

# PPMA Awards Submission for Transforming the Working Environment: Worcestershire County Council's Approach to Talent Management

## Summary

With no sign to the end of austerity and local authorities being asked to deliver better with less, being clear on the future capacity and capability of the workforce is becoming even more important. As such ensuring we have a talented, motivated workforce who are engaged and enabled to be the best they can be, each and every day, is one of the top priorities for Worcestershire County Council (WCC).

In November 2015, Cabinet and our Strategic Leadership Team agreed to a number of workforce 2020 principles including a Talent Management Framework which delivers strong succession planning at all management levels and reinforces our Corporate Values and desired behaviours.

In order to implement these principles and deliver the associated outcomes we have combined the **Capacity**; (e.g. size and shape of the authority, critical role identification, succession management), it's **Capability** (e.g. leadership development and performance management) and its **Culture** which includes our Environmental Factors (e.g. innovative spaces; staff engagement; total reward) to build our **Workforce Effectiveness Framework (WEF)**, which is shaping how we acquire, develop and retain a world-class workforce fit for 2020 Worcestershire (see Appendix 1 Diagram A).

One of the many successful components of this Framework is our approach to **Talent Management**. We have developed an approach to identify, develop and deploy our talent and we use this to inform our succession management.

All authorities are fishing in an ever-decreasing pool of traditional local government roles, especially within adult and children's services, and we are being asked to recruit to and develop roles previously closer aligned to the private sector. Traditional portfolios are getting bigger with senior management positions becoming broader, less specialised and requiring individuals who can excel in leadership, innovation and networking.

In response to this WCC has recognised the value of investing in our existing workforce, transforming our working environment to exploit the 'grow your own' philosophy for the benefit of both the employee and the organisation.

Talent is defined in WCC as those employees who will be future leaders, or those who have the ability to fill critical roles, to ensure we can achieve our vision and strategic priorities for Worcestershire.

Our approach ensures identification of the potential of employees and best performers and once identified, the potential is then assessed. Talent mapping processes are used to identify those employees where potential is evidenced, in order to develop and stretch this potential. By applying this method systematically it ensures a pool of diverse future leaders and key professional/specialist employees who can be developed further to make the best of their abilities, experience and drive and ultimately make lives better for our Worcestershire residents.

There are also known 'hotspots' within WCC due to national and regional labour market conditions. The trend nationally is that retention and recruitment of professional and technical employees is a key concern as this market becomes more competitive. Where these pressures are identified, strategies are put in place through the talent programme to reduce these risks and enable effective resource supply through talent management; identifying those employees with the potential to develop to the required levels.

This year, access to our 'Aspiring Talent' programme (1st level management) was limited to Social Workers within Adult's and Children's Services.

The system we have deployed to manage our talent allows us to:

1. Identify, select, develop and retain those identified as High Potential. This is a relatively small group of individuals whose absence would severely affect the organisation. They are people who inspire others to achieve outstanding results and who role model the values and management and leadership competencies of WCC.
2. Identify and develop successors to roles identified as critical/key to current and future success.
3. Classify and inform how best to invest in all employees based on their potential to add value to the organisation; which in turn enables reduced turnover in key groups and improves morale and performance.

WCC is also well placed to engage with young people to help them better understand the opportunities and breadth of careers available with the council through work placements; 'growing our own' through the expertise we offer Worcestershire via apprenticeships; investing in graduates (focusing on our areas of skills shortage); identifying and developing internal talent and in turn increasing engagement and improving retention.

We manage our succession planning via our **Talent Pipelines** (see Appendix 1 Diagram B). Our talent boards, which operate as a cross organisational body, are formed and aligned to focus on our talent pipelines. They are used to understand the alignment of the workforce to future business needs and the identification and career planning for High Potential employees. They provide open challenge on upcoming vacancies, promotions, assignments and succession plans as well as supporting placement of employees to give development stretch in line with development needs

### **Monitoring Progress & Success**

The **Workforce Effectiveness Board** (Chief Executive and Directors) provides overall direction and monitoring of delivery against the WEF (**Capacity, Capability and Environment**), the talent strategies and their performance, talent pipelines and critical role succession. The Board meets every 6 weeks and is also responsible for talent and succession management for Director level positions and overall employer brand-related decisions.

Wherever we look we have a number of firsts; our first WCC graduates, first conversion from graduate to permanent role, first placements within private sector organisations such as Worcester Bosch, first talent pool cohorts and our first regular whole organisation 'strategic focus' on workforce strategy and direction.

Since the inception of the WEF and our approach to Talent, we have seen staff retention improve by 15.8%. Voluntary resignations have reduced by 13.8% and our frontline manager turnover has reduced by 13.2%. Our staff survey has shown that staff engagement has improved by 23% since the inception of the Talent Management Programme.

We have recently appointed an Assistant Director, who was tempted away from their organisation on the basis that we are one of the only local authorities to have an overt talent programme with a formalised career pathway into a Director role.

Of the 3 'Top Talent' (future Heads of Service /Assistant Directors), 2 are currently acting up into AD roles (previously interims would have been used which would have cost the organisation more). The third is now a permanent member of the Directorate Leadership Team reporting in to the Director.

There have also been a number of unintended benefits from our approach to Talent, the thorough and collaborative approach to talent identification has highlighted the hot spot areas where we have limited talent already in the pipelines. It has also shown where we have single points of failure across the organisation and immediate remedial action has been put in place to resolve those issues.

Since the inception of our WEF, in particular the approach to Talent Management, our journey has not been straightforward. There has been heated debate, defiance, confusion and inexperience. However, in times of serious budget constraints, continuous change and public reform, WCC believes we have laid the foundations to enable people to be the best they can be every single day. We have only just started our journey, however through our WEF, we believe the focus and effort is in the right place and we are well on our way to creating our Worldclass 2020 workforce.

# Appendix 1

Diagram A

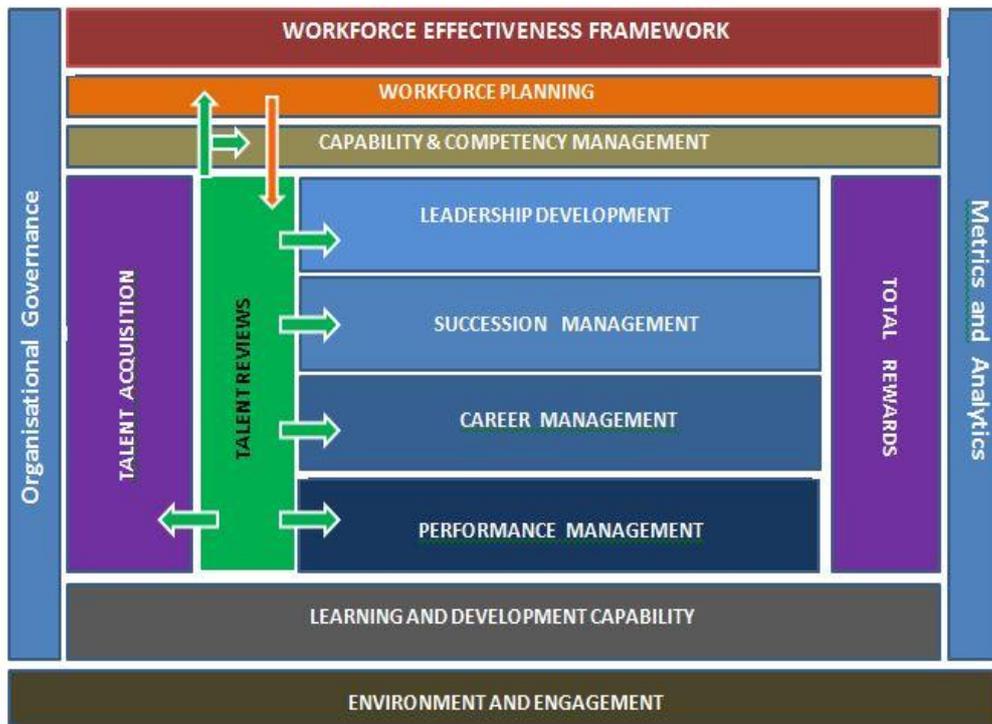


Diagram B

