



PEOPLE STRATEGY 2006 – 2009

“BUILDING PRIDE IN CUMBRIA”

AGREED BY CMT

JUNE 2006



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

FOREWORD

At Cumbria County Council, we have set out an ambitious programme of change and improvement for the next three years. We are committed to building on the very best aspects of public services across Cumbria. We recognise the central role that the people who work here have to play in achieving this vision and the importance of having a committed and skilled workforce. As the biggest employer in Cumbria, we also recognise the special contribution we make to providing employment and development opportunities for local people.

This document sets out our priorities for supporting our employees, to enable them to deliver quality services and develop their skills and experience.

With them we want to build pride in the council and pride in Cumbria as a whole.

Tim Stoddard, Leader

Getting people management right is not simply a task for our Human Resources colleagues. We need a council-wide approach, shaped by our overall objectives, which enables us to focus our efforts on those changes and improvements, which will have the most impact. By setting out our priorities for our workforce, this strategy will help us work together across the council to ensure that we achieve our vision of the sort of organisation we want to be.

Local government is changing, and changing quickly. There is a wide debate about the future role of local councils, the way they engage with local people, and their relationship with central government. The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy emphasises the importance of councils looking ahead, analysing the key workforce issues, anticipating problems and taking a positive approach to meet their requirements.

In Cumbria we are already making fundamental changes to our children's services and to adult social care, and as part of this looking at our workforce requirements with our partners. Over the next three years we will need to make other changes. Work is currently underway on a customer contact strategy for the council, and also our approach to local working and engaging with local people. We will need to consider the implications for our workforce, as decisions are taken on our future direction with these issues.

This needs to be a living, breathing process, grounded absolutely in our plans to improve our services. It also needs to dovetail with our work on communications, equality and diversity, efficiency and performance management. We are making improvements with all of these to ensure that we have a workforce that is genuinely motivated to contribute to our exciting core purpose. These changes are all bringing about real and lasting improvements in the way we work together, and most important of all, improvements to our services to the public.

Peter Stybelski, Chief Executive

INTRODUCTION

In this strategy, we have set out our vision for our workforce and a clear action plan for the year ahead to enable us to achieve our vision by 2009.

In agreeing our priorities, we have taken account of what we want to achieve as an organisation, how we want to work together, and the context in which we are working. We have also taken stock of where we are as an organisation, and reflected on our recent progress in developing and supporting our employees.

We have identified five themes that are important to the future success of our workforce and which form the basis of the action plan that is set out in this strategy. They are:

- Transformational leadership
- Developing our people
- Reward and recognition
- Embedding equality and diversity
- Achieving quality people management

Delivering on these will enable us to meet our priorities as a council and also achieve our aim of being the “Employer of Choice” in Cumbria.

We will need to deliver this action plan alongside the other improvements we are making to the way we work as an organisation; in particular, changes to the way we communicate, manage performance, engage with people from diverse backgrounds, and manage our resources. We recognise that we will also need to work closely with our key commercial partners in developing the wider workforce engaged in delivering the council’s services; and with other partners across the public and independent sectors.

The council’s Corporate Management Team, led by the Chief Executive, is responsible for agreeing the action plan and ensuring it is delivered. The HR team has a lead role in working with all parts of the council and especially the Directorate Management Teams, to deliver the action plan. We have allocated time and budgets to ensure that the action plan can be delivered from existing resources.

During 2006, we are taking steps to strengthen our capacity at the corporate centre and in the service directorates to ensure that we can achieve this strategy. The Directorate Management Teams lead the process of shaping and developing our services in response to changing requirements. In children’s services and adult services we are already responding to new legislation, which is leading to fundamental changes in the way our work is organised. We recognise that we need to develop our capacity across the whole council to look ahead, anticipate our workforce requirements and take action to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills in the future, and the most effective ways of working.

Managers in service directorates are responsible for applying the council’s processes for managing people in a positive and supportive way, and ensuring that equality and diversity issues are addressed. Our HR team will work with service managers to provide an appropriate and effective policy framework, and support them in developing their skills in implementing those policies. We will also work closely with the trade unions on workforce issues.

We will review our People Strategy and update the action plan each year to take account of issues arising in our services, and also of the council’s overall priorities as these evolve.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

This strategy will support the delivery of our overall ambitions, which are set out in the Council Plan for 2006 –2009. We have committed ourselves to a three-year programme to radically transform the way we deliver our services, by being more responsive to the needs and wishes of all the people in Cumbria.

Our priorities are to:

- Improve the life chances and well-being of children and young people
- Improve the health and well-being of adults
- Make Cumbria more prosperous
- Create safe and secure communities
- Create and protect a high quality environment for all
- Improve council services.

We have a particular **focus on immediate improvements** to:

- Children and young people's services
- The care of older adults
- The minimisation of waste
- Re-cycling
- Highway maintenance.

Our **cross-cutting priorities for improvement** are:

- Improved customer contact arrangements
- Greater use of consultation to inform priorities
- A consistent approach to community engagement, including hard-to-reach groups
- Greater focus on Cumbria's diversity with an early focus on black and minority ethnic communities.

Our plans are underpinned by the values of **achieving greater value for money, greater efficiency and better use of resources**. This will require a change of culture in the council and the development of constructive relationships with partners. This includes:

- Improving financial and budget management
- Using benchmarking and comparative information to inform decisions
- Achieving and demonstrating efficiency from key commercial partnerships
- Improving the council's activities as an accountable body.

HOW WE WANT TO WORK TOGETHER

The Council Plan is clear about the **values** that are important to us as an organisation. This people strategy will support us in developing a culture where we:

- Care about what we do
- Respect and value each other
- Celebrate our heritage and culture
- Improve through learning
- Acknowledge and celebrate our diversity
- Aim for excellence and standards we can be proud of
- Recognise our successes and value others.

The Council Plan also sets out our vision for **how** we need to work together as an organisation. It is a priority for us to develop our workforce so that across the council we consistently and routinely work in the following ways:

- The whole council working together for more co-ordinated service delivery
- Setting service standards to let the public know what they can expect from us
- Finding out about local community needs and service performance at the local level to improve our decision-making
- Delivering in partnership with others: other councils; the voluntary and community sector; commercial partners
- Taking preventative action and intervening as early as possible
- Providing more choice and empowering people
- Using our overall priorities to feed into service planning and individual goal-setting as part of the appraisal process.

CONTEXT

The changing face of local government

Local government is undergoing considerable change. A local government White Paper is expected during 2006 and within this and other debates, a number of themes are emerging that will shape the future of local government. These include:

- More focus on the individual as a customer of public services
- A stronger role for councils as the commissioners of service delivery and the customer's champion
- Devolution of more power to the neighbourhood level
- Local councils playing a lead role in Local Strategic Partnerships and in developing Local Area Agreements, with accountability on performance to central government
- New developments in children's services, anti-social behaviour, public health and social care
- Continuing emphasis on securing efficiency gains, with a focus on investing in technology to improve customer services, developing shared services and improving procurement
- Growing awareness of and concern about environmental issues.

As our Council Plan shows, we are responding directly to all of these challenges. This strategy identifies the support we are providing to ensure that the people who work for the council have the skills and experience to engage with these changes in a positive way.

Our workforce challenges

As the largest employer in Cumbria, we have a big part to play in securing the long-term prosperity of the county. Along with other local employers, we face particular challenges in ensuring that skills and jobs are matched to as high a standard as possible.

As the Cumbria economy changes, with the substantial losses of employment from manufacturing and the proposed job losses at Sellafield, we have a particular responsibility to ensure that we have a highly skilled workforce. We also face the challenge of our young people moving away from Cumbria once they reach the age of sixteen. Only 12% of our current workforce is under 30 years old. We recognise that young people are key to the future success of the council and of Cumbria as a whole, and that we have a part to play in reversing this trend. In general, the size and sparsity of Cumbria's population mean that there is a narrow base of high quality jobs making it hard for us to attract skilled and talented people into the county.

“Sustainable Cumbria” – the strategy for the Cumbria Strategic Partnership, identifies the need to get the right balance of skills and jobs in the county, both sectorally and spatially. Along with our Cumbria partners, we have identified it as a priority to develop and “grow our own”. The specific actions identified are:

- Developing better pathways for workers in Cumbria to acquire professional qualifications
- Developing and retaining a skilled workforce
- Ensuring that young people are given incentives to stay in or return to Cumbria.

The key elements of our approach to “growing our own” are set out in our action plan below. In addition, our Workforce Development Strategy sets out the steps we are taking in relation to specific groups of employees where we face particular recruitment and retention challenges.

The council as an inclusive employer

We directly employ over 18,000 people in a total of 12,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

80% of our workforce are women. We are currently carrying out a comprehensive job evaluation exercise as part of our review of equal pay. Alongside this, a number of equal pay claims against the council have yet to be fully resolved. We will continue to develop our approach to people management to ensure that all our employees are fully supported in meeting their aspirations and career development needs.

We have an ageing workforce. 30% of our employees are over 50. We will need to respond to the new legislation on age discrimination and pensions, and ensure that our older employees have a positive experience of work, at whatever age they retire.

Across the council there is low reporting of employees meeting the Disability Discrimination Act definition - just 1% of our workforce. We need to create a culture where disabled employees feel comfortable about being able to declare that they are disabled, so that their particular support needs can be dealt with in a positive way.

We have very few employees from black and minority ethnic groups. While this reflects the profile of our local population, this is something we want to change, as we seek to attract skilled and talented people from all backgrounds into the council.

We want to create a healthy organisation, where the physical environment, the nature of the job, and the balance between home and work, enable people to work effectively and safely. We have strengthened our management of health and safety and we have been working to reduce sickness and improve attendance. Over the last 3 years the number of days lost each year per employee has fallen from 10.21 to 9.16. However, we recognise there is more to do if we are to achieve our target of less than 8 days per employee over the next three years.

Feedback from our employees

We are committed to carrying out a survey of our employees every two years. Our last survey in March 2005, which 25% of employees responded to, highlighted some positive results for the council as well as some important challenges.

Cumbria employees are more satisfied than the MORI local authority average with:

- Making the best use of skills and abilities

- Opportunities to show initiative
- Receiving sufficient training
- Opportunities for career development
- Job security.

However, we were below the MORI authority average on:

- Being informed about what is happening across the Council
- Understanding how work contributes to corporate aims
- Interesting and rewarding work
- Having sufficient resources available to do the job
- Receiving constructive feedback on performance.

In response to this we are making improvements to our communications, and also taking steps to strengthen our team and line management processes.

We demonstrated our commitment to dignity and respect in the workplace, by asking people about this in the employee survey. One in seven respondents said that they had experienced bullying a harassment in the previous year. Following on from this we have asked Equality Works to carry out a separate survey to look further into this. We are committed to taking action to deal with this issue, once they have reported back to us in July 2006.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Where are we now?

Our employees have a strong affection for Cumbria. They enjoy their work and take pride in it, and are focused on their own local priorities in their teams. However, they don't always think of themselves as being part of a wider County Council. Morale is good, but pockets of low self-esteem do exist, perhaps because of the criticism the organisation has faced and our apparent inability to 'move on'. Members can be frustrated and disappointed at not being able to 'get things done' – but are genuinely appreciative of the good work that goes on and the support they get.

Where do we want to be?

We want our employees to be proud to work for an organisation that makes a difference – and to take pride in the services they deliver on behalf of the public. We want them to feel respected and valued, with a clear sense of what the organisation they work for is trying to do – and how the work they do fits in to the bigger picture.

We want them to have the tools they need to do the job - and to feel that their hard work and effort is recognised by managers – and by the public.

We want members to feel that the whole council is pulling together to help deliver their improvement agenda.

We want all our employees and elected members to share a positive collective sense of purpose – to improve the quality of service provided by the council, to a level about which we can all feel proud.

What needs to change?

Employees need to have a clear and strong sense that the council is changing and improving with purpose.

Everyone in the organisation should be positive about improvement and aspire to the highest possible standards.

We should all have a clear understanding of how the work we do can play a part in improving the quality of our services.

We must all be prepared to play our part by taking pride in what we do.

As individuals and as an organisation we need to focus all our energies on "Building Pride in Cumbria" and celebrating our successes.

These comments are based on a range of sources – some come from research and are evidence-based, others are more anecdotal. In presenting them we are seeking to be open and honest about where we stand and what more we need to do to achieve our vision.

OUR RECENT PROGRESS

Over the last three years, we have made significant changes to the way we support and manage our employees:

Transformational leadership

- We have supported Cabinet members in developing their leadership skills, through links with members from other councils and their participation in the IDeA's Leadership Academy.
- We have recruited a new Corporate Management Team who have been working together to develop a shared agenda for transforming the council.
- We have developed a set of core behaviours for managers.
- We have been active partners in the ACE programme, "Achieving Cumbrian Excellence" - the Cumbria-wide capacity building programme for members and managers.

Developing our people

- We have delivered a comprehensive member induction and development programme.
- We have worked with managers to ensure that the employee appraisal scheme is embedded and recognised as a key process for identifying individuals' development needs and ensuring these are met.
- We have invested in the developing the ICT skills of employees across the council.
- We have developed a consistent method across the council for assessing the impact of development and training.

Reward and recognition

- We are more than half-way through a council-wide job evaluation exercise which we are conducting in partnership with the trade unions.
- We have launched our annual Excellence Awards scheme to recognise outstanding performance across the council.
- We have set up a popular staff suggestion scheme.

Embedding equality and diversity

- We have invested in a dedicated Corporate Equality Officer, responsible for embedding equalities in all service provision and employment activity across the council.
- The full council has signed up to the vision set out in the equality policy, of ensuring that equality is mainstreamed into all of our activities.
- We have agreed an Equality Implementation Strategy covering all six equality areas: ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability and religion/faith.
- We are rolling out mandatory training on equalities issues to members and employees.

Achieving quality people management

- We achieved liP accreditation for the whole council in 2004 and are working to be re-accredited in March 2007 against the new liP standard.
- We have introduced a structured approach to internal communications through our employee magazine, team briefings, regular e-mail bulletins and manager conferences.
- We have improved our recruitment processes, including introducing an on-line application form.
- We have made the flexi-time scheme more flexible and developed a pilot home-working policy to ensure a positive balance between work and home life.
- We have improved the employee assistance programme and implemented a new positive attendance policy.
- We have secured enhanced support from our occupational health service and invested in health and safety training for our employees, including our most senior managers.

MAKING IT HAPPEN – OUR ACTION PLAN FOR 2006-07

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

AIM	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
Members			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> members are confident in their leadership role 	Commission the IDeA to deliver a programme of support to Cabinet members, as a team and individually	Member Services	April 2006 – March 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> members are able confidently to promote the council's equalities agenda and represent constituents who experience any type of discrimination 	Provide Equality Works training for all members	HR Team	October 2006
	Members to attend performance of the anti-racist play at their local school	Member Services/Children's Services	May 2006 – April 2007
Corporate Management Team			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMT members are effective in transforming the council by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engaging middle managers focusing on key performance outcomes developing strategic partnerships 	Commission the Leadership Centre for Local Government to provide support to CMT as a team and individually	Chief Executive	April 2006 – March 2007
Cumbria Managers			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> managers clearly understand the capabilities they need to lead, manage and develop people effectively (liP indicator) 	Finalise the Cumbria Manager Leadership Behaviours Framework, prepare guidance, and build into the appraisal system. Launch with managers.	HR Team	September 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people (liP indicator) 	Commission a manager development programme as part of the roll-out of the Leadership Behaviours Framework	HR Team	September 2006 – March 2009

DEVELOPING OUR PEOPLE

AIM	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
Members			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> members are confident about fulfilling their different roles within the council and with partners members understand the strategic issues facing Cumbria and the council's response members are confident in their use of ICT 	Revise and implement the Member Development Strategy, based on individual PDPs and the overall priorities of the council	Member Services	August 2006
	Apply for the NW Charter for member development	Member Services	March 2007
Employees			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people learn and develop effectively (liP standard) people are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making (liP standard) 	Develop the appraisal scheme – in particular focus on evaluating learning and the impact on performance	HR Team	March 2007
	Improve the communication of development opportunities across the council, focusing on employees who do not have access to ICT	HR Team	September 2007
	Develop the core internal communications channels to engage staff in debate and discussion	Communications Team	May 2006
Growing our own			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the council develops and retains a skilled workforce employees have clear career pathways young people are given incentives to stay in or return to Cumbria 	Promote take-up of the Digital Divide programme – a TU-funded initiative, designed to develop ICT skills	HR Team	September 2006
	Set up a council-wide coaching skills programme for managers	HR Team	September 2006
	Develop proposals for promoting career pathways across the council	HR Team	March 2007

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

AIM	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
Pay and grading review			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new pay and grading structure is implemented by April 2007 terms and conditions are harmonised the new pay and grading system incorporates flexible packages of benefits 	Complete the council-wide job evaluation exercise	HR Team with Directorates	March 2007
	Design a new pay and grading structure	HR Team	March 2007
	Secure the agreement of the trade unions to the new pay and grading structure	HR Team	March 2007
	Resolve the equal pay claims	Corporate HR/Legal/Finance	March 2007
Recognition			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is an increase in the proportion of council employees that rate us as an average or above average place to work 	Carry out a benchmark survey on whether staff take pride in the services they provide to the public	Communications Team	May 2006
	Produce "Making Cumbria Proud" booklet to be distributed to all employees	Communications Team	May 2006
	Re-vamp the intranet to include updates of good practice and celebrations of success	Communications Team	May 2006

EMBEDDING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

AIM	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
Awareness of equality and diversity issues			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all employees are aware of the impact of equality and diversity in their jobs 	Produce new appraisal guidance which includes individual equalities objectives	HR Team	March 2006
	All appraisals include equalities objectives, and are revisited at the 6 month and year-end review	All line managers, co-ordinated by the Directorates	May & November 2006, March 2007
	Deliver a rolling programme of equality training to all employees from an independent provider	HR Team/Equalities Officer	April 2006 – March 2009
The council as an inclusive employer			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is an increase in the number of employees who perceive the council to be an equal opportunities employer by employees there is a reduction in the number of employees who have experience harassment 	Develop an action plan in response to the staff survey on harassment, including a review of manager behaviours/culture to feed into the Cumbria Manager programme	HR Team/Equalities Officer	July 2006
	Develop a reporting system that captures any type of discriminatory incident	Equalities Officer	June 2006
	Set up a steering group with employees and trade unions to oversee positive action to increase the diversity of the workforce	Equalities Officer	July 2006
Equality impact assessments			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> equality impact assessments are undertaken in all services that relate to the Council Plan, to a high standard 	Produce corporate guidance on Equality Impact Assessments	Equalities Officer	February 2006
	Set up one-to-one coaching for Directorate Equality Leads	Equalities Officer	February – December 2006

ACHIEVING QUALITY PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

AIM	ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Build the council's strategic HR capacity			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is increased capacity through additional HR posts to support change management in Directorates there is consistent application of HR strategies, policies and procedures across the council managers across the council are considering future workforce requirements and taking action to ensure that they are met 	Appoint to new HR posts in Directorates and within the corporate HR team. Establish effective ways of working across the council to embed the new in-house strategic HR function.	HR Team	September 2007
	Map existing processes and develop new council-wide procedures. Consider business case for investing in ICT systems to support the revised processes.	HR Team	October 2007
	Produce workforce development plans at the corporate level and for each Directorate, as part of the service planning process	HR Team/Directorate Management Teams	
Review and update key people management policies			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a clear understanding of employer and employee expectations and requirements with regard to home working There is a coherent and positive set of processes for managing performance through line management. The number of days lost through sickness per FTE employee, falls to less than 8 a year 	Flexible working - finalise and communicate a remote working policy for the council	HR Team	March 2007
	Managing performance - revise the discipline and grievance, capability, and dismissal procedures	HR Team	March 2007
	Positive attendance – continue to support line managers with implementation of the policy	HR Team/Directorate Management Teams	March 2007
Trades Union Relationships			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive relationships with the trade unions 	Produce and secure trade union support for a revised partnership agreement and memorandum of understanding	HR Team	March 2007

