

People and Culture Strategy

2025 to 2029



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Section one

Our strategic themes

Our Dorset Council identity is created through its people and its culture. Together, they make up who we are and what we stand for.

Our people are the driving force that bring ideas to life and keep our organisation moving forward. They connect us to, and interact with, our local communities in order to serve their needs.

Our culture is like the personality of our organisation. It includes the values, beliefs, behaviours and practices that shape how our people interact and work together. It's what makes us unique and influences how we get things done.

Our People and Culture strategy for 2025 to 2029 aims to achieve outcomes aligned to three key themes.



Section Two

How we got here

We formed as Dorset Council in 2019 and have been maturing in the last five years to strengthen and adapt to new opportunities and challenges, and the changing needs of our communities. We have good foundations to build on and excellent practices and experiences to share, with a skilled and loyal workforce dedicated to making a positive impact.

Our achievements span widely across the areas of people development, support, engagement and recognition. We have also developed our employer brand and undertaken activity to understand what makes a 'great place to work' for our colleagues.

From our external research and internal insights, we know there are six motivating factors for positive employee experiences. Attention to these will help us nurture great people who deliver excellent services and experiences to our customers and communities.

Understanding our strengths and what we do less well, along with our future aspirations, has helped us identify the people and culture shifts we need to make to enable us to effectively deliver our council plan priorities. This exploratory activity has taken place through engagement with colleagues and leaders across the organisation and has involved people in workshops, focus groups, conversations, surveys and marketplace activities across our workplaces.



Inclusion

Inclusion is the heartbeat of our organisation. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy and action plan can be viewed on our web pages. We are committed to developing and supporting a diverse and engaged workforce where our values drive inclusive behaviours, policy and practice to protect and support our wellbeing and productivity.



**Inclusion the
heartbeat of our
organisation**



Our values

As we created our Council Plan 2024 to 2029, we worked with our people to refresh our former behaviours and create our organisational values. These act as guiding principles, defining what we believe is important in the ways we work together.

Our organisational values assist with decision making and getting things done in a sustainable way. Demonstrating these values in action will bring them to life across the organisation, helping us create positive experiences. Our values underpin who we are and how we do things, and will give our people direction, support and motivation throughout their employee journey with us.



Respect

We value our differences, we treat everyone with fairness, dignity, and understanding



Openness

We welcome new ideas; we are honest, positive and inclusive.



Together

We combine our strengths with others to achieve a shared purpose and common goals



Accountability

We take ownership for our work, our actions and our decisions.



Curiosity

We aspire to learn, explore, and adapt to new opportunities and experiences

Section three

Our context

We are redefining our role as Dorset Council. Local government has undergone much change in recent years, with our workforce, technology, place leadership and partnerships all reflecting these changes. Within this context, it is important that we are strong in our vision and ambitions both for our organisation and our people. Our Council Plan 2024 to 2029 sets out our vision as an organisation and our four strategic priorities.

Our vision: "Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations"

Our strategic priorities:



Provide high-quality and affordable housing



Grow our economy



Communities for all



Respond to the climate and nature crisis

Guiding our council vision are the underlying principles of 'Partnership' and 'Prevention'. We can achieve more working with others and through prevention we can avoid demand on acute systems and deliver better outcomes for our residents.

To deliver this vision and the strategic priorities, we need a skilled, motivated and productive workforce with great people who make a difference and are equipped to adapt and thrive as our council evolves.

Our People and Culture strategy themes and outcomes connect to our vision, our priorities and our values.

People and Culture Strategy

Our vision



Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations

Our priorities



Provide high-quality and affordable housing



Grow our economy



Communities for all



Respond to the climate and nature crisis

Our values



Respect



Openness



Together



Accountability



Curiosity

Strategy themes



Inspired to grow



Enabled to adapt and thrive



Making a difference

Outcomes

We prioritise learning

We grow together

We retain and attract diverse talent

We foster a positive and inclusive workplace

We take ownership

We lead with clarity and purpose

We grow our impact

We collaborate and innovate

We improve with data and technology

Section four

Becoming the council we want to be

Looking ahead, we are determined to become a modern, sustainable organisation that truly reflects the needs of our communities. Over the next five years, we will transform our council by revolutionising our operations, technology, processes, and structures. This ambitious vision will allow us to serve our residents with greater efficiency and excellence.

Our journey will include fostering closer, more inclusive collaboration with our communities, towns, parishes, and partners. By focusing on preventative measures, we aim to create opportunities for everyone to thrive.

Attracting, growing, and retaining the best people is at the heart of our organisation's success. As one cohesive employer, we pledge to make our recruitment strategies and people practices inclusive, flexible, and consistent. This will enhance our employer brand and retain and attract talented individuals from diverse backgrounds with varied experiences.

Our framework for managing talent will be key to evolving into a high-performing council that empowers our people, partners, customers and communities. The framework will assist us in planning, attracting, developing and keeping the skills we need now and in the future. It will also help us adopt ways of thinking and processes which enable us to move around the organisation to grow and share our knowledge and experiences and offer modern, flexible careers.

We are committed to a proactive approach to wellbeing, fostering an open and trustworthy environment that supports a healthy and respectful workplace. By embedding wellbeing practices into our daily routines and transformation plans, we demonstrate our care and compassion, ensuring we maintain productive workforce.

Our leaders and managers are crucial in ensuring our employees have a positive experience. As our organisation transforms, they will navigate change, adopt new ways of working, and integrate new technology. We aim to empower our leaders and managers, strengthening their skills and confidence to drive meaningful change and create optimal conditions for success.



Effective conversations between employees and managers are essential for building successful relationships and high performance. These dialogues will connect us to our values, hold us accountable for our actions, and provide feedback, recognition, and support. By getting our people performance practices right, we will unlock our potential to become more innovative, agile, and high performing.

As part of our promise to be an environmentally responsible organisation, we will adapt how we work, deliver services, and interact with colleagues, customers, and technology.

Together, we will achieve our ambitions for Dorset through the growth of our people and our culture.



Experiencing good work and good days at work is really important. We want our workplaces to be healthy and inclusive, where we are treated fairly, we can engage, have good relationships and feel valued for who we are and what we do.

We want to be a strong council with clear objectives, high quality frontline services built around centralised enabling and support services, good governance, a positive workplace culture and balanced finances.



Section five

How we will achieve our ambitions




To achieve our people and culture outcomes we will need to align resources and attention to priority work areas. These areas of focus surfaced from our engagement activity with people and leaders from across the organisation. They recognise areas which will support us to grow our ethos and culture, develop our workforce capacity and capability and make our practices and approaches impactful and sustainable, creating good work and positive experiences.

They include:

- Transformation
- Technology, digital and data
- Building a modern talent and growth offer
- Living our values
- A proactive wellbeing approach
- Leaders and managers
- People performance
- Recognising our people
- Prevention and partnership approaches
- Environmental sustainability



Our priority work areas align to support us in achieving our outcomes

Themes	Outcomes	Priority work areas
 <p>Inspired to grow</p>	<p>We prioritise learning</p> <p>We grow together</p> <p>We retain and attract diverse talent</p>	<p>Transformation</p> <p>Building a modern talent and growth offer</p> <p>Living our values</p>
 <p>Enabled to adapt and thrive</p>	<p>We foster a positive and inclusive workplace</p> <p>We take ownership</p> <p>We lead with clarity and purpose</p>	<p>People performance</p> <p>Leaders and managers</p> <p>A proactive wellbeing approach</p> <p>Living our values</p> <p>Recognising our people</p>
 <p>Making a difference</p>	<p>We grow our impact</p> <p>We collaborate and innovate</p> <p>We improve with data and technology</p>	<p>Prevention and partnership approaches</p> <p>Environmental sustainability</p> <p>Transformation</p> <p>Technology, digital and data</p> <p>Living our values</p>

There will be a number of supporting and enabling strategies and plans, which will contribute to our progress in becoming the council we are aiming to be.

Some of the key strategies and plans which impact on our people and culture include:

- Transformation plan and service change programmes
- Medium-Term Financial Plan
- Climate strategy
- Customer strategy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy
- Digital infrastructure and Inclusion strategy

Section six

Our key themes

We have three key themes that communicate our high-level ambitions. We want to be:

- Inspired to grow
- Enabled to adapt and thrive
- Making a difference

Inspired to grow



This theme is about generating a passion for learning which retains and attracts diverse talent, develops our workforce and enables the agility we need to have the right skills in the right place, at the right time.

We want to achieve the following outcomes through this theme:

- we prioritise learning: Continuous learning is for everyone and is seen as a key organisational focus and a personal responsibility
- we grow together: We develop the skills and experience we need through our commitment to learning and by supporting the movement of people and skills across the organisation
- we retain and attract diverse talent: Our organisation is progressive because people from different backgrounds bring fresh ideas, creativity, and better decision-making

Learning is much more than attending a training course. We will offer a visible range of opportunities to help our people expand their knowledge and experience, broaden their networks and share good practice to keep us growing together.



Enabled to adapt and thrive



This theme concentrates on creating the conditions for our workforce to thrive and adapt through change. It pays attention to the experiences of our people, our managers and our leaders ensuring we are all clear about our purpose, expectations and we feel a sense of belonging to our organisation.

We want to achieve the following outcomes through this theme:

- we foster a positive and inclusive workplace: Our workplace is healthy and welcoming, encouraging diverse perspectives. Everyone feels involved, valued, and treated fairly
- we take ownership: Our people are accountable and inclusive, encouraging each other to be open and continuously improve
- we lead with clarity and purpose: Our leaders and managers set clear expectations, align priorities, and use resources effectively to empower our people to make a positive impact

Diverse and curious minds and inclusive leaders will enable us to strengthen through change. We will experiment, be creative and innovative to find the most impactful solutions to grow and deliver.



Making a difference



This theme focuses on how we grow to work more effectively, using data and insights to make decisions that make a positive difference for Dorset. With the right technology, including artificial intelligence and automation, and strong business intelligence we can be enabled to understand and share the impact we have across our wider systems and partnerships. Working together, with our customers at the centre of what we do, is how we can form creative and effective partnerships to make the biggest and most sustainable difference across our county.

We want to achieve the following outcomes through this theme:

- we grow our impact: As a large employer, we work alongside our communities and partners to broaden our positive and sustainable impact across Dorset
- we champion collaboration and innovation: We build great teams, we test new ideas, and we break down barriers to achieve common, lasting goals
- we improve with data and technology: We enhance our decision-making, prioritisation, and demonstrate our impact by using data, insights, and technology effectively

The decisions we make for Dorset will be driven by data insights and evidence. We will implement the tools and strategies we need to ensure our collective impact is broad and deep.



Section seven

How we will monitor and evaluate success

We will develop an annual delivery plan for this strategy. The plan will describe our objectives and performance metrics, our work activities and outputs, and who will be responsible for these activities. It will also highlight how this strategy underpins the delivery of key strategic documents, such as the council plan and our transformation plan.

Assessing the success of this strategy will involve the evaluation of each annual delivery plan. It will be important to access a range of data sources, including those captured through the delivery of supporting strategic plans. Robust impact evaluation will provide a deep understanding of the development of our organisational health and culture.

Our quantitative and qualitative data and information sources will develop as we mature. Current examples are included in the table:

Strategy theme and outcomes	Areas of focus	Data / Information source
Inspired to grow We prioritise learning We grow together We retain and attract diverse talent	Transformation Building a modern talent and growth offer Living our values	Impact data from transformation and service change plans Engagement and impact of learning and development offers Apprenticeships data and levy spend Internal mobility data Employee experience survey data
Enabled to adapt and thrive We foster a positive and inclusive workplace We take ownership We lead with clarity and purpose	People performance Leaders and managers A proactive wellbeing approach Living our values Recognising our people	Workforce, HR advisory and recruitment data People performance data Employee experience survey data Work-related stress and sickness absence Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan data Engagement data – employees, leaders and managers
Making a difference We grow our impact We champion collaboration and innovation	Prevention and partnership approaches Environmental sustainability Transformation	Corporate and service performance data Financial data Employee, manager and leader survey data Customer insights and partner data