SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S

STRATEGIC PEOPLE PLAN REVIEW AND REFRESH 2024

Scottish Borders COUNCIL

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STRATEGIC PEOPLE PLAN REPORT 2016 TO DATE

Background

Since 2016 there have been many changes in the way the Council has supported staff. The environment in which we work no longer reflects that of 2016 due to several factors including COVID, Brexit, Government priorities, legal developments, and financial impacts.

However, the resilience of our staff and the changes made to support them has enabled the Council to adapt accordingly through this time and for the future.

Scottish Borders Council will continue to modernise its service delivery by working, managing, and leading collaboratively across organisational boundaries with our communities and partners. To support this collaboration the Council will have to develop effective behaviours, skills, actions, and styles of working through innovation, technology, and leadership to ensure that we have a workforce that can respond effectively and be flexible to meet the demands of new service delivery models as outlined in the Operating Model, and Council and Service Plans.

Future and refresh of the Strategic People Plan 2024

Since the initial Strategic People Plan report was published in 2015 outlining the future aspirations of the Council and despite the unknown variables that occurred during this time, e.g. a pandemic, financial impacts, this update highlights that many of these were achieved.

Going forward, the Council Plan and Operating Model will inform the annual Strategic People Plan refresh.

The Council recognises the pivotal role of their workforce in driving success. A strategic people plan is crucial for aligning Human Resources initiatives with the Council Plan, fostering a culture of excellence, and ensuring a sustainable future. These following sections outline our strategic approach to managing and developing our people to achieve our objectives effectively.

1. **Vision:**
   - In the future we will be a smaller more flexible organisation designed to deliver the best outcomes for our communities.
   - All HR initiatives will be in line with the overarching Council Plan.

2. **Recruitment and retention:**
   - Identify key competencies and skills required for future roles.
   - Implement innovative sourcing strategies to attract staff.
   - Develop a robust onboarding process to integrate new hires seamlessly into the Council's culture and operations.

3. **Development and Training:**
   - Continue to conduct regular skills assessments to identify areas for improvement.
   - Offer continuous learning opportunities through training programmes, workshops, and coaching/mentorship.
   - Encourage career development and create more career pathways for advancement within the Council.
   - Ensure staff have access to the right digital skills training.

4. Performance Management:
- Maintain clear performance metrics aligned with the Council Plan.
- Embed regular appraisal evaluations and feedback mechanisms.
- Recognise high performance while addressing underperformance through constructive coaching and support.

5. Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Initiatives:
- Foster a diverse and inclusive workplace culture that values and respects individual differences.
- Continue to review policies and practices to ensure equity and fairness in recruitment, promotion, and remuneration.
- Provide training and resources to promote cultural competence and awareness among employees.

6. Employee Well-being and Engagement:
- Promote employee well-being by encouraging participation in the Council's health and wellness programs.
- Promote work-life balance through flexible work arrangements and supportive policies.
- Foster a culture of open communication and transparency to enhance employee engagement and satisfaction.

6. Succession Planning and Leadership Development:
- Continue developing succession plans across the Council.
- Promote the leadership training and mentoring programmes to develop future leaders within the Council.
- Ensure a smooth transition of leadership roles to mitigate risks associated with turnover.

7. Technology and Innovation:
- Leverage technology to streamline HR processes and enhance employee experience.
- Encourage the use of digital solutions when redesigning services to drive improvement.
- Continue to invest in digital tools for remote work, collaboration, and performance management.
- Encourage innovation and creativity among employees to drive continuous improvement.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation:
- Further develop metrics to measure the effectiveness of HR initiatives and interventions.
- Promote feedback from employees to gauge satisfaction levels and identify areas of concern.

9. Continuous Improvement:
- Embrace a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.
- Regularly review and update the strategic people plan to reflect changes.
- Encourage collaboration and cross-functional teamwork to drive innovation and excellence.

The strategic people plan is essential for building a resilient and high-performing workforce that can adapt to change and drive success. By fully aligning HR initiatives with the Council Plan, fostering a culture of learning and inclusivity, and investing in employee development and well-being, we can create a workplace where individuals thrive and contribute to our collective success.

In 2016 Scottish Borders Council produced a strategic people plan which outlined the future aspirations of the Council over a 5-year period. This report reviews what the Council had hoped to achieve (what we said) and what was achieved (what we did).

REVIEW & PROGRESS - WHAT WE SAID & WHAT WE DID

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

1. People & Succession Planning and Workforce Flexibility
 	
Encouraging and supporting the development of generic job profiles, job rotation and secondments to develop our organisational flexibility and capacity.
 	
Developing a more effective approach to identify suitable alternative employment for staff and improve our ability to move staff into new jobs and roles to avoid, where possible, the need for redundancies.
 	
Ensuring that workforce planning techniques such as scenario planning, skills and gap analysis are fundamental aspects of transformational and Service redesign projects.
	The Council has adapted and created a new digital people and succession planning process which is used throughout the whole Council.
	
	Both people planning and succession planning are integral components of strategic human resource management, contributing to organisational resilience, adaptability, and long-term success. Integrating these processes allows the Council to build a flexible and skilled workforce capable of meeting evolving business needs.
	
	People planning and succession planning are essential strategic processes to ensure the Council has the right talent in place to meet current and future business needs.
	
	People Planning:
	
	• **Talent Alignment with Business Goals:**
	  ❏ People planning allows the Council to align their workforce with current and future business goals. It ensures that the right people, with the right skills, are available to meet the strategic objectives.
	• **Efficient Resource Utilisation:**
	  ❏ By understanding the current and future skills and competencies required, the Council can optimise the use of their resources. This includes identifying areas where additional training or recruitment may be necessary.
	• **Risk Mitigation:**
	  ❏ People planning helps the Council identify potential skills gaps or shortages. By addressing these gaps proactively, the Council can mitigate **the risks associated with talent shortages** and ensure continuity of operations.
	• **Cost Savings:**
	  ❏ By anticipating future workforce needs, the Council can avoid reactive hiring and reduce recruitment costs. This proactive approach allows for better budgeting and resource allocation.
	• **Adaptability to Change:**
	  ❏ People planning enables the Council to be more adaptable in the face of change. Whether it's technological advancements, market shifts, or other factors, having a flexible and skilled workforce can help the Council navigate change more effectively.
	• **Employee Development:**
	  ❏ Identifying skill gaps through people planning allows the Council to invest in employee development programmes. This not only benefits individual employees but also strengthens the overall capabilities of the workforce.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

Supporting effective retention through integrated inclusive approaches to career development, succession planning.
 	
Vacant posts are considered as deployment opportunities across the Council.
 	
Improve the quality of employee appraisal conversations between line managers and employees to improve retention.
 	
Identify future talent that we need to retain in the organisation and help "grow our own."
 	
Promote flexible interdisciplinary teamworking to provide opportunities for staff to broaden their experience, skills, and knowledge.
 	
Develop our overall approach to employee engagement to ensure that we retain key groups of staff.
	Succession Planning:
	
	• **Leadership Continuity:**
	  ❑ Succession planning ensures that there is a pipeline of talent ready to step into key leadership roles when needed. This continuity is crucial for the stability and long-term success of the Council.
	• **Reduced Disruption:**
	  ❑ By having identified and developed potential successors, the Council can minimise disruptions caused by unexpected departures of key personnel. This is particularly important for critical roles that may significantly impact operations.
	• **Employee Engagement:**
	  ❑ Succession planning communicates to employees that the Council values their growth and development. Knowing that there are opportunities for advancement can increase employee engagement and retention.
	• **Faster Leadership Transitions:**
	  ❑ With a well-defined succession plan, the Council can facilitate smoother and quicker transitions when leadership changes are necessary. This minimises the time it takes for new leaders to get up to speed and ensures business continuity.
	• **Identification of future leaders:**
	  ❑ Succession planning helps identify employees who can be supported for leadership positions. This identification process allows the Council to invest in the development of these individuals.
	• **Improved Retention:**
	  ❑ Knowing that there are opportunities for career advancement within the Council can contribute to higher employee retention. Employees are more likely to stay when they are invested in their long-term career growth.
	
	Agile and flexible working policies were developed pre COVID and have been modified and further developed during the pandemic and post COVID to reflect the new working environment. The Council offers greater flexibility with agile working, which allows employees to work in a workplace or from home if this is in accordance with service requirements. This complements the standardisation of job descriptions, allows the attraction of a wider pool of candidates when recruiting and has sustained staff retention. Agile/ flexible working opportunities are often cited as one of the benefits of working for the Council by staff.
	
	Secondments have always been available for most roles within the Council, and this has now expanded to include secondments into projects, allowing staff with key skills and knowledge to apply these whilst gaining valuable experience and increased job satisfaction.
	
	Staff appraisals offer numerous advantages and it's crucial to ensure that the process is fair, consistent, and aligned with the Council's goals. A digital staff appraisal was introduced in 2020 to provide this and continues to evolve alongside manager guidelines to support more productive appraisal conversations.
	
	Staff appraisal is a systematic process of assessing and evaluating an employee's job performance and providing feedback.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

	Performance Improvement:
	  ❏ Staff appraisals provide a platform for constructive feedback, helping employees understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback is instrumental in enhancing performance and achieving professional growth.
	Alignment with the Council Plan:
	  ❏ The appraisal process allows for a discussion about individual goals and objectives, ensuring that employees' efforts are aligned with the Council Plan. This alignment contributes to organisational effectiveness.
	Communication and Feedback:
	  ❏ Regular appraisals facilitate ongoing communication between employees and managers. This open dialogue ensures that expectations are clear, and employees receive timely feedback, fostering a positive and communicative work environment.
	Recognition of Achievements:
	  ❏ Staff appraisals provide an opportunity to recognise and appreciate employees for their achievements and contributions. Positive reinforcement reinforces desired behaviours and motivates employees to continue performing well.
	Identification of Training Needs:
	  ❏ Through the appraisal process, managers can identify skill gaps and training needs. This information is valuable for designing targeted training and development programmes that support employee growth and career advancement.
	Career Development:
	  ❏ Appraisals are a key component of career development discussions. Employees can discuss their career aspirations, and managers can provide guidance on the skills and experiences needed to progress within the organisation.
	Motivation and Morale:
	  ❏ Constructive feedback and recognition contribute to higher levels of motivation and morale among employees. Feeling valued and appreciated for their contributions can positively impact job satisfaction and engagement.
	Fairness and Transparency:
	  ❏ A well-structured appraisal system ensures fairness and transparency in evaluating performance. Clear performance criteria and consistent evaluation processes contribute to employees perceiving the appraisal process as fair.
	Employee Self-Reflection:
	  ❏ Appraisals encourage employees to reflect on their own performance, set goals for improvement, and take ownership of their professional development. This self-reflection can lead to increased self-awareness and a commitment to personal growth.
	Succession Planning:
	  ❏ Performance appraisals help identify employees who may be suitable for leadership roles in the future. This information is valuable for succession planning and talent management.
	Employee Engagement:
	  ❏ Engaging employees in the appraisal process demonstrates that the Council values their contributions and is committed to their professional development. This can positively impact overall employee engagement and job satisfaction.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID
	Career Pathways: In November 2023, the Council introduced and formalised a career pathway guide that pulls together all the above elements. A Career Pathway (CP) is a series of jobs, which clearly allows current and potential new staff to see the sequence of steps for progressing into different or promoted roles across the Council.

Continuing the "WHAT WE DID" column:

- All jobs in the Council, from Modern Apprentice to the Chief Executive, have skills, knowledge, experience and/or qualifications considered essential criteria to fulfil a job and should be easily identified.
- Career Pathways support the Council's delivery of short, medium, and long-term objectives through people planning, succession planning and talent management.
- A Career Pathway can be utilised to alleviate recruitment difficulties due to a lack of candidates with all the essential criteria, or where a development opportunity is identified to 'grow our own' through people and succession planning.
- By creating a Career Pathway, staff are more engaged in their job and long-term relationship with the Council. This improves staff morale as they can see potential career options and what it takes to move from one job to another and supports retention of staff as an employer of choice.
- Staff want to work and contribute their skills in the form of a satisfying career. This is a win-win for the workforce, the Council, and the community at large.

Staff Engagement

This has improved through the actions listed in this report i.e., people and succession planning, appraisals, career pathways, learning and development where staff are considered and asked to contribute to their own development and share ideas and suggestions at team meetings and their 121 sessions.

An annual staff survey was developed and implemented in 2022 to improve staff engagement. An Engagement Score was created to enable the Council to analyse and improve engagement in a measured way. The survey is open to all staff with results then analysed and shared openly following the survey. Action plans are then created within each service and department, in conjunction with staff in response to the survey. A second ran until October 2023 with an increase in the proportion of responders who viewed the engagement positively.

The Viva Engage platform that was introduced during COVID has also proven to help with staff engagement, with staff from across the Council sharing information, updates, hints, and tips on work. It also creates a social space for staff including sharing of community activities and events.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

2. Recruitment/ Retention/ Vacancies, Turnover & Length of Service.

Managers should review all posts before proposing a post for advert to ensure the post is required and meets the needs of the business.

Increase the numbers of modern apprenticeships with positive destinations.

Develop our Exit Interview procedures to better understand the reasons behind staff leaving.

Use digital solutions to replace manual tasks.

Grading & Role Profiles: Continued progression of role profiles and ensuring they are used as part of the new appraisal process to measure performance.

Continue working towards reducing the pay gap between sexes with ongoing equality measures focusing on access and recruitment to roles.

Review of current grade structure

To improve access to our vacancies, across our community, and being mindful of our equality and diversity obligations, the Council is in the process of reviewing our recruitment process. Modernising job descriptions and job adverts to open opportunities to a wider pool of potential applicants by removing "barriers" from the recruitment process including those around protected characteristics, language, and educational bias. The use of hybrid/flexible working also assists in improving access.

Recruitment Process Improvement

80% of our recruitment activity relates to 20 roles within the Council. Fully embracing the streamlined process should result in reducing the time to post an advert from 45 minutes to 10 minutes.

This will be achieved by:

- Maximising the use of the Talentlink System
- Reducing Manager Time and Workload
- Job Description & Job Advert Standardisation & Reduction
- A pilot has been in place for the last 2 years with all Adult Social Care recruitment being carried out centrally by a dedicated HR resource

These improvements will also potentially deliver a cost saving to the Council.

Job Description & Job Advert Standardisation & Reduction

Over several years, the Council have developed generic job profiles as posts were reviewed. In 2023, following consultation with the Joint Trade Unions (JTU) it was agreed with the Council Management Team (CMT), that all posts across the Council will be reviewed, and a standardised set of Job Descriptions and Job Adverts created and stored in a "library". These will replace current job descriptions and role profiles, allowing the Council to have a standard set of Job Descriptions and Job Adverts. These versions will also be used for recruitment, saving time, effort, and money.

The responsibilities in job descriptions have been consolidated into "categories of work" to help shift from "task-based" job descriptions to broader work categories.

Benefits:

- Digitise, centralise, and standardise our job descriptions and adverts.
- De-bias and design inclusion into all our jobs
- Fast-track the creation of new job descriptions ensuring quality and inclusivity.
- Automate the creation of good-practice, consistent and inclusive job adverts.
- Automate how we review, edit, and collaborate on job descriptions.
- Have governance over how jobs are created and updated.
- Maintain an audit trail of changes to jobs as they change over time.
- Extract and map the work and skills across all our jobs to support people planning.
- Automate updates to our jobs as the Council evolves and services change.
- Easier to identify work similarities across jobs.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

Review Pay & Grading Structure

The Living Wage increase since 2015, has led to grades being eroded and the first group of grades being removed entirely from the current pay structure. Therefore, the Council decided, following consultation with the Joint Trade Unions that a review of the Scottish Borders Council pay, and grading structure would be undertaken through the Single Status process, to ensure it is fit for purpose looking ahead to the future in conjunction with the revised job descriptions. This work is due to be completed in 2025.

Turnover & Retention

Scottish Borders Council average turnover highlighted the need to understand reasons for leaving and what we can do to retain talented staff.

It was agreed in 2015 to review our exit interview approach by developing a digital form on Business World for employees and managers to access and the ability to report. Since its introduction, the number of exit interviews have increased however not the number to match the number of those leaving, which still identified a gap in exit interviews being undertaken and awareness of managers of their importance.

Replacing Manual Processes with Digital Solutions

In April 2017, the Council moved onto Business World an Enterprise resource planning (ERP) which is a type of software that organisations use to manage day-to-day business activities such as accounting, procurement, payroll, and HR Processes.

This has enabled the Council to automate manual processes, roll out self-service and have real time information available for managers.

In 2019 the Workflex App was launched so managers can instantly deal with covering unplanned leave. This has reduced the administrative burden on managers to phone round staff to find cover and staff can choose the days and time that they want to be available for additional hours.

Modern Apprentices

Scottish Borders Council is committed to developing our MA programme with most individuals' finding a role within the council or otherwise finding a positive destination.

Year	Number of Apprentices
2014/15	3
2015/16	7
2016/17	21
2017/18	23
2018/19	24
2019/20	30
2020/21	36
2021/22	75
2022/23	50
Total	269

269 Apprentice Destination
2014 - 2023

- Scottish Borders Council
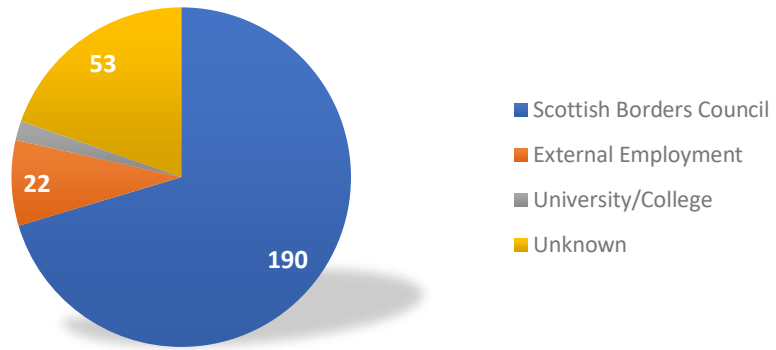- External Employment
- University/College
- Unknown

Table 1 below shows the breakdown of those apprentices retained within Scottish Borders Council by Directorate and year.

Table 1	2014 /15	2015/ 16	2016 /17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23
Adult Social Care						1			
Education & Children Services					3	1	20	30	15
Finance & Corporate Governance			1		2	2		2	2
Infrastructure & Environment		1	11	7	1	3	3	9	9
People, Performance & Change		1				1		2	1
Resilient Communities		3	6	6	7	10	5	10	11
Social Work						1		1	2

Table 2 below shows the breakdown of those remaining apprentices by destination and year.

Table 2	2014/ 15	2015/ 16	2016 /17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23
University/College	1			2				2	
External Employment	1		2	3	1			11	4
Unknown	1	2	1	5	10	11	8	8	6

Working across the Council services, departments and in conjunction with colleges, universities, and local businesses we have found 217 positive destinations for people from across the Borders region. Building on the work already done, the Council plan to work more closely and proactively with schools as pupils approach leaving age, providing them with potential opportunities and options the Council has to offer as an employer of choice including the benefit of "earn & learn" through apprenticeships, traineeships, and career pathways.

As part of this partnership working and expanding on our "earn & learn" initiative, a Modern Apprenticeship in Environmental Health Support will be available to address the national shortage of Environmental Health Officers.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID
	Employee Benefits

In today's competitive job market, offering attractive benefits is crucial for both attracting talent and retaining existing employees. A comprehensive benefits package demonstrates our commitment to the well-being and satisfaction of our workforce.

Benefits such as health support, retirement plans, and wellness programmes contribute to the overall well-being of employees. When employees feel valued and supported, they are more engaged, productive, and motivated to contribute to the Council's success.

Flexible work arrangements, paid time off, and family-friendly policies help employees achieve a better work-life balance. This not only enhances job satisfaction but also reduces burnout and absenteeism, leading to higher productivity levels. The Council has expanded the benefits programme over the last 5 years:

- Lifestyle savings
- Car salary sacrifice
- Cycle to work salary sacrifice
- Employee Assistance Programme including counselling, legal and financial advice
- Aviva Health Care Benefits open to employees and their dependents including online GP, annual health screening, specialist mental health supports, second medical opinion
- Additional Voluntary Pension Contribution Scheme
- Flexible Retirement Programme
- Long Service Award Scheme
- Play Your Part Awards Scheme
- Flexible working
- Wellbeing support
- Pension scheme
- Childcare vouchers salary sacrifice
- Health cash back plan |

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

3. **Absence & Wellbeing**

Training of Management staff on how to manage sickness absence in line with the new Business World system where they will have more control over the monitoring of their staff.

Continued roll out of Absence Management Training.

Noticing trends amongst certain groups and investigating quickly.

Ensuring working environments meet health & safety legislative standards.

Encouraging staff to adopt healthier lifestyles by making them aware of what the council has to offer and what is on within the local community.

It is the goal of Scottish Borders Council to continue to reduce the number of absence days from across its services, as absence can lead to a reduction in productivity and add stress to other staff colleagues.

The following are figures for sickness as per the Statutory Performance Indicators (COVID Absences not included): -

Staff

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	*2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
4.92%	4.61%	4.52%	4.95%	5.03%	5.54%	4.75%	5.05%

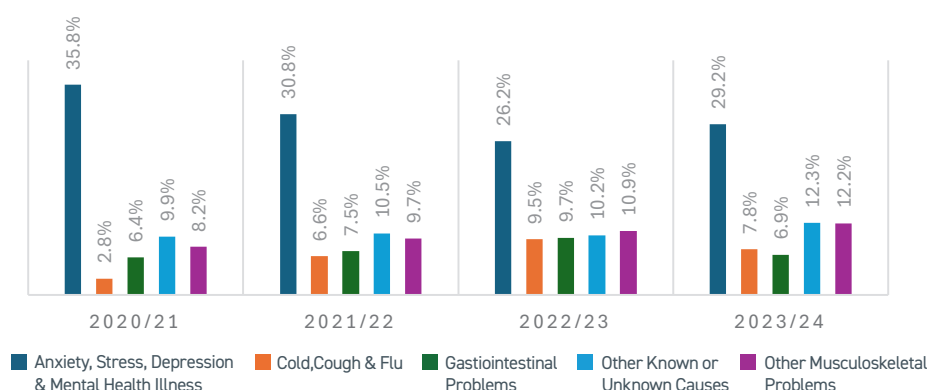* In 2019/20 SB Cares came back into the Council and this coincides with the increase in absences.

Teachers

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
3.25%	3.49%	3.18%	3.11%	3.84%	3.99%	2.27%	3.06%

In 2016/17 the Council transitioned from its previous recording system to Business World, and this has allowed us to break down the reason for absences in more detail.

	Top 5 categories for absence (2014/15 - 2021/22)
1	**Anxiety, Stress, Depression & Mental Health Illness** Over this 8-year period this absence averaged 13.760.44 days
2	**Other Known or Unknown Causes** These were not recorded under one of the Councils 25 absence categories. Over this 8-year period this absence averaged 6,065.25 days
3	**Cold, Cough & Flu** This reduced in 2020/21 when staff began working at home during the pandemic and staff felt able to work but knew they would not be infecting their colleagues and did not have to travel into work. In fact, it was not in the top 10 of absence reasons for this period. Back problems were the 5th most common. Over this 8-year period this absence averaged 4,632.13 days
4	**Musculoskeletal Problems** (excludes back pain) Over this 8-year period this absence averaged 5,732.31days
5	**Gastrointestinal Problems** Over this 8-year period this absence averaged 3,858.63 days

Below is a table illustrating the trends of these top 5 absence categories over the last 4 years 2020/21 – 2023/24 to show the most recent trends beyond the figures above.

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24

- ■ Anxiety, Stress, Depression & Mental Health Illness
- ■ Cold,Cough & Flu
- ■ Gastiointestinal Problems
- ■ Other Known or Unknown Causes
- ■ Other Musculoskeletal Problems

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID
	Mangers receive reports when a member of staff has hit an absence trigger point for those they manage, allowing them to address any issues early and support their staff. Managers can also refer staff directly to Occupational Health.

Absence figures are also monitored as part of the quarterly people planning meetings Services have with their HR Business Partners to identify any trends and how these can be addressed quickly.

It is now mandatory for all Line Managers to undertake the Absence Management training as part of their responsibilities.

The Council also introduced courses to support managers and staff:

- Stress Management Techniques
- Managing Your Mental Health While Working From Home
- Mental Health Awareness: Training for Managers
- Developing Personal Resilience

The Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), provided by Vivup, offers a range of resources to support staff wellbeing.

This includes a free confidential helpline available 24 hours a day, every day of the year, a free counselling service and a selection of self-help workbooks covering issues such as mental health, debt, and bereavement advice.

In 2023 the Council also introduced the AVIVA DigiCare+ (Workplace app). Aviva DigiCare+ Workplace is an easy to-use app that offers guidance and care for staff's physical and mental health, allowing staff and their dependents to look after their health confidentially and proactively.

Additionally, the Council have created a wellbeing handbook, which can be found via this link.

Staff Wellbeing Handbook September 2023.pdf (sharepoint.com)

The purpose of this directory is to provide staff with a list of useful organisations and resources in relation to wellbeing topics. This guide is a list of potentially useful resources and organisations and is updated on a quarterly basis. This directory includes a comprehensive list of well-being material and additional support resources for staff.

- Bereavement
- Cancer
- Domestic abuse
- Drug & alcohol support
- Eating well & eating disorder support
- Emotional wellbeing & mental health
- Financial wellbeing
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- SB learn – self-development & resources
- Social care
- Suicide prevention
- Sexual assault
- Volunteering
- Retirement

The council have also produced Menopause Guidance, and this can be found via this link:

Menopause Guidance Nov 2021.pdf (sharepoint.com)

As mentioned previously the Council's Viva Engage platform also hosts local community information and groups for staff to support each other.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

4. Learning & Development

Expansion of our SBLearn e-learning courses.

Review the learning and development programme regularly to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Our SBLearn platform is growing and now hosts 682 resources compared to 142 resources on launch in 2013. It now features communities and Learning Pathways where the 6,544 active learners can be directed to structured training programmes specific to their role or the communities they belong to, this includes Council Members, some NHS staff, and volunteers.

The learning & development programme is constantly being reviewed with the next focus being a review of our Leadership and Management training and introducing a set of training around coaching for all staff to create a coaching culture, embedding this learning across all spheres of the council from how we interact with each other and how we approach change.

Staff Investment Council investment in staff learning & development has increased year on year. Despite the annual increase in training costs the Council ensures it gets best value for money working closely with the procurement team and contractors.

Financial Year	Council Wide Budget	Dedicated Education Budget
2020/21	£305,586	£123,593
2021/22	£411,708	£189,625
2022/23	£483,567	£127,115
2023/24	£511,799	£164,430

The top 3 largest spends for the training budget are:

Financial Year	Top 3 Service Area Spend	% of Budget
2020/21	Education	29 %
	Health & Social Care	22%
	Corporate Licencing & Training*	17%
2021/22	Education	32%
	**Infrastructure & Environment	12%
	Health & Social Care	11%
2022/23	Education	21%
	**Infrastructure & Environment	16%
	*Corporate Licencing & Training	13%
2023/24	**Infrastructure & Environment	41%
	Education	24%
	Social Work & Practice	24%

*This covers the whole of the council for all staff regardless of service area.

**Following the restriction from COVID to access training for the period of 2020-2022 and limited spaces available, this created a backlog.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID

Social Work Traineeship Scheme (Grow Your Own) Investment

Since its inception in 2021 It has provided 11 Fully Qualified Social Workers & 3 Mental Health Officers.

Equating to 20,075hrs per year of Social Work Resource delivered & 5,475hrs per year of Mental Health Officer resource delivered.

Over the next 2 years it is expected to provide an additional 11 Fully Qualified Social Workers & 4 Mental Health Officers

2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024 to date
£177,705.69	£206,349.08	£234,794.25

Teacher (Grow Your Own) Investment

Since 2017 the scheme has provided 19 High School Teachers and 19 Primary School Teachers.

There are currently a further 5 teachers in the training scheme.

These large investments in this traineeship scheme have reduced costs as vacancies are filled and agency staff reduced.

	WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID
5	**Equality & Diversity** **Disability** To increase the uptake in declaring a disability, the Council will incentivise staff to self-identify and complete the diversity tab of Business World (HR Information Management System) to identify initiatives the true number of disabled employees. **Sex** Over a sustained period, the Council will continue to introduce and promote equality initiatives. This will include continually reviewing our recruitment process and how that is targeted. Identify initiative to tackle organisational segregation within the Council and wider community by encouraging job applicants to apply for posts undertaken by certain sexes e.g. females into technical and environmental posts and males into caring and teaching posts. **Age** To help engage and retain younger staff in the16-24 age group in the longer term, the Council has committed to the ongoing and expansion of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) posts and professional trainees, factoring entry level posts into structure reviews; and ring-fencing suitable Grade 1, Grade 2, Clerical and entry level posts to those on Modern Apprenticeships.	The latest mainstreaming report can be found on the Scottish Borders Council internet site with a breakdown of all the data and actions. Click here to access: [Reporting on equality and diversity	Equality and diversity/Fairer Scotland Duty	Scottish Borders Council (scotborders.gov.uk)](#) As this report shows, considerable progress has been made in meeting the requirements of the general duty. However, we will continue and increase our efforts to mainstream equalities within the Scottish Borders. It is considered that the recommendations contained within our Equality Mainstreaming Update Report published in April 2019 are still relevant and should be continued with. These include the need to: • Continue the work in establishing effective performance indicators for Council services. • Ensure that the business plans for service areas fully embed equalities and equality outcomes. • Develop a training programme on Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) for Council staff and Councillors. • Use the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process when carrying out core business functions and have officers trained in the current IIA process and requirements. • Ensure that the Children and Young People service continues to link into the Council's overall approach to equalities. • For Human Resources (HR) to continue to strive to improve the information the Council holds for each of the protected characteristics in respect of employees and to analyse the reasons for the pay gap between the sexes and address these. • Ensure that communities and groups are consulted/involved in the formulation of Scottish Borders Council's strategies/policies. Fundamentally, it was recognised that an essential component of mainstreaming the equality duty is to incorporate it into core business functions of the Council and that it was important to continue with this work. Since the Council introduced the diversity tab on Business World (HR Information Management System) there has been an increase in staff self-identifying across all protected characteristics, however this remains low. **Disability** The Council is working on a range of initiatives focused on the use of technology, development and improvement of premises and the development of modern ways of working i.e. Hybrid/agile/flexible working practices to support recruitment and retention for those with a disability. The Scottish Borders Physical Disability Strategy, A Fairer Borders for People with a physical disability or long-term condition and their carers was approved by the Integration Joint Board in October.

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID
Initiatives include Career pathways, succession planning traineeship schemes. Introduce more entry level posts and career paths into the organisation as part of its transformation programme to create more opportunities for younger people and support succession planning. Identify talent, skills, and knowledge and how they can be retained. Expand the Council's Modern Apprenticeship programme to include new occupational areas and consider higher level SVQ qualifications suitable for the needs of future service delivery. Typically, Education recruits several Probationer Teachers every year, the majority of whom are under 30. Education also plans to create a "Grow Your Own" Scheme to encourage students to take up teaching as a profession with support from the Council.	An implementation plan has now been developed and covers seven ambitions. 1. Support services are designed and delivered to support all people with a physical disability to live the life they choose, have control, make informed choices, and have support to communicate this when needed at every stage of their lives 2. People with a physical disability can participate fully in education and paid employment, enabling their talent and abilities to enrich the Borders. People with a physical disability are supported through transitions in their lives e.g., from school to work. 3. People with a physical disability can live life to the full in their homes and communities with housing designed and adapted to meet their needs 4. People with a physical disability can live life to the full in their communities with transport designed and adapted to enable people with a physical disability to participate as full and equal citizens 5. People with a physical disability are confident their rights will be protected and will receive fair treatment. 6. People with a physical disability are involved in shaping their lives and the decisions that impact upon them. 7. Unpaid carers of people with physical disabilities and long-term conditions are acknowledged and supported to recognise their rights as a carer. The implementation plan is currently under review. Whilst the ambitions will remain relevant these will be prioritised to ensure that post COVID the implementation plan and its aspirations continue to meet the needs of the communities and our employees. **Education Children Services Specific Initiatives** - Promote Togetherall, our online Mental Health support for young adults, staff and parents - Increase the number of Mental Health First Aiders across education - Continue to offer a range of professional learning programmes across a number of Mental Health themes (including Trauma informed practices, Seasons For Growth and Sleep Scotland) - Development of an Education Neurodiversity Strategy which aims to raise awareness and understanding, promoting acceptance and tolerance across all establishments. - Offer a comprehensive range of professional learning programmes across Neurodiversity themes (including SCERTS training and the LEANS project)

WHAT WE SAID	WHAT WE DID
	Sex As mentioned previously in this report we are standardising job descriptions and job adverts. This includes the language that is used that may discourage people from applying for roles leading to organisational segregation with roles historically associated with a particular sex. Research has found in job descriptions that: • Some words are sex biased. • Women are less likely to identify with jobs with words that are stereotypically masculine. • Jargon deters some groups of candidates from applying. There has been an improvement in these sex typical roles, but this initiative should help overcome this as a barrier. Additional initiatives to reduce sex stereotyping that are still being developed in partnership with schools, colleges and universities include: • Schools tackling sex stereotyping • Targeted work placements/taster sessions to groups underrepresented. • Promoting career opportunities in particular roles in conjunction with the Council's new career pathways initiative. • Engaging with colleges to encourage uptake in particular areas of service delivery. **Age** Scottish Borders Council needs to have a more balanced age profile in the future and will have to be proactive in taking steps to tackle the emerging issues at both ends of the workforce age spectrum. However, as detailed throughout this report initiatives have been implemented and show an improvement in the Council's age profile. Modern Apprentice places and positive destinations have remained steady (see section 2 above for full explanation of initiatives) and new occupational areas with SVQ qualifications suitable for the needs of future service delivery are continually being reviewed. Creation and implementation of career pathways, traineeship schemes, people and succession planning to identify talent, skills, and knowledge and how they can be retained (see section 1 above for full explanation of initiatives).

APPENDIX 1

The Council's Operating Model will be a key driver of the evolving strategic people plan and it is divided into 9 Workstreams:

- Commissioning
- Customer & Communities
- Data
- Digital
- Financial & Environmental Sustainability
- People - Culture
- People - Structure
- Process Re-Design
- Property/Estates

Although 2 of the workstreams are "People" specific staff will be impacted across all the 9 workstreams. The table below illustrates the vision for each of the workstreams.

	Workstream	Vision/Aims
1	**Commissioning**	**The Vision:** - A catalyst for positive change, innovation, and excellence in the delivery of citizen-centric public services. - Create a commissioning framework driven by a deep understanding of our community's diverse needs and aspirations. - Ensure that every pound spent results in the highest possible value for our residents, fostering well-being, equity, and sustainability – building wealth across the region through supply chain and benefit realisation. - To envision a transparent, collaborative, and outcome-focused approach, where partnership working with service providers and stakeholders is at the core of our decision-making. - To develop a clear-documented understanding of what SBC needs. - A continuous performance management cycle. - Understand the benefits of joining up with other partners to commission a service. - Ensure staff understand what commissioning means and the different models through training and good practice.
2	**Customer & Communities**	**The Vision:** - Align the new operating model & associated processes with the needs and priorities of customers and communities. - Understand real-time customer insights to drive strategic planning, daily operations, and locality action. - Remove barriers to empower communities & individuals. - Provide both digital technology & face to face contact/support. - Continue developing DCA programme. - Provide customers with an updated/user friendly website and sufficient reporting tools. - Align customer engagement sessions – whole of SBC, not department specific. - Provide customers with a one stop shop and not the "post-box scenario." - Change the culture so that everyone recognises their role in shaping/liaising with customers & communities. - Understand and respond to communities' needs and aspirations.

	Workstream	Vision/Aims
		• Being an enabler to help communities. • Stop annoying people. • Provide communities with feedback and be proactive with comms to them. • Involve communities from the start not after plans are underway. • Agree how SBC will work with communities in the future – what model east/west, localities etc.
3	**Data**	**The Vision:** • Currently being developed. Vision still being drafted as per the stakeholder sessions occurring & viva engage questionnaire.
4	**Digital**	**The Vision:** • Define, become, and communicate that SBC is the UK's first smart connected rural region by Digitally connecting all Borders communities. • Embrace the best opportunities for SBC, including AI (Artificial Intelligence). • Support innovation. • Empower a flexible workforce. • Advance truly integrated partnership working. • Provide solutions to allow greener, low carbon ways for a sustainable future. • Ensure infrastructure is digitally equipped. • Design a platform which highlights all digital projects. • Utilise external funding opportunities and Borders-wide connectivity initialisation. • Ensure staff, communities, businesses understand digital and can develop their skills further, utilise the new systems team to help development. • Highlight what digital innovation SBC already has in place to help partners. • Transform Service Delivery. • Transform customer led service delivery. • Digital inclusion
5	**Financial and Environmental Sustainability**	**The Vision:** • Continue to develop our long-term financial strategy. • Developing a Council Tax Strategy with the aim of bringing SBC in line with Scotland average. • Optimising budgetary processes and resource allocation to ensure long-term financial stability. • Identify cost-saving opportunities and revenue-generation strategies. • Attract inward investment through private sector companies. • Improve financial transparency and accountability. • Identify & utilise external funding opportunities. • Understand any windfarm/solar opportunities for revenue generation. • Developing community choices to engaging communities in the Council budget at a local level.
6	**People – Culture**	**The Vision:** • To develop an exceptional organisational can-do culture where everyone feels deeply valued, empowered, and inspired to deliver excellence each day. It thrives on the following principles: • Diversity, equity, inclusion, personal growth and continuous learning. • Open and honest communication and collaboration across services. • Removing the need to micro-manage staff and instead empowering them to be innovative and creative.

Workstream	Vision/Aims
	• Trust and leadership by example at all levels. • Pride in SBC services, with a focus on customer & community outcomes. • Employees understanding the values of SBC in line with the competency framework. • SBC has one culture, whilst recognising that services may need to interpret this differently to each other. • Removing the "pass the buck" culture both internally and externally thereby excelling in customer service. • Recognising the achievements of employees and developing a workplace where mistakes are not to be feared but accepted as part of evolving and learning. • Ensuring new employees feel they work for SBC (not a specific department) through a one team approach. • Empowering staff to deal with changes. 7 People
7 People – Structure	**The Vision:** • We want to design and develop a workforce and services that facilitate excellence in everything SBC does – shaped by and to achieve the following Operating Model objectives: • SBC is an Employer of Choice with tangible career pathways & employee benefits. • There is fluid cross-service support & collaboration across services providing a better customer and community experience and robust business continuity. • Support staff development & facilitate statutory obligations. • Provide vocational, educational and personal development opportunities across all departments and roles with an emphasis on delivering outcomes. • Streamline management structures across departments and remove "layers" that may not be required. Empower staff with knowledge, experience, initiative and encourage ownership. • Develop standardised role descriptions that allow fluid movement between roles and remove silos of teams. Thus, providing better People Planning and safeguarding SBC's future with an ageing workforce. • Engage with unions to understand and resolve any concerns employees may have. • Refresh the current competency framework. • Create an induction process which results in individuals feeling they are part of SBC not a specific department.
8 Process Re-design	**The Vision:** • Revolutionise the way we operate by creating a more efficient, responsive, and citizen-centric organisation. • Be pioneers in embracing cutting-edge technology and data-driven insights to streamline our processes, eliminate bottlenecks & silos, and to reduce bureaucracy. • Empower our employees to become process innovators, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration. • Create a future where the delivery of SBC services is not only cost-effective but also agile and tailored to the unique needs of customers, responding to the ever-changing world and technology. • Develop an internal team of process re-engineers to upskill staff, provide career progression and future proof SBC. • Break down barriers for change – look at what other areas are using, QR codes/ cashless. • Remove "post-box scenarios" where something is passed through several hands and encourage staff to look at the whole picture not just their "part." Ensure change is written in a way that is understandable by staff and not in bureaucratic jargon.

	Workstream	Vision/Aims
9	**Property/Estates**	**The Vision:** • Operate an efficient, fit-for-purpose, sustainable estate, that is appropriately sized and located to meet the needs of our communities and their strong identities, with digitally enabled working environments that can be effectively managed, and which supports the Council Plan through the delivery of truly joined up services, including: • An estate of vibrant assets that serve as the cornerstone of our community's well-being and prosperity. • SBC properties not only being a physical structure but service touchpoints of innovation, inclusivity, and community engagement for SBC and its local partners. • Developing principles of responsible stewardship, with a focus on the needs of our residents, fostering economic growth, and safeguarding our environment. Equipping the estate with efficient digital tools to enable the continuation of a digital future.