

**Brent Council  
Human Resources**

**Human Resources Strategy  
2014 - 2017**

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## **Vision**

In 2010, Brent Council set its vision to become a thriving, vibrant place, where diverse communities live in an environment that is safe, sustainable and well maintained. This vision to reduce poverty, redress inequality and prevent exclusion was at the heart of Brent's One Council, One Borough and One Community programmes, which involved:

- Creating a sustainable built environment that drives economic regeneration and reduces poverty, inequality and exclusion;
- Providing excellent public services which enable people to achieve their full potential, promote community cohesion, and improve our quality of life; and
- Improving services for residents by working with our partners to deliver local priorities more effectively and achieve greater value for money from public resources.

## **Strategic Plan**

This vision to improve the quality of life for local people will continue to be at the heart of Brent Council's future Borough Plan 2014 – 2017 and will be embedded into its strategic plan; with three main priorities will provide the framework for the way in which Brent conducts its business.

These three priorities are:

- making it a fairer borough
- fighting for more jobs and growth in the local economy
- strengthening Brent's community.

Brent recognises that these ambitious priorities can only be achieved through its employees working together with its partner services, residents, local business, voluntary and community sector, which is why this 2014 – 2017 Human Resources Strategy, is aimed at providing a high performing and motivated workforce that provides excellent services.

Brent's Workforce Strategy and Action Plan will underpin and be delivered alongside the Human Resources Strategy 2014 – 2017. The Workforce Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan will ensure that all employees have the right skills to fulfil their roles and that that Brent meets its future workforce needs.

This Human Resources Strategy 2014 – 2017 will assist the council to:

- Achieve Investors in People Gold Status in 2014/15
- Develop high performing teams through a strong performance management culture
- Increase apprenticeship and training opportunities for local people.

## **Review of People Strategy 2010 - 2014**

To identify the priorities for the new Human Resources Strategy it was essential to measure the council's previous performance in implementing its People Strategy, which determined work priorities for 2010 – 2014.

Supported by 37 actions and 36 additional outcome related tasks, the People Strategy 2010 – 2014 focused on the following priority areas:

- Developing strong leadership via a new Brent management tool;
- Streamlining and reconfiguring the organisation on One Council principles;
- Supporting effective change management that delivers timely results;
- Building an agile and efficient workforce that adapts easily to change;
- Closing skills and resource gaps by developing and re-skilling staff;
- Attracting, retaining and developing highly motivated, diverse and talented people.

### **How did Brent perform?**

The following summarises the performance against the People Strategy 2010 -2014 objectives:

#### **Priority 1: Developing strong leadership via a new Brent management tool**

- A full staff survey was conducted in 2010. This revealed that the 'perceptions of line management' were relatively positive especially when rating their manager on a more personal basis.
- Mini surveys were conducted across the council in 2012 on Management Effectiveness, Staff Engagement, Performance Management, Vision, Change and Working Practices and Workforce Development with 88% of respondents stating that they are happy to go the extra mile.
- Wave 1 and wave 2 downsizing of the council and increasing management spans of control to an average of 5 -6
- 97% of annual staff appraisals were achieved in 2013/2014;
- Established key performance indicators for people, performance and budget management;
- Revamp of the People Dashboard information to improve accuracy rates;
- Restructure of the HR function to meet the needs of the council;
- A new capability procedure was implemented along with other key HR policies including disciplinary and grievance.

#### **Priority 2: Streamline and reconfigure the organisation on One Council principles**

- An Employee Benefits review successfully brought together and consolidated terms and conditions of employment into a new more user-friendly core contract of employment for all staff on NJC terms and conditions;
- Harmonisation of the working week to 36 hours;
- Employment terms and conditions were harmonised across the council;

- Preparations for a new Oracle HR/Payroll system were made to deliver enhanced staff and management self service, data management and reporting;
- As a minimum all non-school, permanent staff now receive the London Living Wage, currently £8.55 an hour;
- New Senior Manager structure has been implemented;

**Priority 3: Support effective change management that delivers timely results**

- Project management training available to managers/managers;
- Specific training held on change initiatives to support departments and teams including Welfare Reform workshops;
- Reviewed Brent's Change Management policy to be more flexible and adaptable;
- New emphasis on e-learning to allow for greater flexibility and up-skilling of the workforce;
- Supporting staff through change including new outplacement features;
- Change Management training and Executive coaching held for managers.
- Implemented a number of restructurings within the organisation, including a restructure of the Brent Integrated Business Support (BIBs) resulting in streamlining and service efficiencies.

**Priority 4: Build an agile and efficient workforce that adapts easily to change**

- Supported 'Ready, Steady Go' activities in preparation for the move to the Civic Centre with an 93% employee attendance rate achieved;
- Reduced the number of interims and consultants working for the council;
- Flexible working and Smarter Ways of Working workshops delivered across the council;
- Harmonisation and consolidation of London Weighting;
- Reviewed corporate recruitment to create a more streamlined and business focussed-recruitment service;
- Introduced enhanced flexible working policy and opportunities to deliver a more agile workforce;
- Improved quality of recruitment material and application packs to present the council as an employer of choice;
- Effective management and support to service changes involving TUPE (redundancy package to provide employees with greater protection during TUPE);
- Achieved Investor's In People silver level accreditation;
- New framework for engagement with trade unions successfully implemented resulting in closer working and consultation.

**Priority 5: Close skills and resource gaps by developing and re-skilling staff**

- Restructure of the Corporate Learning and Development function successfully completed;
- New mentoring scheme introduced including access to external mentors;
- 92.66% of training participants reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied that the course would benefit them as individuals.

**Priority 6: Attract, retain and develop highly motivated, diverse and talented people**

- Launched a new apprentice programme to recruit 100 apprentices in the next three years with 21 apprentices already commenced on the programme in various departments across the council;
- At 85%, Brent has one of the highest retention rates of graduates who have completed the Scheme in the country;
- In 2013, Brent successfully integrated all the council's business support activities, which resulted in standardisation of processes, financial efficiencies and a more streamlined and responsive service;
- Employee demographic data refreshed with 77% response rate across the eight of the nine diversity characteristics.

The review of past performance revealed additional key achievements that have positively affected services and which have been aimed at continuing performance improvement.

Human Resources created an HR Improvement Group comprising of senior stakeholders from across the council. The group provides a unique opportunity to consult on key people management issues and to engage departments in HR best practice and associated key decisions.

Oracle Shared service project was a key strategic programme of work commenced under the People Strategy 2010 – 2014 that has laid the foundations for possible shared services for six London boroughs. The project created the opportunity and ability to deliver significant efficiencies and service improvements in finance, procurement, payroll and HR.

The participation and influence in the design process by Brent's HR and Payroll work stream has ensured that Brent is well placed to manage the migration from its existing legacy systems to the new oracle system.

A programme of review has seen key HR policies and procedures revised to reflect a modern, robust and performance driven organisation, which is aligned to the Borough's One Council vision to build a modern efficient organisation that is responsive to customer needs.

Trade unions have been fully engaged in the policy review process that has seen the revision and re-launch of the council's policies including Flexible Working, Probation, Disciplinary, Grievance, Capability, Attendance, Managing Change, Appraisal, Managing Change, Time Off, Whistleblowing, and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) policy.

As part of the continuing efficiency drive, Reed was selected as the new Master Vendor supplier of agency workers, consultants and senior interims. This appointment will help to drive down spend on all non-permanent arrangements.

## **Aims of the new Human Resources Strategy 2014 - 2017**

The future for Brent like other London Boroughs and public sector providers will be one of challenges and change. Reductions in Government funding means that Brent must identify new ways of working to ensure that it can provide high quality services with less.

It is recognised that to achieve its ambitious vision of making Brent a fairer borough, growing the local economy and strengthening Brent's community it must rely on its greatest asset – its workforce.

It is therefore the aim of the new Human Resources Strategy to proactively strengthen its position to meet the challenges that lie ahead through implementation of the following five strategic aims:

1. Achieving organisational effectiveness and strong performance management to ensure an excellent service is provided to customers and residents;
2. Recruiting, retaining and rewarding a diverse, highly skilled, flexible and motivated workforce;
3. Valuing diversity, reducing inequalities and responding to the diverse needs of the community;
4. Developing high performing managers and talented staff;
5. Building the professionalism and skills of the workforce to support One Council projects and deliver high quality services.

The new strategy and action plan is structured around these five aims, which will contribute to achieving the objectives of the future Borough Plan.

The HR strategy and action plan provides the framework and overarching priorities to enable the council and services to deliver on agreed objectives. Under the umbrella of the HR strategy a Workforce Strategy and action plan and a Diversity Strategy and action plan will be developed. These will be the instruments that will facilitate the delivery of council and HR priorities. They will ensure all activities and objectives relating to employment, workforce development, employee retention, developing staff and diversity are linked to supporting achievement of the Human Resources' challenging targets over the forthcoming years.

Equally important in the context of the Workforce strategy will be encouraging innovation amongst staff. The contribution that staff can make improving sustainable service delivery will be fundamental to the achievement of the council's vision for the future. With this in mind, the Workforce strategy will support employees to contribute as well as adapting to new ways of working.

It is acknowledged that the shape of the workforce will continue to change in the years to come. Maintaining a heightened awareness of the external environment and its impact on how the council delivers its services and the implications for its workforce, will continue to be increasingly important including how the council works with contractors. Developing a leaner and more proficient organisation will be a key priority over the next two to three years.

## **Responsibility for the Human Resources Strategy 2014 – 2017**

Although the HR Strategy has a heavy emphasis on the work programme of Human Resources, it is a strategy that is to be owned and delivered by the whole council.

To assist in council-wide ownership of this strategy will be implemented, as follows:

### **General Purposes Committee (GP Committee)**

This committee carries out a number of functions on which the Executive cannot take decisions, including public rights of way, setting the Council Tax base and approving the council's statement of accounts, staffing matters and health and safety functions. A number of sub-committees have been established to carry out some of these functions. The committee will approve the HR Strategy 2014 - 2017 and will receive regular progress and monitoring updates on the Human Resources Strategy action plan.

### **HR Director**

This postholder is responsible for ensuring effective performance and accountability in respect of the human resources service, and that it operates within clearly defined functions and engages key stakeholders at governance and officer levels.

### **HR Managers (including the Head of Learning and Development and Head of Equality)**

These post holders report to the HR Director and in addition to all members of the Human Resources team, they are responsible for overseeing the on-going development, delivery and review of the strategy to ensure the HR service directly contributes to the achievement of the council's strategic plan.

### **HR Improvement Group (HRIG)**

This group comprises of senior stakeholders from across the council and provides an opportunity to scrutinise the operational effectiveness of the Human Resources. The HRIG will play a key role along side the Corporate Management Team (CMT) in implementing the strategy; ensuring middle managers are fully engaged. The group will also be responsible for monitoring the role out of the strategy on a quarterly basis. Progress against the strategy and action plan will be reported on an annual basis to CMT for consideration and approval.

### **Corporate Management Team (CMT)**

The CMT is comprised of the Chief Executive and eight directors, who lead the council's departments. They are responsible for ensuring that services are delivered in accordance with strategies and policies agreed by council and in the best interests of the community. They also play a fundamental role in determining the strategic direction of the council and ensuring its strategic objectives are delivered. In this context, CMT supported by HRIG will have the overarching responsibility for ensuring the strategy is implemented and middle managers are fully engaged.



### **Council-wide managers**

All Brent managers are required to fulfil the responsibilities outlined in human resources policies and procedures. They must also provide leadership that motivates, empowers and develops others to achieve shared goals as part of their core management responsibilities. In addition, managers must take responsibility for challenging poor performance. This will be made explicit in role profiles and measured through the annual appraisal process.

### **Trade Unions**

There are two recognised trade union groups operating within Brent council, Unison and GMB. They are available to provide support to their members on employee relations matters including health and safety. The council also engages with other unions who represent our school staff including National Union of Teachers, National Union of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers, Association of Teachers & Lecturers, National Association of Head Teachers, Association of School & College Leaders.

### **Brent employees**

All employees are responsible for ensuring they behave in accordance with the council's mission and values. The council is committed to working in partnership with employees through the Employees' Joint Consultative Committee in order to improve consultation, communication and engagement.

It is important that Brent employees are proud of the council and its services and are encouraged to act as ambassadors in raising the profile of the council as a vibrant and interesting place to live and work.

## **Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy**

Prior to implementation of this strategy consultation took place with key stakeholders including trade union representatives; HR Improvement Group; key members; employees; and CMT.

The Human Resources Strategy action plan outlines the key activities against each of the objectives that the Strategy sets out to achieve.

The action plan will be reviewed in 2015 when the new Borough Plan is implemented to ensure that the tasks and activities of the HR Strategy contribute to the borough's revised strategic plan and on an annual basis for the life of the strategy.

The strategy will also be reviewed in light of the staff survey in 2014. The results of the survey will be incorporated into future recommendations/actions associated with the HR strategy.

To ensure the new Human Resources Strategy is embedded across all areas of the council and at all staff levels this strategy will be published on the intranet and made available to all staff across the council.

## **Review of the Human Resources Strategy 2014 - 2017**

The Human Resources Strategy 2014 – 2017 has a lifespan of three years. Progress against achievement of its strategic objectives will be reviewed on an annual basis. This will include amending any aspects of the strategy to reflect changing priorities. Feedback from employees, trade unions and managers, along with quality checks will be conducted to ensure that all opinions are reflected wherever possible.