

NHC People Strategy 2026 onwards

Foreword from Anthony Roche, Chief Executive

Our people are fundamental to the quality of the services that we provide and our ability to adapt to change. This People Strategy sets out how we will retain, attract, develop and support our workforce through the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) transition. It aims to ensure that people are informed, engaged, and equipped to deliver before, during, and after reorganisation.

We recognise that change brings uncertainty and emotional impact. Our goal is to continue to take a people first approach to build a resilient, confident, and well-supported workforce who can deliver for North Hertfordshire and thrive in the future.

The strategy is underpinned by our **Council Priorities, Our Values and feedback from employees.**

Council Priorities:

- Thriving communities
- Accessible services
- Responsible growth
- Sustainability

Our values:

As an organisation we strive to be:

- **ADAPTABLE:** We are adaptable in finding solutions for each other, our partners and our customers
- **LEARNING:** We learn from others and are open to change
- **LISTENING:** We listen to and consider the views of each other, our partners and our customers
- **INCLUSIVE:** We are inclusive and value diversity
- **TOGETHER:** We work together and support each other to deliver the best we can

We are: ALL In Together

Our People and how we work together

We employ approximately 440 people, working together in a wide variety of roles and in several locations to make a difference to the communities of North Hertfordshire.

39% of our employees work part time hours. 68% of our employees are female. 57% of our staff are aged 45+ and over 30% of our employees have 10 or more years service with us.

We employ both apprentices and graduates, working across various service areas. Several apprentices have achieved permanent roles with the Council, supporting succession planning and highlighting our commitment to development.

We offer flexibility in how our employees work wherever possible, with many hybrid roles and flexible working patterns, which is proving to be a core retention tool.

What our people say

Our 2024 staff survey showed that 90% of staff would recommend us as an employer and this is reflected in our turnover rate, which was only 8.5% for 2025/6. This is the lowest level it has been for over 18 years.

Feedback from the 2025/6 Corporate Peer Challenge shows that employees are committed to providing a good service and enjoy working for North Herts Council. The review recognised a happy workforce who feel supported to do their jobs and have access to learning and development opportunities.

This has also been reflected in our 2026 short survey, where employees say they feel well supported by managers. This survey indicates employees feel well informed about the LGR process but also highlights that uncertainty is becoming a concern.

Opportunities & Challenges

Culture and Leadership

The 2024 staff survey feedback indicated that our Leadership team could be more approachable/ accessible. Various actions were put in place to respond to this concern and 2025 saw changes in our Leadership team with an additional Director role and redistributed directorates. More recently, there has been positive feedback about transparent and open communication from Leadership Team, which we will continue to build on.

Our values define how we work together and shape our behaviour at work every day. In times of instability, it's even more important that our people work well together and we will be working to further integrate our values.

Recruitment and retention

Like many local authorities, we have a number of hard-to-fill roles across several service areas, often reflecting national skills shortages. This includes posts in Environmental Health, Planning, Legal and IT.

Although our retention rates are good, we recognise that uncertainty in the period leading up to LGR may increase turnover across the Council, which could reduce our capacity to deliver services, increase pressure on remaining staff, and heighten risks to employee wellbeing. We

need to retain skills and knowledge to deliver services now, but also for the future Unitary Councils.

Our apprenticeship scheme is having a positive impact by supporting succession planning and building capability for the future. We will continue to develop clear career pathways through career-graded posts and continuing our established approach to graduate and apprenticeship schemes.

We have well-developed flexible working arrangements, which not only meet candidates and employees expectations, but also provide a broader recruitment reach. It is crucial that we continue to support positive work-life balance to recruit, retain and support high-quality people.

Employee Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing is a priority for us; we have various resources available for support including our Employee Assistance programme, and signposting on the Hub and e-learning to support positive mental health and build resilience. Flexible working arrangements and work-life balance are also key contributors to wellbeing. This focus will become even more important as we navigate a period of change.

We know from staff surveys that increased workloads impact employee wellbeing, and we understand the importance of building capacity to deliver the LGR project and continue to provide services.

Skills

Digital development continues to change how we work. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into our processes, we will support employees to build the skills and confidence to use new tools effectively within their service areas, creating more capacity for work that adds value for our communities.

LGR represents the biggest change local government has experienced in recent years. We will therefore provide our managers with change management skills so they can support their teams effectively through uncertainty.

We want our people to be delivering services and preparing themselves for the future. We understand that this will look different for each person and good quality conversations to support learning and development are vital.

We have committed to additional funding for training and development. This will allow our people to put themselves and their future employer in best possible place to deliver services.

Equalities and Inclusion & HR Policies

Our commitment to Inclusion is embedded in the culture of North Herts Council. Inclusion forms part of our Values and this is reflected in the day to day activities of our employees. It is also evidenced in our 2024 staff survey with 79% believing the Council values equality and diversity. Our Inclusion group has been in place since 2021 and works to continue to develop understanding, acceptance and a workplace that encourages every employee to bring their whole selves to work.

Our Gender Pay Gap for 2025 is 12.2%, which is a significant improvement since 2017, when the gap was 25%. However, we recognise that it remains too high. We will continue to address this through our Inclusion Group and associated action plans, including activity to increase the

representation of women at middle and senior management levels. We have already greatly increased the number of women in Director roles.

The Employment Rights Act introduces the most significant changes to employment law in years. We will ensure that our policies and practices are updated to reflect the changes coming into effect from 2026 onwards.

Our people priorities

Our people priorities are split into themes and describe our approach to employees at North Herts Council.

Theme	We will/ we will continue to:
Retain and attract	Develop skills and knowledge to maintain services Provide a fair reward package Attract high-quality candidates Focus on recruiting hard to fill roles
Develop and engage	Develop future capacity through career graded posts, apprenticeships and graduate opportunities Develop skilled and confident managers who work with integrity and build strong teams Strengthen employee engagement by continuing to obtain, listen and act on employee feedback Develop a resilient workforce and support people to be adaptable through uncertainty Prepare employees for the future Maintain trust and clarity through transparent dialogue
Inclusion and wellbeing	Prioritise mental health and wellbeing & support employees through uncertainty Promote and support positive work life balance Foster an inclusive workforce where everyone can be themselves. Support each other through collaboration and engagement.

Our People themes will be translated into actions and a service delivery plan each year, which sets out the detailed actions and timescales. Progress on the People Strategy will be monitored

and measured through reporting to Leadership Team, staff groups (e.g. Staff Briefings and Staff Consultation Forum) and the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

