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| Council | COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL |
| Name and date of Committee | CABINET - 16 APRIL 2026 |
| Subject | RETENTION STRATEGY 2026-28 |
| Wards affected | All |
| Accountable member | Councillor Mike Evely, Leader of the Council Email: mike.evely@cotswold.gov.uk |
| Accountable officer | Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk |
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| Summary/Purpose | This report presents the Council's Retention Strategy for approval. |
| Annexes | Annex A – Retention Strategy |
| Recommendation(s) | That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Approve the Retention Strategy |
| Corporate priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing for the future• Delivering Good Services |
| Key Decision | No |
| Exempt | No |
| Consultees/ Consultation | The Leader and key officers Representatives of the recognised trade unions. |



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report presents the Council's Retention Strategy, developed to ensure that the organisation continues to attract, develop and retain a skilled and committed workforce capable of delivering the priorities set out in the Council Plan and Corporate Plan 2025–28. The strategy recognises the significant recruitment and retention pressures affecting local government including increased competition for talent, rising costs of living and sector wide difficulties in filling specialist and senior roles. It also acknowledges the uncertainty created by local government reorganisation which may affect workforce stability.
- 1.2** The Retention Strategy outlines a clear vision based on the Council's organisational values and establishes a structured approach to workforce planning, staff engagement, leadership development, career progression and inclusive practice. It sets out priority areas of work aligned to the Local Government Association's "Six Ps" framework: Plan, Promote, Process, Partnerships, People and Pledge supported by a programme of targeted actions intended to strengthen the employment offer and improve long-term retention.
- 1.3** By adopting this strategy, the Council reinforces its commitment to building a positive organisational culture, investing in staff development and establishing a resilient workforce capable of meeting current and future service demands.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Council operates in a challenging national and regional context with local government organisations across the UK experiencing unprecedented recruitment and retention pressures. Factors such as increased vacancies, greater competition from the private sector, inflation driven pay expectations and difficulties filling specialist and leadership roles have contributed to workforce instability. These pressures coincide with rising demand for services, reduced spending power and the forthcoming local government reorganisation, all of which amplify the need for a clear and proactive retention approach
- 2.2** To support delivery of the Council Plan and the Corporate Plan 2025–28, the Council has developed the Retention Strategy to ensure it has the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles at the right time. The strategy is grounded in the Council's values and positions staff as the organisation's most important asset.



2.3 The strategy also aligns closely with the People & Culture Strategy and emphasises the importance of inclusion, diversity, strong leadership, employee engagement, and continuous professional development. It recognises the role of key stakeholders including elected members, senior leaders, HR, communications, line managers, trade unions, learning and development teams in shaping and sustaining a positive employee experience.

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 Strategic Vision & Workforce Priorities

- Ensures the Council employs individuals who embody its core values and possess the skills needed to deliver current and future priorities.
- Positions workforce planning as a central component of organisational sustainability.

3.2 Responding to Recruitment & Retention Challenges

- Addresses sector wide issues such as competition for talent, rising pay expectations and difficulties filling certain roles.
- Recognises heightened uncertainty associated with local government reorganisation.

3.3 The 'Six Ps' Framework for Retention

The strategy adopts the Local Government Association's 'Six Ps' approach:

- Plan – we will ensure that we understand our workforce needs so that our actions are strategic
- Promote – we will raise our profile as an employer so that we strengthen the position of local government as an employer of choice
- 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.
- Partnerships – we will work with partners such as local educational institutions to build a talent pipeline into local government.
- People – we will balance attracting new talent and retaining our current employees by continuing to promote our workforce values.
- 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.



3.4 Commitment to Inclusion

- Embeds inclusion as a fundamental principle ensuring all workforce policies and development opportunities are fair, accessible and supportive of diversity.

3.5 Leadership & Communication

- Emphasises the role of senior leaders and managers in modelling positive behaviours, supporting staff and building a culture of transparency, trust and respect.
- Highlights the importance of effective internal communication in supporting engagement.

3.6 Monitoring & Delivery

- Supported by a detailed action plan with responsibilities, timescales and status indicators to ensure progress is measurable and regularly reviewed.
- Ensures alignment with the Corporate Plan and prepares the workforce for future operating models resulting from reorganisation.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Applying the 'Flexibility within Pay Policy' as outlined within the 'Retention Strategy' may result in increased staffing costs, including:

- Market supplements added to base pay.
- Accelerated progression to higher spinal points within the evaluated peer group.
- Higher starting salaries for new recruits where necessary to match market rates.

4.2 These adjustments may increase the total pay bill for affected services and need to be funded from existing budgets unless additional resource is approved.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council must ensure that any retention measures comply with its statutory, best value and public law duties. The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) and as a result, an Equality Impact & Rurality Assessment has been completed to ensure that proposed retention measures do not directly or indirectly disadvantage any protected group within the workforce. Any differential pay, such as market supplements or targeted payments, must be objectively justified to mitigate equal pay risk.



6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 The Council faces several workforce related risks driven by national recruitment pressures, rising service demand and uncertainty linked to local government reorganisation. Key risks include shortages in critical skills, difficulties attracting and retaining talent, and the potential impact of turnover on service delivery. Employee engagement, leadership capability, inclusion and the development of future talent pipelines also present ongoing challenges.

To mitigate these risks, the Retention Strategy sets out actions such as workforce planning, career pathway development, strengthened employer branding, improved recruitment processes, targeted wellbeing and engagement initiatives and closer collaboration with partner councils and education providers. The Strategy also emphasises strong leadership, inclusive practice and systematic use of workforce data to support informed decision making.

6.2 Overall, the approach aims to stabilise the workforce, improve resilience and ensure the Council remains able to deliver its corporate priorities effectively.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 The Retention Strategy has positive equalities impacts, as it embeds inclusion and diversity as core principles throughout the Council's workforce approach. The strategy recognises the importance of creating an inclusive working environment and commits to ensuring that recruitment, development and retention practices are fair, accessible and supportive of all employees.

7.2 It promotes equality through actions such as strengthening career progression pathways, improving employee engagement, supporting wellbeing and ensuring consistent performance management. The strategy also identifies the need to broaden the workforce by engaging underrepresented groups including targeted support for care experienced colleagues, helping to reduce barriers and improve representation across the organisation.

7.3 Overall, the strategy is likely to have a positive impact on workforce equality, supporting a diverse, inclusive and equitable organisational culture.

7.4 An Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment form was completed by the Head of HR on 13th March 2026. This highlighted the positive impact of implementing this strategy.



8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The Retention Strategy indirectly supports the Council's climate and ecological emergency commitments by ensuring it has a stable, skilled and resilient workforce capable of delivering the environmental priorities outlined in the Council Plan. These include responding to the climate emergency and preparing for the future, both of which require specialist skills, organisational capacity and sustained staff engagement.
- 8.2** Strengthening recruitment, development and retention help safeguard the Council's ability to deliver climate related programmes, maintain momentum on environmental initiatives and build the internal expertise needed to meet long term sustainability goals. While the strategy does not introduce new environmental impacts, it contributes positively by supporting the workforce stability required to advance climate and ecological objectives.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1** Equalities & Rurality Impact Assessment Form – 13th March 2026 held by Carmel Togher, Head of HR.

(END)