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| Council name | COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL |
| Name and date of Committee | CABINET 4 SEPTEMBER 2025 |
| Subject | PEOPLE & CULTURE STRATEGY 2025 - 2028 |
| 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 |
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| Summary/Purpose | To approve the People & Culture Strategy attached at Annex A and accompanying year 1 implementation plan at Annex B. |
| Annexes | Annex A – People & Culture Strategy Annex B – Implementation Plan Annex C – Internal Communications & Engagement Strategy |
| Recommendation(s) | <p>That Cabinet resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the People & Culture Strategy as detailed in Annex A2. Approve the four core workforce values:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 |



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| | <p>3. Approve the year 1 implementation plan as detailed in Annex B (September 2025 – August 2026)</p> <p>4. Note the Internal Communications & Engagement Strategy as detailed in Annex C</p> |
| Corporate priorities | Delivering Good Services |
| Key Decision | No |
| Exempt | No |
| Consultees/ Consultation | Corporate Leadership Team, Cabinet and the workforce. |



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Cotswold District Council does not currently have a defined People and Culture Strategy. Such a strategy is helpful in setting out the vision, values, behaviours and ways by which employees are supported and developed. This is particularly important during the forthcoming period of change arising from local government reorganisation which affects individuals whose careers, roles and futures are directly affected.
- 1.2** Innovation Central was commissioned to support the Council in the development of such a strategy. This strategy, workforce values and year 1 implementation plan are now presented for approval.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Prior to the Publica review and the transition of several key teams back to the Council, the direct employee base at Cotswold District Council was very small. As part of the detailed transition work and as the staffing base would become considerably larger, it was considered that the need for a Cotswold District Council specific People and Culture Strategy was very important. The need for a strategy was subsequently reinforced by the announcement of the Government's plans for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire.
- 2.2** The development of the strategy included:
- Facilitating focus group meetings with all individuals transferring across to the Council.
 - Facilitating a workshop with senior managers to get their views and input on what a 'great day at the office' looks like.
 - Creating a set of values as an output of the information and views established through the focus group work.
 - Preparing a draft strategy.
 - Hosting an online staff engagement survey seeking feedback on the draft vision, values and year 1 priorities.
 - Considering the feedback and preparing the final strategy for adoption.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** Over 100 members of staff took part in the focus groups (the sessions included Publica staff that worked closely with Cotswold District Council as well as those transitioning to the Council), with all views and comments captured.



3.2 The emerging core workforce values and strategy, together with suggested 'year 1 priorities' was then shared with staff and their views were sought via an online staff engagement survey earlier this year. Most responders supported or strongly supported the vision, values and year 1 priorities.

3.3 Following this period of employee engagement, the following core workforce values are recommended:

- 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

The strategy includes a framework setting out the "expected" behaviours across all types of roles within the Council. These core behaviours align to the core values, define 'how' staff are expected to approach their day-to-day work and sit alongside 'what' they are expected to do as well as unacceptable behaviours. This will assist in providing clarity and focus around professional development, performance, recruitment and retention.

3.4 The strategy, if adopted, will become one of the key documents for the Council, reflected at both an individual and team level; referenced as part of one to ones, team meetings, appraisals, recruitment, onboarding and career development, working alongside the Corporate Plan and the Council's approach to transformation.

3.5 The strategy recognises and addresses a few challenges including the impending structural changes to local government which mean district councils are abolished. At the heart of every Council are the workforce who keep services running. There is the risk of losing some of our best performing staff just when the Council needs them most.

3.6 The Implementation Plan (Annex B) sets out a number of projects and initiatives that have been identified to address the priorities within the strategy in the first year.

3.7 How and when we communicate with staff, in addition to what we say and do, are fundamental to successfully embedding the values and principles of the People & Culture Strategy. Good communication is also being key to the success of the strategy. Since March 2025, we have been evolving a new internal communications and engagement strategy (Annex C) that is fully aligned with the People and Culture Strategy. It is designed to ensure we have a comprehensive toolkit of comms tools, introduced and enhanced by data, aimed



at embedding the strategy and making it relatable to staff, all while keeping them informed in different ways and ensuring there are plenty of means for two-way engagement.

- 3.8** If approved, the strategy will be launched to the workforce using a range of avenues; the staff portal, blogs, emails, corporate updates, agenda items at team meetings and via six weekly "all staff" briefings. The internal staff reference group, known as the "Culture Club" will be used as a sounding board.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** Cabinet may choose not to adopt the People and Culture Strategy; however, this is not recommended for the reasons set out in the report.

5. CONCLUSIONS

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

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Implementation of the Action Plan will need to be met from existing budgets and resources.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** The principal risk is that without a People and Culture Strategy, the Council fails to articulate clearly its vision, values and the way it will retain, support, engage, empower and develop its employees. The report sets out the risk of workforce attrition and retention arising from reorganisation which is also reflected in the Council's risk register.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** The strategy aims to enhance systems, policies and processes to ensure that all employees are recognised, supported and developed.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS



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10.1 None directly associated with this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

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