

PPMA EY Research

Shaping the future for people
working in Local Authorities



The better the question. The better the answer. The better the world works.



EY

Building a better
working world



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Agenda

- ▶ Overview of research
- ▶ Top 5 themes
- ▶ Discussion
- ▶ What happens next?

We want to understand where we need to collaborate to address the workforce challenges over the next 10 years

What was the challenge?

- Understand the challenges that Local Authorities will face in shaping their workforce to deliver the expected future remit for supporting citizens.

Why was it researched?

- Many Local Authorities are faced with the need to execute large scale transformations to achieve their 2035 vision.
- The skills, capabilities and workforce structures needed to achieve the vision are expected to be different from those needed today.
- PPMA members will need to work together to address the biggest challenges.

How was it researched?

- 1:1 Interviews with HR Directors and COO/CEO (n = 10).
- Round table discussions with London members and PPMA Board.
- Online survey (n = 75).

Our research identified 5 consistent themes that People Managers need to address

1. AGILITY

HR needs to remove obstacles to increased agility in how they enable people to move around the organisation

5. LEADERSHIP

Leaders need more support in acquiring the right capability to develop and deliver on long-term workforce strategies

2. ALIGNMENT

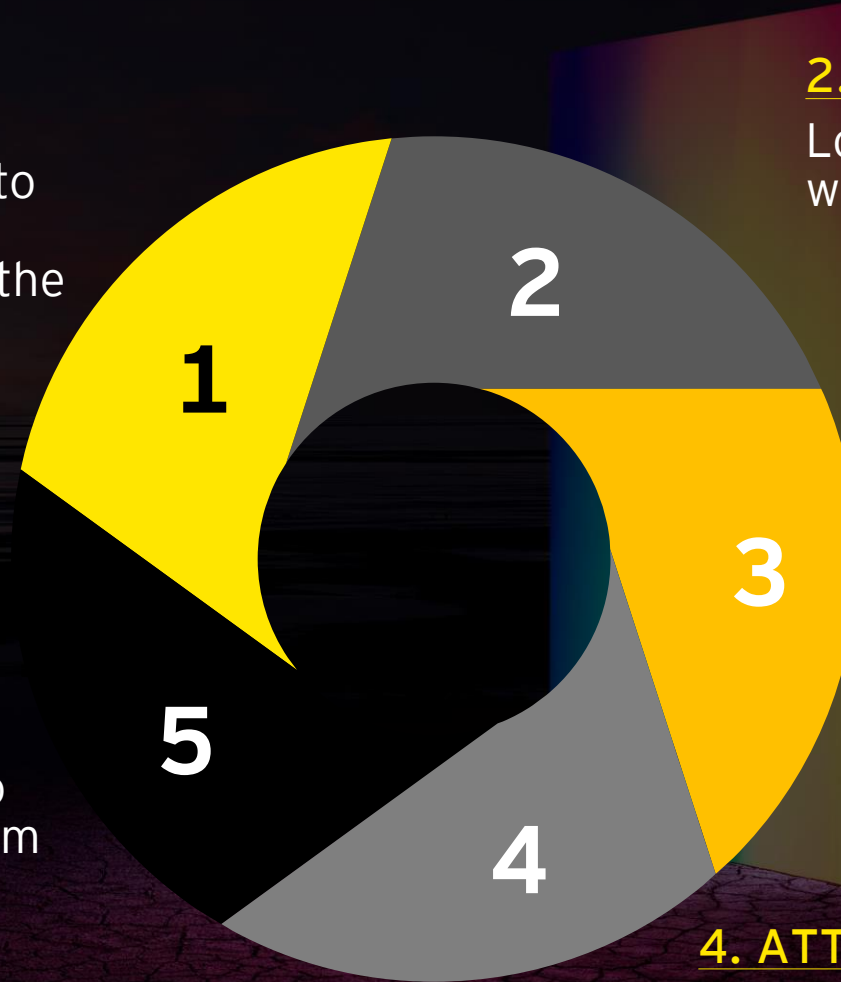
Long-term solutions require a coherent whole-system response

3. ABILITY & SKILLS

Digital skills and change leadership are the most important attributes to focus on for long-term impact

4. ATTRACTION & RETENTION

Current structure and marketing of LA roles is preventing younger employees from seeing local government as an attractive career choice



Agility



HR needs to **remove obstacles to increased agility** in how they enable people to move around the organisation

An agile workforce..

- Increased flexibility in how people work, moving away from rigid job roles to staff groupings based on generic skills and agile resourcing.

...enabled, not hindered by HR

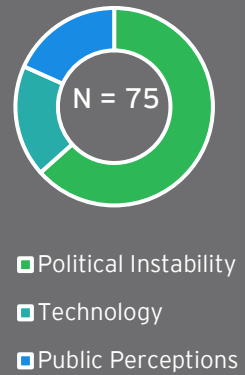
- There is a need to help people move with more agility between roles and create more fluid job descriptions.
- Ensuring that HR practices do not hinder the use of flexible personnel and leveraging wider interests to attract talent, including those with side hustle.

“ **Leaner, more productive workforce**, agility to move where work is not what your job says “



Long-term solutions require
a **coherent whole-system
response**

Political instability
was highlighted by
45% of respondents
as having the biggest
impact on workforce
strategy



**Alignment on
outcomes** was the
most highlighted risk
to achieving
workforce strategy,
closely followed by
cost efficiency

Alignment

Stability in strategy and planning

- The focus has been on managing crises, which has impacted the ability to plan for the long term. There is a struggle to get leaders to concentrate on long-term planning, and political changes can cause a shift in effort to short-term priorities.

Building a sector-wide talent pool

- Working with educational institutions to ensure that individuals are prepared for the workplace, with the necessary skills and readiness for employment.
- Mentoring relationships with partner organisations and LA's.

Addressing the tension in Integrated Care

- There was a clear tension between the LAs accountability for delivery, but the funding was held by others with different priorities.

Ability and Skills



Absence of digital skills impacts on transformation

- The opportunities for exploiting GenAI were perceived to be limited by ageing workforce, fear of change, and lack of confidence in technology.
- The impact of digital will change the nature of services within local government which requires a rethink on the skill levels needed for typical officer roles.

Digital skills and change leadership are the most important attributes to focus on for long-term impact

What skills do you feel are most important for future leaders to acquire to lead the council in 2035?

Most important

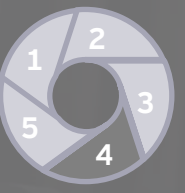
Skills and Capabilities

Developing Organisational Capabilities
Championing Change and Innovation
Aligning People
Strategic Decision Making
Maximising Strategic Opportunities
Inspiring the Organisation
Leveraging Partnerships
Enhancing Reputation

Lower importance

“Digital investment, use of automation, feels like we're in the foothills”

Attraction & retention



Competition

- LAs face multiple threats to attraction from private sector (for low-skilled workers) to local competition across government departments.
- Cost of living challenge increases mobility through minor pay differences

Younger Employees

- Hard to retain in rural areas
- Creating opportunities for progression alongside an aging workforce.
- Perceptions of limited career growth in public sector.
- Have a desire to make a difference and have portfolios.

Limited career pathways

- Complex job descriptions/non-user friendly/need for values-based hiring.
- Need to innovate approaches to succession planning and increase organisational agility to allow for more flexibility in career progression.

Current structure and marketing of LA roles is preventing younger employees from seeing local government as an attractive career choice

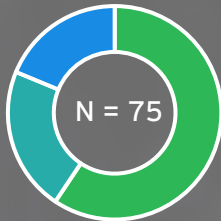
“We are really poor at selling the amazing work that we do in local government”



Leaders need more support in acquiring the right capability to develop and deliver on long-term workforce strategies

"Leaders need to be genuine and authentic to connect with a more open younger generation"

Leadership was the top skill identified for the delivery of the workforce strategy (53%)



- Leadership
- Change Management
- Creativity

Leadership

Leaders struggle to develop capability

- Budgetary Pressures
- Spans of control
- Not engaged in need to grow
- Time or ability to think strategically
- Resource constraints

Dealing with ambiguity

- Future leadership will need to be adept at dealing with change, demonstrating resilience, and operating on a systems basis.
- The scale and pace of change requires leaders to create a compelling vision and bring the workforce with them on the journey.

Becoming enterprise leaders

- The transition from specialist to enterprise leader requires a targeted approach to talent development.

A group of people, including a man and two women, are standing in a line, looking towards the right. They appear to be waiting or observing something out of frame.

What next? A call to action for PPMA and Local Authorities:

- ▶ Four challenges for HR professionals:
 - ▶ Workforce planning
 - ▶ Reskilling and upskilling
 - ▶ Leadership models
 - ▶ Removing process barriers

A high-resolution satellite image of Earth from space, centered on the African continent. The image shows the outlines of Africa, Europe, and Asia, with the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea clearly visible. The Earth's surface is detailed with green landmasses, brown desert regions, and blue oceans. The atmosphere is visible as a thin blue layer around the globe. The background is the deep black of space, with some faint starlight visible on the right side.

Questions and Observations