



COTSWOLD

District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 10 SEPTEMBER 2026
Subject	PEOPLE & CULTURE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN YEAR 2/3
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Every, Leader of the Council Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To approve the People & Culture Implementation Plan at Annex A
Annexes	Annex A – People & Culture Strategy Implementation Plan 2026-28
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Approve the years 2 & 3 implementation plan as detailed in Annex A (August 2026 – March 2028). 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance & Development, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make minor amendments to the plan in response to emerging organisational or legislative changes.
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Corporate Leadership Team, Cabinet and the workforce



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report presents the Year 2 and 3 People & Culture Strategy Implementation Plan (August 2026 – March 2028), which builds on the strong foundations established during the first year of delivery following Cabinet approval of the strategy and initial implementation plan in September 2025.
- 1.2** Over the past 12 months, the Council has made significant progress in strengthening organisational culture, modernising workforce policies and processes, and improving employee experience. Key achievements include the introduction and embedding of workforce values, implementation of a revised organisational structure, development of a more robust performance management framework, refreshed onboarding and mentoring arrangements, and the delivery of a Retention Strategy. Enhanced communication and engagement arrangements, alongside a continued focus on wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion, have supported workforce stability during a period of organisational change.
- 1.3** This next phase of the implementation plan reflects the increasing demands of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the need to maintain high-quality service delivery whilst preparing for transition to a unitary authority. It sets out a co-ordinated programme of activity focused on supporting colleagues through change, strengthening leadership capability, improving workforce resilience and building the skills and capacity required for the future organisation.
- 1.4** Key priorities include delivering clear and consistent communication, supporting managers to lead through change, promoting staff wellbeing and ensuring meaningful opportunities for employee voice. The plan also places a strong emphasis on workforce development, including leadership, digital and technical capability, alongside initiatives to support retention and career progression.
- 1.5** Whilst this plan focuses on the Council's internal workforce priorities, it sits alongside and is aligned with the Gloucestershire-wide People & Culture Workstream supporting LGR, recognising the interdependencies between local and system-wide activity.
- 1.6** The implementation plan includes clear outcomes and success measures, with progress to be monitored through workforce metrics, staff surveys and regular reporting.



- 1.7** Overall, the plan provides a comprehensive and proportionate framework to support the Council's workforce through a significant period of change, ensuring the organisation remains resilient, engaged and well-prepared for transition.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Council's People & Culture Strategy year 1 implementation plan and workforce values were approved by Cabinet in September 2025 and set out the ambition to build a skilled, resilient and engaged workforce capable of delivering high-quality services whilst preparing for the transition to a future unitary authority.

2.2 Work Undertaken to Date (September 2025–August 2026)

Over the past year, significant progress has been made in implementing the People & Culture Strategy, focusing on strengthening organisational culture, improving workforce processes and preparing for LGR.

2.3 Embedding Workforce Values & Culture

- Workforce values were developed and approved by Cabinet (September 2025), establishing a clear behavioural framework for the organisation.
- Values have been embedded through leadership communication including CEO blogs, team discussions and 1-1s.

2.4 Organisation Design & Workforce Clarity

- A revised [organisational structure](#) was implemented (July 2025) and kept under ongoing review to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- Work has been undertaken to ensure job descriptions are up to date and to improve visibility of training and development opportunities.

2.5 Policy Development & Workforce Frameworks

- A programme of policy review and refresh has been progressed ensuring alignment with legislation and organisational change (including policy areas such as probation, pay and flexible working).
- Equality Impact Assessments have been embedded within policy development.
- An agile working toolkit was developed and implemented to support hybrid and flexible working arrangements.

2.6 Recruitment, Onboarding & Early Employee Experience



- A refreshed onboarding process has been developed to improve the experience for new starters.
- A mentoring/buddy programme has been introduced, supporting induction and integration.

2.7 Performance Management & Workforce Development

- A stronger performance framework has been embedded including:
 - Ensuring all staff have regular 1-1s and annual performance discussions;
 - Increasing appraisal completion rates;
 - Providing support to managers to improve developmental conversations.

2.8 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- The Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy & Procedure has been updated together with a new policy to support those employees who are also carers (Cabinet January 2026)

2.9 Reward, Recognition & Retention

- Increased promotion of employee benefits and wellbeing support to improve awareness and uptake.
- An update to the Flexibility in Pay Policy to reflect the challenges of salaries for hard to recruit to roles.
- Development of a Retention Strategy (approved by Cabinet April 2026), forming a key element of ongoing workforce stability work.
- Continued delivery of recognition initiatives including staff “shout-outs” and awards.

2.10 Leadership & Management Development

- Promotion of Leadership Pathways programmes including external opportunities, eg, LGA/Solace).

2.11 Communication & Engagement

- Delivery of a targeted communication and engagement approach including:
 - Regular staff briefings;
 - Ongoing updates aligned with organisational change;
- Introduction of employee engagement surveys to gather feedback on staff experience and communication.

2.12 Overall Position



Over the past year, the Council has successfully:

- Established strong cultural foundations through values and behaviours;
- Strengthened workforce policies and processes;
- Improved employee experience from onboarding through to development and recognition;
- Enhanced communication and engagement; and
- Put in place key building blocks to support workforce stability ahead of LGR.

This provides a solid platform for the next phase of delivery (2026–2028), which focuses on deepening this work and preparing the workforce for transition to a unitary council.

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 The implementation plan, included at annex A, represents the next phase (Years 2 – 3) of the People & Culture Strategy and reflects:

- The ongoing demands of LGR;
- The need to maintain service delivery and organisational stability during a period of uncertainty; and
- The importance of supporting colleagues through change, whilst building future capability.

The plan builds on progress made to date and consolidates activity across key themes:

- Organisation and job design
- Systems and processes
- Performing and developing with us
- Being recognised by us
- Connecting with us

Members may also recall a separate Retention Strategy was approved by Cabinet in April 2026.

3.2 Supporting the Workforce Through Change

A central priority of the plan is to ensure colleagues feel informed, supported and engaged throughout LGR. Key actions include:

- Delivering clear, consistent and transparent communication, supported by a Gloucestershire-wide employee portal;



- Strengthening manager capability to lead through change with confidence and empathy;
- Ensuring opportunities for staff voice through surveys, engagement activities and ongoing dialogue;
- Promoting wellbeing support and implementing recommendations from the 2026 wellbeing audit.

This approach aims to maintain trust, reduce uncertainty and support resilience across the workforce.

3.3 Building a Future-Ready Workforce

The plan includes a strong focus on workforce development to ensure readiness for a unitary council environment. This includes:

- Workforce and skills audits to identify gaps and critical roles;
- Investment in leadership, digital and technical capability;
- Expansion of early career pathways and talent pipelines;
- Development of system-wide understanding and cross-organisational working.

Together, these actions will help ensure the Council retains the capacity and capability to deliver services both now and in the future.

3.4 Retention & Workforce Stability

Retention remains a critical risk during the transition period. Therefore, the plan continues delivery of the Retention Strategy approved by Cabinet in April 2026, with a focus on:

- Improving employee engagement and experience;
- Strengthening career development opportunities;
- Recognising and valuing staff contributions; and
- Supporting internal and cross-organisational mobility.

Additionally, a "Future Gloucestershire Workforce" approach will support co-ordinated recruitment, development and redeployment across local government partners.

3.5 Organisational Culture & Values

Embedding workforce values remains a core element of the strategy. Key actions include:



- Aligning recruitment processes with organisational values;
- Supporting managers to address behaviours consistently and constructively;
- Strengthening staff engagement through initiatives such as the staff group “Culture Club”.

This will help maintain a positive, inclusive and high-performing culture during a period of change.

3.6 Recognition & Legacy

The plan recognises the importance of acknowledging the Council’s achievements and supporting colleagues through organisational transition. Actions include:

- Celebrating organisational history and achievements;
- Recognising individual and team contributions;
- Creating meaningful milestones to mark transition.

This will support morale, maintain engagement and ensure a positive legacy.

3.7 Outcomes & Measures of Success

The plan includes a range of measurable outcomes and targets including:

- Improved staff engagement, communication and wellbeing scores;
- Increased retention and reduced voluntary turnover;
- High levels of staff confidence in leadership and change management;
- Strong participation in engagement and development activity;
- Evidence of increased readiness for LGR and system-wide working.

Performance will be monitored through staff surveys, pulse surveys and workforce metrics, with regular reporting to the Corporate Leadership Team.

4. LGR PEOPLE & CULTURE WORKSTREAM

- 4.1** It should be noted that this implementation plan is distinct from but complementary to, the Gloucestershire-wide People & Culture Workstream established to support LGR, with representatives from all the local government employers including Publica. Whilst CDC’s plan focuses on the Council’s internal workforce priorities and immediate organisational needs, the countywide workstream is developing a broader, system-wide approach to workforce transition and future operating models. There



are, however, clear interdependencies between the two programmes, particularly in areas such as workforce planning, communications and employee movement across organisations. Therefore, ongoing alignment will be maintained to ensure consistency, avoid duplication and maximise collective impact across Gloucestershire.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1** Cabinet may choose not to adopt the People and Culture Strategy Year 2/3 Implementation Plan; however, this is not recommended for the reasons set out in the report.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** The adoption of the year 2/3 People and Culture Strategy Implementation Plan will support the Council's transition in terms of embedding its key messages, supporting employee development and managing a significant period of change.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The Strategy can largely be delivered within existing budget and therefore has no direct financial implications. However, there may be future financial implications arising from the implementation of recommendations from the Staff Wellbeing Audit (3.2), which is due for completion in July 2026 and from the implementation of the Future Gloucestershire Workforce agreement in relation to recruitment, secondments and employee movement for development and redeployment (3.4).
- 7.2** The impact of both initiatives will need to be monitored and assessed as they progress with any resulting budgetary or financial implications being considered.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The plan supports the Council in meeting its statutory employment responsibilities including ensuring policies remain compliant with employment and equality legislation and good practice.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1** Key risks addressed through the plan include:
- Loss of key staff and reduced organisational capacity;



- Reduced morale and engagement during LGR;
- Insufficient capability to operate effectively whilst preparing for LGR;
- Poor communication leading to uncertainty and disengagement.

9.2 Mitigation measures include the Retention Strategy, proactive communication and engagement, leadership development and workforce planning.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

10.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as part of policy reviews to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

10.2 The plan promotes equality, diversity and inclusion through:

- Fair and consistent people policies;
- Inclusive engagement approaches;
- Monitoring of workforce data;
- Equality Impact Assessments on policy changes.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct climate implications arising from this report. However, the development of a future workforce capable of operating at scale will support the Council's wider sustainability ambitions within a unitary context.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- People & Culture Strategy & year 1 Implementation Plan approved at Cabinet 4th September 2025.
- Retention Strategy approved at Cabinet on 16th April 2026.

(END)