee feedback mechanisms so they know what has happened as a result of their suggestion.

Having a workforce that is empowered, forward thinking and proactively seeking improvements and solutions is of key importance to us. We therefore need to encourage and promote this behaviour particularly when working with stakeholders and partners so our joint working produces effective and efficient delivery on every occasion.

We celebrate our success internally and externally, always looking for the opportunity to acknowledge and praise. When something works well, we shout about it and when there is the opportunity to develop we involve all stakeholders in developing solutions.

The way in which we manage change can have a significant impact on our employee's perception of our culture. Organisational change is inevitable however we need to ensure that when it does happen it is handled well. There are current growing pressures and challenges, as detailed earlier in this strategy, that are likely to mean significant change for us in future. The responsibility for effectively managing change lies with our leaders and managers. In this context our managers need to be able to introduce and manage change to ensure that the organisational objectives of the change are met through the commitment of our people. Change management involves planning and sensitive implementation and relies heavily on the skills and abilities of our leader and managers to get this right.

10.4 Develop a reward and recognition strategy

During our Investors in People assessment the majority of employees interviewed confirmed that they do feel valued and recognised for their efforts and they were able to give some examples of this, however there was little evidence to suggest that this

is a cohesive and strategic approach which is fair, clear, consistent and applies to everyone. To help address this, we will take the lead on producing a new reward and recognition strategy that is aligned with our strategic objectives. In developing the strategy we will be looking to combine both formal and informal approaches together with non-financial rewards. We will learn from best practice and crucially, we will involve our people in the development of the strategy.

10.5 Develop our health and wellbeing initiatives

To achieve our organisational objectives and maximise our performance we recognise the importance of maintaining and improving the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of our employees. We are committed to encouraging a happy and healthy workforce.

We believe that wellbeing encompasses a positive and healthy experience for everyone who works in our organisation. Its scope is wide and takes in health and safety, the mental and physical health of our employees and the professional and high-quality working environment. All this is underpinned by a continuing commitment to the principles of equality and diversity.

We firmly believe that successful workplace wellbeing provides improved engagement and commitment from individuals, reduces risks to occupational health and safety and results in high levels of employee satisfaction and attendance at work.

From our recent employee surveys we know that this is currently an area of strength for us. This is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of our employees feel that, as an organisation, we do actively promote health and wellbeing in the workplace. Despite this we cannot afford to become complacent and there is even more that we can do.

During the life of the People Strategy we will be working towards achieving the Better Health and Work Award Gold Level. We are pleased to be working closely with our partners at Gateshead Council on the development of our Occupational Health and Health and Wellbeing service offer. We are effectively accessing value for money resources as well as gaining economies of scale from joint working.

We know from employee feedback that our employees benefit from flexible working opportunities, as both parties have the flexibility to organise their working arrangements in a way that suits them. This enables our organisation to adapt to changing business conditions and individual employees to better balance their work and family life. We are committed to maintaining the range of policies that enable our people to achieve this balance. We know our success in providing great work life balance opportunities for all our employees sets us apart from many other organisations. As we move forward we will need to be mindful of the way our services are delivered now and in the future. Whilst we have 7am -7pm flexi times that have enabled a number of work life balances, with reducing resources we need to ensure that our services are delivered to customers during our core business hours, which can differ from our working hours.

10.6 Developing a workforce for the future

We readily acknowledge that we will need effective workforce planning to help us accurately forecast our future resourcing needs, to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills at the right time. We need to have a firm understanding of the challenges and issues we are likely to face over the coming five years so we can align our workforce accordingly.

To support our plans we will review our guidance and support managers in the challenges ahead both at a corporate level and within each service area. We hope that this will enable us to better direct resources where they are most needed both in the short and medium term.

We know that we have real challenges ahead as we continue to review the way we work and deliver services and make sure that we are organised in a fit-for-purpose way with our resources linked to our priorities.

We know we face significant financial challenges ahead and we will work with our partners Gateshead Council to deliver value for money and efficiency savings across both organisations to ensure the people of Gateshead continue to receive quality services through our joint approach to people management. In real terms, this may result in the transfer of services, posts and employees from one organisation to another. We will therefore continue to strengthen our partnership with unions, employees and stakeholders so that consultation and communication is meaningful.

We continue to follow Gateshead Council's policy for redundancy, redeployment and retirement to ensure consistency of approach between our organisations.

There are strong relationships between engagement and how well we maximise the opportunities and effectiveness of our existing employees. We recognise that across our organisation there will always be people who have greater potential than their current job requires therefore we are keen to increase opportunities for staff to develop and extend their skills and knowledge to benefit both themselves and the organisation. Our approach will need to provide a planned and managed programme of development for talented individuals using training, work placements, coaching and mentoring and similar techniques. We will follow a similar process for succession planning to ensure we share knowledge and expertise across the organisation, aiming to provide the future proofing of service provision.

We are a socially responsible company and understand the value and importance of investing in people. Apprenticeships are an important way we can do this. By bringing apprentices into our organisation we will provide quality training and experiences to equip people for their future. We will plan for the introduction of the government levy in April 2017 that will see the introduction of 0.5% of our wage bill paid to the Government as an Apprenticeship Levy. We will also respond to the Enterprise Bill that will require all public sector organisations to make sure that 2.3% of the workforce are apprentices at any one time.

10.7 Attract, recruit and retain a quality workforce

We are an Equal Opportunities Employer with fair, relevant and fit for purpose processes that provide everyone with the opportunity to progress and develop.

We use a wide variety of methods, to attract people to our organisation, always ensuring that value for money principles are followed. Through a seamless and efficient recruitment process, we make a positive first impression, removing barriers to people applying.

We work with our partners Gateshead Council on the redeployment of employees across our organisations to provide employment opportunities in line with our policies and procedures that promote upskilling whenever possible.

We are committed to pay the National living wage for people 25 years and over and we will monitor government guidance annually.

10.8 Communication

How well we communicate as an organisation and how we empower and involve our people in decision making forms a fundamental part of our culture. When communication mechanisms breakdown this can have a detrimental effect upon employee motivation and levels of engagement. The 100 Best Companies engagement survey found that feeling listened to was the most important factor in determining how much employees value their organisation. Being heard reinforces a sense of belonging within an organisation and a belief that your actions have an impact.

As an organisation made up of different services it is sometimes difficult to ensure that communication between the services is effective. A lack of awareness and understanding about what other teams do in the organisation is often the root cause of communication breakdown. We will be expanding our approach to cross service working and communication as we know this contributes to improved organisational effectiveness.

We will continue to commit to carry out a further two employee surveys during the life of this strategy.

11. Evaluation and Assessment

We recognise the importance of continuously assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy in order to ensure that we achieve our key objectives. The success of our People Strategy is assessed via:

- Progress with the People Service Plan
- Annual employee engagement survey
- Our position in the 100 Best Companies and Investors in People
- Compliments and complaints
- Customer and employee feedback
- Absence from work

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- Behaviours aligned to the strategy and culture
- Performance management and capability
- Return on investment from training
- Workforce planning, flexibility and targeting of resources
- Value for Money and efficiencies are achieved
- Legal and economic pressures are managed effectively

12. Monitoring and Review

The Support Services Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the People Strategy is implemented and delivered, and all employees and Board Members are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The People Strategy will be reviewed in five years, with consideration of any significant changes on an annual basis in conjunction with the annual Service Plan. Any changes deemed to be significant will be reported to the TGHC Board for approval as and when they emerge, to ensure that the People Strategy remains relevant and fit for purpose.

13. Linked Documents

The People Strategy should be delivered in conjunction with:

- TGHC Five Year Strategic Plan 2015-2020
- People Management Service Plan
- Employee Handbook
- Employee Behavioural Framework
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Health and Safety Handbook
- Organisational Design Guide

14. Contact Details

For more information on the People Strategy or for advice, support and guidance in relation to human resources and organisation development activity, please contact Jennifer Aston, Support Services Manager at The Gateshead Housing Company
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