

A background image showing the profiles of three people's faces. The faces are semi-transparent and overlaid with a horizontal band of color that transitions from yellow on the left to purple on the right. The central figure is a man with short dark hair, looking slightly to the left. To his left is a woman with reddish hair, and to his right is a woman with dark hair wearing sunglasses. The overall image has a soft, ethereal quality.

PEOPLE STRATEGY 2009-2012



CONTENTS

1 Why do we need a people strategy?5

2 How does the strategy fit with the Strategic Plan and the 'Way We Work'?9

3 Priority areas and outcomes11

4 Communicating the strategy, sharing the ambition18

5 Evaluation and review18



OUR AMBITION

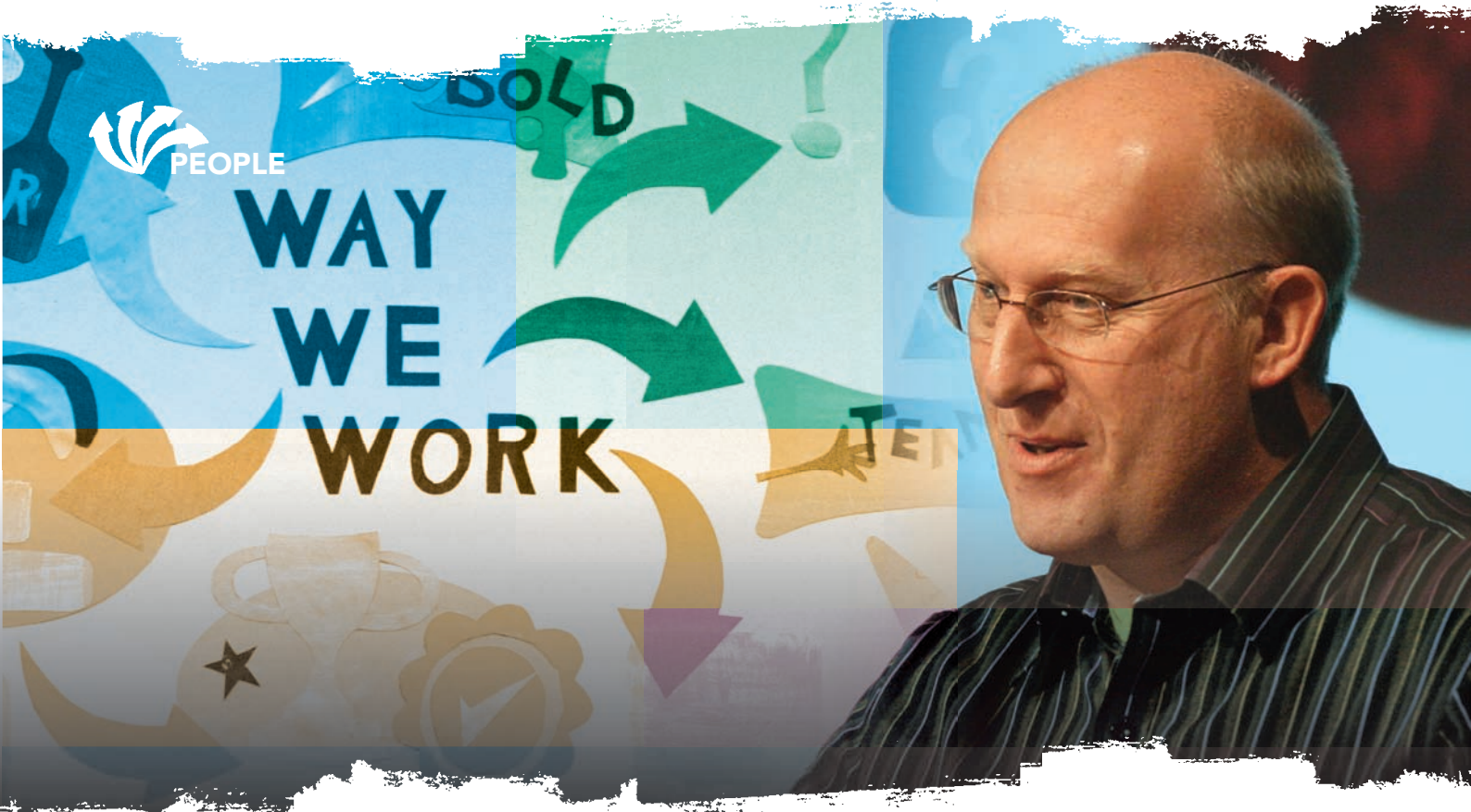
"I believe Colchester Borough Council is an ambitious and exciting place to work. We are renowned for having vision about our place and our organisation and turning that vision into a reality. We want to be the best we can be and an organisation that sets the agenda, leads the way and is ready to take on new challenges.

Our change programme 'Way We Work' provides the opportunity for a very different picture of the organisation and the 'Way We Work' in the future. One that has services truly designed and delivered around our customers needs; has our people working in a whole variety of ways supported by the latest technology which allows the flexible delivery of services; and where excellent performance is encouraged, supported and rewarded.

This vision comes with significant challenges for us, the people who work here and for our Councillors to perform at a consistently high level and do more for our customers. (These customers include the people who live in, work in and visit Colchester). We need to perform in the most efficient and effective way possible and to use the services we provide to transform lives and behaviour for a better quality of life for all. A tall order I know but one I also know you are prepared to take on.

I am clear that if you are to give of your best you will need to be supported, developed and given opportunities to make sure we can make 'Colchester a place where people want to live, work and visit'.

Adrian Pritchard
Chief Executive



OUR PEOPLE VISION – A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

A great place to work ...

Some of our people say these things about working for the council – we want most of our people to say these things.

"My initial experiences here have surpassed any other organisation I have worked for"

"Even before you start, the way the recruitment process works encourages you to raise your game"

I know I have the support of my manager and the council as a whole"

I am given the freedom within clearly defined boundaries to develop and improve council services. The lead from the senior members of staff is towards departments working more closely together to achieve benefits for everyone."

"Managers listen to what you have to say and colleagues support each other"

"Has a good reputation and is ambitious. Streets ahead of other councils in terms of attitude and being positive."

Flexible working hours. Support from colleagues and other members of staff. Commitment to environmentally friendly policies and practices. Opportunities for learning. Opportunities for career development. Working for an organisation that is accountable. Working for an organisation which has been recognised as innovative and forward thinking."

"A culture of "can do" which has been fostered by the management of the organisation. A "freedom" to work on one's own initiative within the parameters set by the strategic direction. A "no blame" culture which builds confidence. A strong desire to do the best for our customers within the resources available."

There is a sense of achievement when you are complimented after doing a good job and the support and encouragement is endless. The best thing is the opportunities, when you are good at your job the opportunities are endless they recognise it and there is no two ways about it. This is an organisation I am working with and I am really proud to be associated with it."

"I am allowed to reach my ultimate goal in my own way; time and using means that I feel are appropriate and work for me. I am made to feel a worthwhile, trusted and respected member of this staff - not only my direct manager but by the senior management team and organisation head. Praise for good work flows freely from my manager, senior management team and organisation head. In the department I work in there is a deep sense of respect for each team member with help and advice freely and willingly given by all members."

Comments taken from CBC Employee Survey 2007 – What makes the Council a great place to work and Investors in People assessment 2008

1 WHY DO WE NEED A PEOPLE STRATEGY?

We want to continue to be a high performing Council with motivated employees who are proud to work here and make a difference to people's lives. We need to use our resources wisely to become known as a great employer where we draw on and develop the talent and skills we have in the organisation to be even better than we are in everything that we do. Our core value relating to our people is;

'Encourage and develop our people to excel at what they do, have a can do approach, be ambitious, innovative and confident to lead the way.'

The Council has set out its vision for a very different future where service delivery will be more adaptable and flexible to customers needs and many of our people will carry out their work in a different way. This strategy is designed to keep us focussed on motivating our people to maintain high levels of performance and give our customers an excellent experience of our services as we move into this future.

1.1 High performing organisations¹

High performing organisations have been found to have many key characteristics which fall into three main areas;

- a. High levels of employee involvement and engagement
- b. Good people management practices – sophisticated recruitment practices, performance appraisals, work design and coaching
- c. Reward and commitment practices – financial rewards, family friendly policies, flexible working practices

Following our recent Investors in People assessment in December 2008, the assessor had this to say about our organisation:

"When it comes to people management Colchester Borough Council is one of two outstanding Borough Councils I have visited. Strategies are comprehensively and transparently incorporated with exceptional employee involvement and engagement. People are well trained and well utilised throughout the organisation. Effective leadership has been a focus for many years and there are many fantastic examples of people moving on in the organisation with the help of the encouragement, investment and recognition. "

Clare Laidler
Investors in People Assessor
December 2008

1.2 Where are we now?

This council delivers many vital public services to the residents of Colchester borough. We depend on our people to deliver these services in a way that meets the needs and growing expectations of the customer.

¹ DTI study 'High Performance Work Practices' 2007

It is what our people do and say on a daily basis that makes a difference to the experience our Customers have of the Council and the borough.

We employ over 1000 people in a wide variety of roles and spend approximately £24.5 million (29% of the Council's gross spend) on salary and people related costs each year. We also employ around 150 casual employees.

We should be really proud of our organisation and the excellent work we do is recognised by many; "The way that Colchester Borough Council is run and the delivery of its services is excellent" was the verdict of the Audit Commission in 2004.

This is an ambitious and outward looking Council which makes it a dynamic and exciting place to work but this brings with it significant challenges for all of us. For example:

- Our population growth exceeds the national average and Colchester is now the largest and fastest growing district in Essex which places additional demand for services on the Council.
- As a key community leader the Council works closely with public, private, voluntary and community partners which brings both opportunities and challenges as we seek to involve our communities and partners in the future development of the area and the delivery of services.
- Working in partnership with others such as our museum partnership with Ipswich and our joint parking work with Braintree DC and Uttlesford DC will bring real opportunities to learn and develop as a Council and real challenges to adapt, change and embrace new ways of working.

1.2.1 Employee involvement and engagement

You told us through the Best Councils survey (July 2008) that we have fair levels of employee engagement but there is considerable room for improvement. Our Investors in People assessment in December 2008 showed that we are making progress in this area.

Also through the Best Councils survey you told us that leadership and communication from our Senior Management team needs to be stronger and clearer, again improvement was clear from our Investors in People assessment. Positive examples of senior management team attempting to communicate effectively and openly through developing new and creative ways of being visible and providing people with opportunities for meeting with them were given.

Using the Best Companies model of engagement we know that we have good team working taking place and everyone interviewed for Investors in People felt they had the opportunity to share ideas and suggest areas for development.

1.2.2 Good people management practices

In being awarded Investors in People status for the whole council in December 2008 we were given positive feedback on the development of our people management practices. In particular we were praised for our strong linkage made between strategy and people planning, evidence proved we do this at an early stage rather than as an after thought. People are at the heart of considerations. We want to continue this improvement path.

We were however, alerted to the fact that there are some examples where the definition of management effectiveness is still rather loose and some managers do not seem to have any dialogue about management effectiveness and how they could develop to improve.

1.2.3 Flexibility and commitment

We have a very loyal workforce with many colleagues having worked for the Council for many years. We also remain a popular employer with considerable interest in the posts we advertise. For many years we have been introducing flexibility into the way our people work and this is being built on in our Flexible Working strand of Way We Work.

The aim of this strategy is to help us build on some firm foundations and continue to develop as a high performing, innovative Council that is recognised as a great place to work.

1.3 Diversity

We recognise that equal treatment and positive action are necessary to counteract discrimination. We are committed to ensuring fairness and equality of access to employment opportunities. We recognise the value of a diverse workforce in which people from differing backgrounds with different skills and abilities can bring new ideas to enable us to deliver high quality services that reflect the needs of our diverse communities.

We remain committed to making sure diversity is embedded into all our policies and procedures. We constantly review and update our practices to ensure that we continue to comply with employment legislation and reflect Equality and Diversity best practice.

The growing diversity of our customers requires us to have a better understanding of how this translates into customer needs. This is reflected in Phase 4 of the Customer Excellence Strategy (2009/2011) in the stream of work entitled customer insight.

In March 2009 we achieved level 3 of Equality Standard. During our assessment the IDeA highlighted a number of strengths relating to staff, employment and training at Colchester Borough Council:

- staff professional, enthusiastic and committed
- staff at all levels committed to deliver services of excellence – “not doing it for a tick in the box”; “want to do the right thing”
- external recognition as a good employer with Investor in People re-accreditation
- equality and diversity training for all staff and Members
- 50/50 gender balance in SMT

1.4 Local government – The place to be, the place to work

(Local Government workforce strategy 2007)

Our People Strategy also has a close fit with the national strategy priority areas.

- **organisational development** – building workforce support for new structures and ways of working
- **leadership and management development** – developing visionary and ambitious leadership, which makes the best use of the political and managerial role, in a partnership context
- **skills** – developing skills and knowledge in an innovative, high performance, multi-agency context
- **recruitment and retention** – working with partners to address current and future skill shortages, promoting careers, developing talent and addressing diversity issues
- **pay and reward** – reviewing systems to ensure they reflect new structures and priorities and reinforce high performance

2 HOW DOES THE STRATEGY FIT WITH THE STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE 'WAY WE WORK'?



Our strategic vision is to be a place where people want to live, work and visit, this is what we are all ultimately here to achieve. Success will make Colchester the place of choice for visitors and residents – a prosperous borough with vibrant and empowered communities and high regard for the wellbeing of the environment. Way We Work is a programme to help us manage the process of change that will keep us all moving toward the vision.

We all have a contribution to make in our services, teams and as individuals. We will continue to build on our success by leading the way, staying ahead of the game and always looking to improve. We will be efficient, accessible and customer focussed. The organisation will be an employer of choice and enjoy an excellent reputation as a great place to work.

Our values sum up each strand;

- 'Encourage and develop our people to excel at what they do, have a can do approach, be ambitious, innovative and confident to lead the way.' **(WWW People)**
- 'Embrace flexibility in our thinking and behaviours to make best use of technology and new ways of working.' **(WWW Flexible Working)**

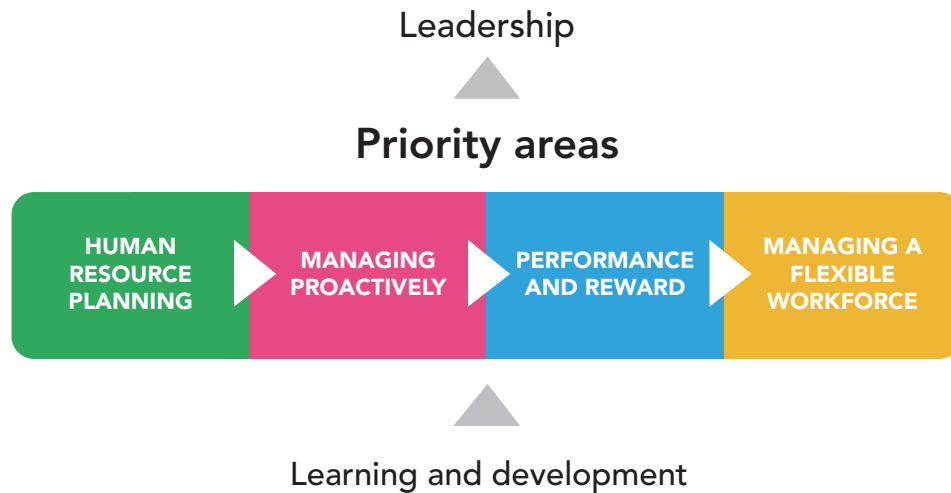
- 'Place customers at the heart of what we do with clear performance standards driven by the changing needs and expectations of our customers to deliver an excellent service.' (**WWW Customer Excellence**)
- 'Take every opportunity to make Colchester full of places where people want to live, learn, work and visit.' (**WWW Place Shaping**)

The Way We Work programme has some key outcomes and the important ones for the People Strategy to contribute to are;

- recognition that work is something you do not somewhere you go – we are an outcome based organisation
- Good work is rewarded and poor work is addressed
- Our staff and members are equipped with the skills, tools and support to do the best job.

3 PRIORITY AREAS AND OUTCOMES

To make the aims of this strategy a reality will require us to be clear about our priorities and how we are going to deliver them. This strategy will focus on 4 priority areas for the delivery of 'Way We Work' and how we support them with effective human resource planning and the development of the organisation.



Leadership

To drive this People Strategy forward within the Council will require strong leadership, clarity of vision and purpose from the Senior Management Team and Cabinet. All of our managers need to feel confident to lead its implementation in their teams and to have determination, energy and commitment to bring about success.

This leadership will be demonstrated in many ways;

- **Purpose** – through Way We Work we will be clear about our vision for how the organisation will develop over the next few years
- **Risk** - We will encourage people to take risks to encourage innovation and change without blame if things do not work out quite as intended.
- **Skills** - We will develop the leadership skills and confidence of our managers through a programme of leadership days and Colchester Learning Managers so they are able to fully contribute to and lead the development of the organisation through significant change.
- **Listening** – we will encourage people to share their perceptions of what needs to be done, to co-operate on tasks and to work collaboratively rather than in isolation
- **Creating a shared culture** – one that our people can engage with and sign up to

3.1 PRIORITY 1: HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING

3.1.1 Resourcing the Council

Our people are key to the Council's success. Through effective, long term human resource planning we can ensure the Council employs the right number of people with the right skills to deliver the Council's vision and services.

The key to effective resourcing will be to introduce a corporate approach to work force planning with a clear alignment to the Council's priorities driven by senior managers. We will embed workforce planning within service and financial planning by considering future needs in relation to skills, staff recruitment and retention on a corporate level.

For the Council, effective human resource planning will:

- Support the development and maintenance of a diverse workforce
- Enhance service delivery through the employment of committed and skilled staff;
- Provide value for money by minimising expensive interim solutions and costs associated with high turnover, sickness absence and vacancies;
- Ensure replacements are available internally to fill vacancies saving recruitment costs
- Establish a flexible workforce which can better adapt to the restructuring and reduction and expansion of its workforce.

3.1.2 Key actions (2009 – 2012)

- a) Linking workforce strategies to wider strategic objectives by establishing a long term planning approach which is closely integrated to financial and service planning **(July 2009)**
- b) Development of HR resource plans to support individual service plans **(1st versions by May 2009)**
- c) Whole scale review of our approach to recruitment to assess if it is effective, investment made in the right place and our practices are up to date. This will include where we need to enhance our selection processes and equip our managers to appoint the right people **(April 2009 for review – March 2010 for completion of implementation)**
- d) Establishment of a robust succession planning framework which identifies and develops the talent within the organisation to become the managers and leaders of the future **(December 2009)**
- e) Development of a flexible workforce with core, transferable skills that can be quickly re-deployed to respond to new priorities, turnover and decreases in workloads.

3.1.3 Key outcomes/success/difference

- a) Level of successful recruitment (first attempt) increased from 73.5% to 85% by 2009/10
- b) Staff turnover reduced from 2.9% to 1.5%
- c) Recruitment and interim staffing costs reduced
- d) Internal movement and promotions within the organisation increased
- e) Staff satisfaction with development opportunities increased (employee survey)

3.1.4 Learning and development

The council remains very committed to investing in the development of its people and re-secured Investors in People for the whole organisation in December 2008. The continuing focus on improved performance and the need to work smarter to make resources go as far as possible will require further planning, some investment and new skills.

The Colchester Learning Academy provides a framework for learning and development but needs to be reviewed in terms of its effectiveness and use by the organisation. Providing a framework within the Academy for the delivery of the Council's Customer Excellence expectations to new employees and councillors is also a priority.

During 2007/8 the council lead a project with two other authorities to identify an improved approach to Councillor development (funded by BCE) The relevant outcomes and learning from this project will need to become a part of the Learning and Development Strategy for the organisation.

3.1.5 Key actions (2009 – 2012)

- a) Development of the Learning and Development strategy for the organisation and Councillors underpinning the Way We Work Programme and linking into Personal Development Plan information from services **(June 2009)**
- b) Implementation of a senior management leadership programme **(March 2010)**
- c) Ensuring equal access to learning and development opportunities for front line staff **(ongoing)**
- d) Establishing a coaching culture within the Council through a coaching development programme for managers **(December 2009)**
- e) Building on our Colchester Learning Managers programme through the development and delivery of a new Leadership programme linked to a succession planning framework **(March 2010)**

² Building Capacity East

- f) Review and re-launch of Colchester Learning Academy as a coordinated mechanism to deliver a learning and development programme for the organisation. Ensure access to these opportunities for all our people **(September 2009)**
- g) Develop our understanding of our key customer groups, their knowledge and skills and how we can communicate effectively; taking into account different learning styles and key statistics that apply to customer groups as part of our customer journey work **(March 2010)**
- h) Identification of customer excellence learning and development needs and inclusion in the overall strategy (previously lead by 'Enhancing your skills' group, WWW Customer Excellence) **(ongoing)**
- i) Enhancing creativity and innovation through empowerment, skills development, learning from each other and drawing on expertise from outside **(ongoing)**
- j) Carry out assessment of basic skills and develop a strategy with LSC (Train to Gain) to improve basic skills across the council **(September 2009)**

3.1.6 Key outcomes/success/difference

- Skills levels enhanced
- % of employees receiving formal learning and development increased (performance dashboard)
- Staff satisfaction with learning and development opportunities provided improved (employee survey)
- Investors in People re-accreditation in December 2008 achieved
- Basic skills levels raised to at least level 2 across the organisation
- Access to learning and development opportunities for all Councillors improved
- Increase participation in the ICS awards scheme to improve customer excellence and employee development
- Political Awareness Training to be rolled out to the organisation
- Customer Excellence Training to be enhanced and continued

3.2 PRIORITY 2: MANAGING PROACTIVELY

3.2.1 What does this priority mean?

Equipping and supporting our managers at all levels in the organisation to manage effectively and proactively is a current priority. How our people manage and experience management has a direct impact on motivation, performance, attendance, customer satisfaction and ultimately the productivity and reputation of the Council. We were praised during our recent Investors in People assessment for the impressive examples that were given of individual managers being seen as role models which brings the best out in people and that their approaches rub off on others.

It is also critical that our managers are enabled to lead the organisational changes of Way We Work within their teams and are equipped with the information, understanding and ability to manage this period of significant change effectively.

In addition managers need to understand what being a manager means in terms of their accountabilities and collective responsibility for delivering not only their day to day operational responsibilities but also for driving organisational change within their teams.

3.2.2 Key actions (2009 – 2012)

- a) Clear accountabilities for all managers with core management objectives and focus on implementing the change programme **(May 2009)**
- b) Establish and embed a 'managers network' to clarify the expectations of managers in the Council, enable the sharing of information and best practice, provide support, increase levels of contact, enable pre discussion on key changes, share strategies on managing change effectively etc. **(Ongoing)**
- c) Ensure the widespread use of Colchester Learning Managers Programme as a management tool to raise management competencies and skills especially in the management of change **(Ongoing)**
- d) Develop the coaching skills of our managers working with the HR Business Partners to identify areas for improvement **(Ongoing)**
- e) Continue to effectively manage sickness absence, using data, policies and HR Business partners for advice and consistency **(Ongoing)**
- f) Implement the wellbeing strategy to promote healthy living and raise awareness and address issues of health, safety and wellbeing **(Ongoing)**

3.2.3 Key outcomes/success/difference

- Demonstrate effective longer term planning and ability to adapt to changing priorities
- Managers actively support, encourage and develop teams and individuals (employee survey)
- Maintain IIP accreditation in 2011
- Improved productivity and performance levels (performance dashboard)
- High levels of staff satisfaction with management (employee survey)
- High levels of staff engagement (employee survey)
- Reduced number of grievances (performance dashboard)

3.3 PRIORITY 3: PERFORMANCE AND REWARD

3.3.1 What does this priority mean?

We will introduce a consistent approach to managing performance so everyone is clear what is expected of them and how they should carry out their work. In some areas of the Council performance management is truly embedded and delivering results and in others it is not clear leaving some people unsure of what their priorities are and what is expected of them. The introduction of a performance management system in 2007 with a commitment to all employees to have SMART objectives and personal development plans is intended to improve the organisations overall approach. Depending on the consultation process, the next step is to secure a link to individuals reward to encourage high performance and recognise individual and team contributions.

3.3.2 Key actions

- a) Continue to monitor and support the performance management system throughout the Council (Ongoing)
- b) Evaluate the implementation and make recommendations for improvement for the 2009/10 performance year (June 2009)
- c) Agree the preferred approach to linking performance to reward and the necessary changes to terms and conditions (September 2009)
- d) Implement the reward phase (2010)

3.3.3 Key outcomes/success/difference

- a) People clear of what is expected of them and motivated to deliver (employee survey)
- b) High performing organisation – consistently adding value and delivering “more for less” (customer feedback)
- c) Productivity increased - Services delivering all aspects of service plans. (Performance Dashboard)
- d) Staff recognised for individual and team contribution and share in the organisation’s success (awards)

3.4 PRIORITY 4: MANAGING A FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE

3.4.1 What does this priority mean?

The Flexible Working strand of Way We Work presents some really exciting opportunities for the Council to transform the way it designs and delivers services to its customers. It also provides a range of opportunities for our people to work in a way that makes more sense and increases the flexibility around how we work. The challenge for our managers will be to realise the benefits of the opportunities for both our customers and our people and manage a significant change in the way people approach their work from 'work is somewhere you go' to 'work is something you do'. In addition the increasing use of technology in the way we run our business means we need to ensure the ICT skills of all our people are developed and maintained.

3.4.2 Key actions (2009 – 2012)

- a) Identify the key management challenges of managing a flexible workforce including leading the cultural change and managing remote workers and equip managers to tackle them effectively **(Ongoing)**
- b) Support the development and delivery of an ICT skills development programme for the whole organisation including our Councillors (lead by WWW Flexible Working) **(Completed by December 2009)**
- c) Ensure our people are skilled, supported and trusted to perform in a flexible working environment **(Ongoing)**
- d) Develop a broad ranging role profiles to enable ease of movement of people between roles and secondments for personal development and to meet changing work priorities **(September 2009)**

3.4.3 Key outcomes/success/difference

- a) Customer feedback on the customer experience continues to rise with the use of various methods including Touchstone, GovMetric, The Place Survey, NI14 and service lead surveys
- b) ICT skills improved (No.s attending training)
- c) Staff feedback on work life balance is good. (employee survey)
- d) Transition between different working arrangements managed effectively (performance maintained, turnover levels stable, staff engagement etc)
- e) Productivity increased through realising efficiencies (performance dashboard)
- f) Development of flexible working practices support diversity strategy (performance dashboard)

4 COMMUNICATING THE STRATEGY, SHARING THE AMBITION

As part of the Way We Work programme the ambitions in this strategy present some real challenges for the People in the organisation to aim high and be innovative. It will be critical to make sure our people and in particular our managers are able to influence how the strategy is implemented. Already the work with managers undertaken to develop the performance management system has been of significant value and this approach needs to be continued. Also the managers network will enable two way conversations to take place (real or virtual) to make sure all managers can contribute and are also fully informed of any changes they need to lead in their teams. In addition using the already established Council magazine 'One' to communicate the progress of Way We Work with the wider organisation will share information and prompt conversations all over the Council.

5 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The four priority areas identified in the People Strategy will be developed into action plans with SMART objectives with resource and risk implications outlined. Progress against the action plans will be reported to Senior Management team via the WWW People steering group.

It is critical that the People Strategy remains a 'living' strategy that can respond to emerging issues and changes in circumstances to help to keep the organisation ahead of the game.

The Performance Dashboard as monitored by the Performance Management Board will have key measures in the People Quadrant around;

- Organisational Movement
- Diversity
- Sickness
- Performance (People)
- Learning and Development