

CABINET
21 April 2026

Refresh of the Our People and Culture Strategy 2026–2028

Report by Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer)

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) Note the refreshed Our People and Culture Strategy 2026–2028 and its four priority areas for attracting, supporting, developing and equipping colleagues to deliver high-quality services for Oxfordshire.
 - b) Note that the full Strategy is provided as an accessible PDF, which sets out the detailed approach, supporting actions, and measures of success.

Executive Summary

2. The refreshed Our People and Culture Strategy 2026–2028 provides a clear, high-level direction for how the Council will support colleagues during a period of significant organisational change. It outlines the strategic intent behind the refresh, ensuring continued focus on leadership, culture and workforce capability while the organisation prepares for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), devolution and significant financial pressures. The accompanying full Strategy sets out the organisational priorities, detailed actions and measures that will guide delivery over the next year.

Summary of the strategy

3. The refreshed Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting and developing colleagues during 2026 – 2028. It builds on the previously approved 2024 – 2026 Strategy but refines priorities in response to current pressures, service needs and colleague feedback.
4. The Strategy is underpinned by the following **vision**:

A fair, inclusive, and forward-thinking workplace where everyone can thrive, collaborate, and deliver outstanding services for our communities. We lead with integrity, compassion, and agility, celebrating diversity and putting inclusion at the heart of everything we do. Together, we are ready for the future.
5. The Strategy retains the four priority areas previously endorsed by Cabinet, refined for the current context:
 - a) **Lead** – Leading by example at every level, living our values every day.

- b) **Thrive** – Creating a supportive, inclusive environment where everyone can do their best.
- c) **Grow** – Helping everyone build the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for the future.
- d) **Attract** – Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented, diverse people.

6. The full Strategy is provided as an accessible PDF in the annex.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

7. The Strategy underpins the Council's Strategic Plan 2025–2028 by strengthening support for young people leaving care into employment (as set out under 'Grow') and advancing the Council's ambition to be an employer of choice. It also aligns with wider organisational priorities, including financial sustainability, improved outcomes for residents, and ensuring the organisation is well-prepared for future change.

Financial Implications

8. The financial implications of delivering the Strategy are expected to be met from existing resources, including the HR and Culture Change service budget, previously agreed funding from the Transformation reserve, and, where work directly supports Local Government Reorganisation, from the LGR budget. No new or additional funding requirements are anticipated at this stage.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

9. There are no direct legal implications associated with noting this report. Any specific proposals arising from the Strategy will be assessed individually for legal considerations.

Jay Akbar
Head of Legal & Governance

Staff Implications

10. Delivery of the Strategy will be supported through existing staff resources within the HR and Culture Change service and by colleagues across the organisation as part of implementing the identified priorities. No new or additional staffing requirements are anticipated. Should any further staffing input be required to progress specific elements of the Strategy, this will be funded through the budgets outlined in the Financial Implications section.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

11. An updated Equality and Community Impact Assessment has been completed and shows a positive impact across all protected characteristics. This reflects the strategy's strengthened focus on inclusive recruitment and talent pipelines, accessible people policies and systems, enhanced leadership development, and improved wellbeing and engagement support through organisational change. No negative or disproportionate impacts have been identified.

Sustainability Implications

12. A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed. Minor positive impacts relate to increased visibility of active travel benefits and internal wellbeing initiatives.

Risk Management

13. Workforce capacity and organisational readiness for change remain key risks. These are being mitigated through prioritised work programmes, strengthened project management support and proactive engagement with services. Capacity and engagement considerations will be factored into delivery planning.

Consultations

14. Colleagues across all service areas, networks and unions have contributed to the refresh. Feedback from employee networks, services and corporate engagement informs the priorities and approach. The Strategy was considered by Informal Cabinet in February 2026.

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

Annex: Our People and Culture Strategy 2026–2028 (Accessible PDF)

Background papers: Nil

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