

Watford Together

OUR TOWN. OUR FUTURE.

**ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

2020-2024



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**



Welcome

We are an ambitious council, constantly striving for better outcomes for our residents, our businesses and our community. We pride ourselves on thinking bigger and taking the bold decisions that make a real difference. Our staff work at pace, embracing new challenges and actively pursuing opportunities that support our ambitions and drive us forward.

Working at Watford is never dull; there is always something new on the horizon for us to achieve together. I see so many examples of how you welcome the chance to take on new areas of work, stepping up and thriving on the challenge of finding

the right way for our council and our town. Many organisations claim their people are their biggest asset, and you prove this through your hard work, every day.

Together we've just been through one of the most difficult times most of us have ever faced in our working lives. Whilst we don't yet know what lies ahead, the creativity and tenacity you have shown throughout the COVID-19 pandemic gives me tremendous confidence that we are ready to build on our achievements and deliver even more for our residents and our community.



to a new Organisational Development Strategy for Watford.

Our new Council Plan 2020-24, supported by our Delivery Plan, demonstrates our bold, pioneering approach. Together they clearly set out our promises to our community and show our determination to focus on what matters most to Watford, to make it an even better place to live, work and visit.

None of this would be possible without you - our staff. That's why it's the right time to launch our new OD Strategy. We want you to feel inspired by working for Watford. This strategy is our commitment to you that we recognise that our staff are at the heart of our council and that, at Watford, you will have the right support, training and opportunities to grow and excel.

YOU REALLY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Throughout the life of this strategy we will engage and empower staff so that we can continue to respond to what's important and make positive changes to working life at Watford. We have already stepped up how we can involve you at greater depth in shaping our plans. The Staff Ambassadors Group have been instrumental, providing valuable insights and challenging how this plan has come together, following their equally positive input to the new Council Plan. We want to demonstrate that we are serious about listening closely to our staff and I would urge you to get involved and play an active part in the life of your Council. You really can make a difference.

I know we have the right foundations in place to be the envy of other local authorities and to be role models for employment excellence across our local community. Whilst we know there are challenges ahead, there will also be opportunities for us to build an even stronger and more successful organisation that uses all its skills, talents and enthusiasm to achieve more for our residents and community. We want you to be the best you can be at Watford and this strategy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

Donna Nolan Managing Director

Our response to COVID-19 showed how ready we are to embrace new, more agile ways of working and to develop radical and innovative solutions together. This strategy recognises how far we have come in such a short time, and seeks to build on what we have learnt, but it also challenges us to go even further. We will work as 'one Watford team' to create a culture of success, based on the shared values and behaviours we shape together.

Staying focused

THIS ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD) STRATEGY SETS OUT THE COUNCIL'S AMBITION FOR OUR STAFF TO BE THE VERY BEST THEY CAN BE. WE RECOGNISE THAT TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE NEED TO EQUIP THEM WITH THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT THEY NEED TO EXCEL AND GROW.

We want to attract, and retain, the very best talent for Watford. To be renowned, not only for the outstanding local services we provide for our residents, businesses and community, but as the Council that is the local authority employer of choice.

We know that, although we might be a relatively small local authority, we think big and punch well above our weight. Our ambitious plans and constant drive to do more mean we create interesting, challenging and diverse roles, which offer a real chance for people to develop and make their mark.

Working with our Staff Ambassadors Group, and through our staff survey results, we have identified four major themes for our OD Strategy, which will help take our Council to the next level. These themes will be delivered through a series of focused actions and everyone will have a significant part to play, and contribution to make, towards their successful delivery.

on what matters to our staff.

Our themes come together to create the foundations for a strong, progressive and inclusive culture, where we can genuinely work together, irrespective of background, role or grade, to deliver the ambitions outlined in the Council Plan.

1

Theme one

commits to a healthy, happy and resilient workforce.

2

Theme two

describes our commitment to **codesign our values and behaviours** in a way that will **shape the desired culture** of the organisation, and **create a space** where people feel able to bring their whole self to work and **do their best.**

3

Theme three

focuses particularly on our learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and seeks to **embed our new, more agile ways of working.**

4

Theme four

concentrates on how we will **develop our talented staff at all levels** of the organisation.

Under each theme, we clearly set out our priority areas for action, seeking to build on the excellent foundations that are already in place. We know our themes are ambitious, but we're confident that our leaders and their teams have the appetite to deliver. We haven't yet included all of the details about how we will deliver our commitments, but we're looking forward to working with our staff to develop this aspect further.

Theme one

Workforce health and wellbeing

COMMITMENT:

WE WILL WORK HARD TO KEEP OUR PEOPLE HEALTHY, HAPPY AND RESILIENT

1



OUR ACTIONS

WHAT WE'LL DO

1

Place a particular focus on tackling the stigma associated with mental health or declaring a disability

We know that physical and mental wellbeing are of equal importance. In addition to offering more mental-health first aid training, we will continue our focus on mental health, so that our leaders feel well equipped to have open, courageous conversations, and understand their important role in contributing to improved mental health in the workplace and reducing stigma. We will work with new and existing staff to encourage them to be confident to declare their ethnicity and / or any disability they may have, safe in the knowledge that we will support them and ensure they thrive and develop in the workplace. We will be a 'disability confident' employer.

2

Craft great roles where our people have control over the best way to deliver their work, and feel well supported

We will maximise control over our work, noting the link between resilience, mental wellbeing and having autonomy over our work. We want to make sure that everyone, irrespective of grade or role, can contribute ideas and instigate new and better ways of doing things for the benefit of our community.

3

Support personal and professional growth in health-related subjects

We will create and publicise a range of opportunities to learn and build good habits on a range of health and wellbeing topics, so that our staff can access e-learning and interactive, habit-changing sessions.

4

Place continued emphasis on physical health

In addition to our occupational health provision, we are committed to developing our 'Watford Health and You' brand, so that our people can access a wide range of support for their physical needs.

5

Ensure that our Occupational Health and Employee Assistance offering is accessible and of high quality

We will continue to offer excellent employee assistance programmes and access to occupational health services, ensuring that their benefits are well publicised, understood and accessible for all.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Theme two

An organisation driven by values and behaviours



COMMITMENT:

PROMOTE WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AS AN ORGANISATION WITH A STRONG, INCLUSIVE CULTURE, WHERE WE 'LIVE' OUR VALUES EVERY DAY FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR STAFF AND THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE



OUR ACTIONS

WHAT WE'LL DO

1

Building on our success, we will empower all to help create a shared understanding of our values and behaviours

We will co-design a strong set of values and behaviours, using a variety of mechanisms, involving everyone, irrespective of grade. They will represent who we are, and who we aspire to be and reflect on the values and behaviours that we need to 'Survive, Revive and Thrive' and deliver our ambitious Council Plan.

2

We will ensure that everyone is familiar with our values and behaviours

It is crucial that we roll out our values and behaviours across every part of the employee journey. Everyone will understand how the values and behaviours connect with their day-to-day work.

3

We will make sure that our leaders embody our values and behaviours in everything that they do

We will appoint and develop leaders in line with our values and behaviours, so that leaders discharge their duties in a way that reflects these values and behaviours, without exception. In order to achieve this, we will ensure that we can measure leaders' behaviour, using a competency framework linked to regular reviews and annual appraisals.

4

We will reward those who exemplify our values and behaviours

We know that some people really champion the culture that we want to create. We will use a variety of ways to celebrate success and share examples of how our values and behaviours are lived in practice, far and wide.

5

We will embed our values and behaviours so that they are 'lived, not laminated'

We will align policies and practices so that our values and behaviours are felt and experienced, rather than simply talked about in abstract form. We recognise that this is a journey, and will use our 1:1 and appraisal processes to measure our progress over time. We will have honest conversations at all levels in the organisation about the things that could contradict our desired values and behaviours, so that we can put those things right.

INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Theme three

An agile organisation

COMMITMENT:

**CREATE CONFIDENT, AGILE
TEAMS, ABLE TO ADAPT
AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS
OF OUR COMMUNITIES**

3

OUR ACTIONS

WHAT WE’LL DO

1

Optimise choice over when and where team members work

Our response to COVID-19 has demonstrated just how agile we can be and we have had great success. We must make sure that we don’t lose the increased flexibility over when and where we work. We know that employees are more loyal, and less likely to leave, when they have control over when and where they work. So as long as our communities receive the best service, we want to create a space where our teams can choose what works for individuals and teams. We will wherever we can, optimise the opportunity to work in an agile way, irrespective of grade or role, and we will champion those who lead the way.

2

Design ways of working that challenge and further develop an agile mindset

We will pilot new and innovative ways of working, continually pushing and developing our own agile mindsets. We will pilot new innovations on a small scale, engaging teams in our evaluation, before considering a roll-out to the rest of the organisation.

3

Break down silos across teams

We will create a series of opportunities for our staff to gain a better understanding of how things work in different parts of the council. Our people will have the opportunity to spend up to five days per year working or shadowing in another department. We will encourage creativity and opportunities to work in partnership across teams in a range of ways, and team members will be able to work on projects outside of their functional area, based on their interest and potential to grow, rather than their job title, or experience.

4

Support the development of digital skills

We know that agile working requires strong digital skills and we will ensure that our development programmes build these skills, so that our people are confident. We are committed to developing skills, using a blend of face-to-face and online channels.

**CONFIDENT
AGILE TEAMS**

Theme four

Performance and staff development

COMMITMENT:

PROMOTE OUR REPUTATION AS A HIGH-PERFORMING COUNCIL THAT TAKES DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF SERIOUSLY AND PROVIDES PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW, IRRESPECTIVE OF BACKGROUND, ROLE OR GRADE

4

OUR ACTIONS

WHAT WE'LL DO

1

We will prioritise the development of all of our people

Irrespective of background, grade or role, we are committed to developing our people so that they fulfil their potential and their aspirations. We take career development very seriously and all our staff will participate in a meaningful appraisal, where performance, aspirations and potential are equally important, so that the objectives in the Council Plan are met.

2

Create a strong pipeline of new people to join our talented and skilled team, starting with the creation of a Customer Service Centre (CSC) Academy

The creation of entry-level roles into the Council creates an important connection with our local community. We will recruit for attitude and potential, using our CSC to develop new recruits and create an important recruitment pipeline. The Academy will help us to increase the number of apprentices we retain and move up into permanent roles within the Council, or who gain employment within our local community. There will be an opportunity to develop our own graduate scheme, linked to HCC and EELGA schemes, but targeted specifically for Watford.

3

We will encourage and actively develop our aspiring leaders

We will introduce a 'first steps to leadership' programme and increase opportunities for secondment and project work, to ensure aspiring leaders feel empowered to develop their career, without having to leave Watford. A new role of Executive / Group Head Assistant will be created to provide the link between strategic and operational leaders.

4

We will create an enviable programme of leadership development

We recognise the importance of leaders at all levels of the organisation. We will continue to embed our leadership framework and continue to develop our leadership programme, building the confidence and skills of all leaders at all levels. We will proactively succession plan, ensuring that both business-critical and hard-to-fill roles are incorporated into our plans.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staying focused on what matters



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