



## Retention Strategy

### 1. Introduction

We are an ambitious council, proud of the meaningful impact we make and the positive change we deliver for our communities every day. Our people are central to this success—their dedication, creativity, and commitment turn our aspirations into reality. Attracting the right people and creating an exceptional environment where they can grow, thrive, and choose to stay is not only important, but fundamental to the legacy we are building.

As a local authority, we remain committed to delivering the priorities set out in our Council Plan:

- Preparing for the future
- Delivering good services
- Responding to the climate emergency
- Delivering housing
- Supporting communities
- Supporting the economy

We pursue these priorities in the context of local government reorganisation, significant financial pressures across the sector, and a challenging national landscape driven by the rising cost of living.

Local Government Reorganisation is likely to create a period of uncertainty and may unsettle some staff. This comes at a time when national recruitment and retention pressures continue to affect many local government professions. These challenges have increased demand on our services, placed additional pressure on our workforce, and reduced overall spending power.

To respond to this, we have developed the Corporate Plan 2025–28, *“Building a lasting legacy for the Cotswolds”*, which ensures our resources are aligned to the priorities in the Council Plan. A critical element of this work is making sure we have the right people, in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills.

National issues in staff retention are also being felt at Cotswold District Council. These include increased competition for talent due to more vacancies than available candidates, rising pay expectations linked to inflation and cost-of-living pressures, greater difficulty in retaining skilled employees, and challenges in recruiting to senior positions, among other factors.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to employees employed by CDC. It does not apply to workers, contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the Council.

## 3. Our Strategic Vision for Retention

To ensure that Cotswold District Council employs people who share Our Values of:

- We put our **communities first**: their priorities are our priorities
- We are **one team**: working for our residents and businesses
- We are **business focussed**: ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and good value for money
- We are **set up for success**: to deliver against our corporate priorities

We need to ensure all employees have the required skills and abilities to meet current and future needs, enabling the delivery of the Council Plan and ultimately the success of the council.

## 4. Why We Need a Retention Strategy

To achieve the ambitions set out in our Corporate Plan, we must continually assess our workforce requirements using robust, evidence-based analysis. This enables us to plan proactively, ensure our approach is inclusive, and monitor progress effectively. It also supports our efforts to retain our valued workforce and to prepare and develop our people for local government reorganisation.

Aligned with both our Corporate Plan and our People & Culture Strategy, this approach reaffirms our commitment to investing in our people; their success is the foundation of the lasting legacy we aim to build for our communities.

## 5. Commitment to Inclusion

As a council, we recognise the importance of inclusion and diversity. This strategy embraces inclusion as a core principle and is committed to ensuring that it is applied throughout.

## 6. Our Priorities to Achieve this Vision

The Local Government Association, in its advice on recruitment and retention best practice, suggests the use of the 'Six Ps' to create an effective recruitment process and these form the basis of our priorities:

- i. Plan – we will ensure that we understand our workforce needs so that our actions are strategic
- ii. Promote – we will raise our profile as an employer so that we strengthen the position of local government as an employer of choice
- iii. Process – we will ensure that our recruitment approaches are both targeted to specific audiences, whilst taking an inclusive approach. Any person interested in working with us will have a positive experience.
- iv. Partnerships – we will work with partners such as local educational institutions to build a talent pipeline into local government.
- v. People – we will balance attracting new talent and retaining our current employees by continuing to promote our workforce values.
- vi. Pledge – we will work with other councils to share best practice and develop a wider pool of potential employees in addition to the existing Recruitment Team’s talent pool.

It is envisaged that these Six Ps will be supported by initiatives including:

1. Career Progression – including opportunities available through Local Government Reorganisation
2. Employee Engagement and Involvement – awareness of decisions being made in the council and opportunities to contribute via staff briefings, culture club, staff surveys, etc
3. Communications - keeping everyone informed through the internal communications strategy
4. Leadership - providing strong senior leadership and empowering managers
5. Investing in training and professional – availability of a range of training opportunities
6. Annual Appraisals - strong culture of performance management
7. Culture of Trust and Respect – established between all levels of colleagues
8. Benefits - generous benefits package including Medicash and employee assistance

## **7. Key Stakeholders in Local Government Retention**

### Elected Members (Councillors)

- Provide political leadership and set strategic direction.
- Approve key policies, budgets, and workforce priorities.
- Champion a positive organisational culture.

### Senior Leadership Team (CEO, Directors, Heads of Service)

- Translate political priorities into organisational action.
- Ensure retention goals are embedded across services.
- Model leadership behaviours that support engagement and wellbeing.

### HR Team/Recruitment

- Design and lead the retention strategy.
- Provide workforce data, insight, and analysis.
- Support the development of pay, benefits, and reward strategies.
- Develop interventions: recruitment, onboarding, learning, wellbeing, reward, and organisational development.

### Line Managers & Supervisors

- The biggest day-to-day influence on employee experience.
- Responsible for performance management, development conversations, team culture, and wellbeing support.
- Crucial in spotting retention risks early.

### Trade Unions

- Key partners in shaping fair, inclusive, and workable employment policies.
- Help address concerns before they escalate.
- Support communication, consultation, and staff wellbeing.

### Communications Team

- Craft messages that build trust, transparency, and engagement.
- Support internal campaigns that celebrate staff, promote development, and reinforce culture.
- Promote employer brand through use of social media outlets, such as LinkedIn, Facebook.

### Learning & Development / Organisational Development

- Build capability, leadership pipelines, and career pathways.
- Strengthen organisational culture and readiness for change (e.g., LGR).
- Deliver training and development aligned to strategic priorities.

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Objective	Action	Who	Timescale	Status
<b>PLAN</b>				
Conduct workforce planning to determine current and future workforce requirements in response to local government reorganisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess projected service needs under the new unitary council (s) organisational Future Operating Model to determine future workforce demand.</li> <li>• Analyse the difference between current workforce capacity and future requirements to identify gaps, surpluses, and critical risk areas.</li> <li>• Strengthen workforce capability by using professional development, apprenticeships, reskilling, redeployment, and role design to address identified gaps.</li> </ul>	AC & LGR People & Culture workstream	TBD	exploratory
Review and update 100% of all job descriptions to ensure they accurately reflect current duties, required skills and reporting lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and rewrite job descriptions to clearly outline the required skills, responsibilities, and expectations for each role.</li> <li>• Consultation between employees and managers to ensure descriptions accurately reflect day-to-day duties so staff fully understand what is required of them.</li> <li>• Identify and document competencies and responsibilities that support career pathways and internal promotion opportunities.</li> <li>• Align each job description with performance criteria to support fair, consistent performance reviews and help highlight individual or organisational skill gaps.</li> </ul>	Line mgrs in conjunction with HW	31.8.26	In progress

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Status</b>
Define, promote and implement clear professional development & career progression opportunities across the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual appraisal provides the opportunity each year to discuss performance, objectives and ongoing professional development.</li> <li>Produce accessible apprenticeship materials (e.g., guides, portal pages) for all hard to fill roles.</li> <li>Integrate career pathways into HR processes, including recruitment, appraisal and learning and development.</li> <li>Communicate and promote new opportunities through internal channels such as staff briefings and the portal.</li> </ul>	Line mgrs  CJ  CT/HW/CJ  CJ/CW	April – June 2026	In progress
Identify and prioritise hard to recruit and retain areas across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Heads of Service to identify all roles and service areas experiencing recruitment &amp; retention difficulties and implement targeted support interventions to address gaps in required skills, knowledge, and behaviours.</li> </ul>	HoS/HR	30.6.26	Exploratory
<b>PROMOTE</b>				
Promote core & optional employee benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote benefits through multiple channels (e.g., portal, blogs staff briefings) to ensure all employees report awareness of the full benefits package in subsequent staff survey.</li> </ul>	CR/CW	16.3.26	In progress
Promote and enhance the employee assistance & wellbeing offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote CDC's wellbeing benefits through multiple channels (portal, newsletters, staff briefings, and wellbeing events). Track engagement and awareness through the employee survey.</li> </ul>	CR/CJ/CW	31.3.26	In progress

Objective	Action	Who	Timescale	Status
Promote role flexibility as a key attraction benefit to enhance retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch a refreshed messaging campaign highlighting flexible/hybrid working and relocation support.</li> <li>Revise the Relocation Policy to ensure it aligns with hybrid working arrangements</li> </ul>	CW	31.5.26	
		AC/CT	30.9.26	
Develop and maintain a strong local employer brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen and promote our employer brand by analysing how candidates hear about us, identifying additional promotional channels, and implementing initiatives to enhance our reputation as an employer of choice to improve attraction and retention.</li> </ul>	SI	Ongoing	In progress
<b>PROCESS</b>				
Explore and assess opportunities for the effective use of AI across the organisation	<p>We will undertake work to start to understand what AI can do to support retention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving employee experience through automation such as repetitive admin.</li> <li>Supporting wellbeing and early intervention – such as identifying sickness trends.</li> <li>Enhancing recruitment quality (which boosts retention) such as filtering candidates more successfully.</li> <li>Giving managers better insights and decision support – such as highlighting changes in employee engagement surveys.</li> <li>Helping understand why people leave – through analysis of exit interviews and resignation letters.</li> <li>Strengthening organisational culture – feedback trends through employee survey outcomes.</li> </ul>	GO	31.12.26	Exploratory
		CT/HW	Ongoing	
		SI	Ongoing	
		CW	Ongoing	
		HW	Ongoing	
		CW	Ongoing	

Objective	Action	Who	Timescale	Status
Utilise the "Flexibility within Pay" Policy that enables pay flexibility for hard-to-recruit roles while maintaining full alignment with the organisation's job evaluation framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply the organisation's "Flexibility within Pay" Policy in cases where the evaluated pay rate is not competitive enough to respond effectively to market pressures, ensuring timely and appropriate pay adjustments to support retention.</li> <li>Update the Policy to include a contractual "golden handcuffs" (tying an element of employees' pay to future service) when a market supplement is agreed, and in exceptional circumstances provide the Chief Executive to award a market supplement above 15% of basic salary for retention.</li> </ul>	CLT/CT	Ongoing.	
Embed the use of apprenticeship and progression roles by evaluating opportunities for trainee positions as vacancies arise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate a review stage into the CLT decision-making process to assess each vacancy and determine whether it can be redesigned as a development role rather than assuming a like-for-like replacement.</li> </ul>	HoS/CLT	Ongoing	In progress.
Sourcing strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will review whether we use the best channels for advertising</li> </ul>			
<b>PEOPLE</b>				
Deliver the Year 2 implementation plan for the People & Culture Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue delivering the People &amp; Culture Strategy by implementing agreed actions relating to retention, employee development, wellbeing, and engagement, ensuring measurable improvements in staff experience and organisational culture.</li> </ul>	AC/CT	31.8.26	

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Status</b>
Enhance engagement across the wider workforce, with a particular focus on supporting and involving care-experienced colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop targeted strategies to broaden our potential workforce, including initiatives that specifically support and attract people with care experience.</li> </ul>	SI/CJ	30.9.26	Exploratory
Ensure exit interviews are consistently conducted, analysed, and translated into actionable improvements to strengthen retention and employee experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematically use exit interview data to monitor reasons for leaving and evaluate the success of the People &amp; Culture Strategy.</li> </ul>	HW	Ongoing	In progress
<b>PLEDGE</b>				
Collaboration with other councils across Gloucestershire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a joint retention action plan in partnership with the councils across Gloucestershire.</li> <li>Develop a Partnership Agreement on Staff Movement and Recruitment from transition to the formation of the new unitary council(s)</li> </ul>	AC CT	31.8.26 31.8.26	exploratory