

HR Committee – 8 January 2026

People Strategy Progress Report December 2025

Purpose	For review
Classification	External
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides a progress update 6 months after approval of the People Strategy, and demonstrates the significant progress, importance and impact of the work so far.</p> <p>An updated action plan is provided with highlights including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behaviour commitments• Growth and Goals conversations• Embracing change programme• Recruitment process improvements
Recommendation(s)	To review and note progress.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>To support the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Corporate Plan• the Transformation Strategy aligned to the People and Capabilities theme.• readiness for local government reorganisation.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Rebecca Drummond – Assistant Director for Transformation
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Introduction

1. The people strategy was approved by Council in April 2025 and included a 2-year implementation plan to modernise, and best position our staff for future opportunities whilst feeling supported and ready for change in local government reorganisation.

This report provides a progress update 6 months on and demonstrates the significant progress, importance and impact of the work so far.

Key areas of progress

2. A full progress update is provided in the appendix (pages 5-10). Areas to highlight are:

2.1. People strategy launch

In May, a Learning at work week initiative was delivered via a roadshow across all our work bases and was used as an opportunity to launch our people strategy. The roadshow included activities, webinars, learning sessions, polls, signposting, and general engagement. As a result there is good awareness of the people strategy work and intentions.

2.2. Behaviour commitments

Our behaviour commitments, aligned to our values, were developed with engagement across the organisation and launched in July 2025.

The launch included sharepoint pages, employee and manager toolkits, and briefing sessions.

A one day leadership development session was also delivered, based around mindset and behaviours, as a pre-cursor to the formal launch.

To further embed the behaviour commitments, staff recognition was discussed informally at EMT in October and a more detailed proposal on values and behaviours-based recognition is in development.

Growth and goals conversations, see below, also support our behaviour commitments.

2.3. **Growth and goals conversations**

Our existing performance management processes have been reviewed and a new 'Growth and Goals conversations' initiative launched in November.

Easy to use forms, toolkit, sharepoint pages, and process guide are available now.

A monthly meet session was delivered in October and November, plus two staff briefing sessions, to aid wider staff understanding of the new process, to get people ready.

One day growth and goals conversations training days are being delivered for all managers across NFDC. 150 managers have signed up and training will be complete by end of December. Feedback has been excellent so far.

This represents a larger piece of work than was originally planned and is being delivered ahead of the original implementation schedule.

2.4. **Recruitment process improvements**

The recruitment process has been fully mapped, reviewed and redesigned using lists, forms and automation. Testing with a core group of managers took place in September/October, enabling improvements to be made. The new process went live in November and feedback has been positive. Initial teething problems have been resolved, and the process is now working effectively.

Aligned to the new process, a recruitment toolkit has been created on Sharepoint to better guide managers through the recruitment process, giving them all the information they need to take them through from start to finish.

2.5. **Embracing change programme**

Our embracing change programme started in September and was set up following feedback from our operational managers to ensure it was delivered in a variety of ways to meet the needs of different groups of staff. It included:

- 8 short e-learning modules covering topics such as reactions to change, taking control, looking after yourself.
- 8 x 1 hour interactive learning sessions delivered in a hybrid way to increase accessibility
- 2 x half day interactive learning sessions in person

- 9 x 1 hour team taster sessions covering the key topics in a supportive and interactive way for specific teams
- A series of practical worksheets and activities to follow up each of the learning sessions, which will be made available on SharePoint for all to access.

Evaluation scores for satisfaction are 4.8 out of 5 and comments include satisfaction with the interactive nature of the sessions, the practical tips and activities, the opportunity to take time out to reflect and discuss the impact of change on self and others. In total, approximately 100 staff have benefited from the programme.

3. Challenges and mitigations

Challenge	Mitigations
Managers are most impacted by the new initiatives and changes delivered as a result of the people strategy, and some managers are finding new ways of working more challenging than others.	Feedback is being gathered informally and regularly to ascertain how people are feeling. Additional support for managers through videos, drop ins, update sessions, peer reflection or further training is being explored.
People strategy related activities are challenging for some to access due to capacity, service delivery needs and amount of change activity.	With all new initiatives, effort is being made to ensure accessibility for different groups of staff, by including depots, different times of the day, different formats of information or learning. Toolkits and guides support longer term sustainability and support.
Communication channels are failing to consistently reach people, with many people saying that all staff communication e-mails are not read routinely and people don't know about changes that are happening within the organisation. However, for major changes like LGR, people feel well informed and value the openness of the CEO briefings.	Our internal communications and engagement is being reviewed to ascertain what is working and what is not. Some new ways of communicating are being tested to gather data. The review will result in a series of recommendations in the new year. A specific LGR staff engagement plan is in place to ensure people are well informed.

Challenge	Mitigations
There is significant scope for additional activities to be delivered for staff, to help them work better together, and prepare everyone for change, however, capacity is limited to the scope in the people strategy.	A proposal has been developed to consider capacity of the team, in light of staff changes and future needs for organisational development activity.
Impact of the people strategy work will take time to see and measure, so return on investment isn't always immediately obvious.	Immediate feedback is being gathered on each initiative as and when, with a full staff survey to be run in 2026 to gain feedback on culture, the wider organisation, communications, learning and careers, management and leadership, and wellbeing, which can be benchmarked against other local government organisations and previous surveys at NFDC in 2024 and 2022.

Financial and resource implications

4. Three additional roles were recruited in 2025 to ensure effective delivery of the action plan:
 - learning coordinator (April 2025)
 - organisational development facilitator (May 2025)
 - employee engagement officer (July 2025)

In addition, a modest ringfenced budget for events, training, and other financial costs is in place to support delivery of the strategy.

Expected spend in 2025-6 is shown below:

Item	Forecast spend 2025/6
Learning Coordinator (30 hrs)	£30,200
OD Facilitator (30 hrs)	£42,200
Engagement Officer (37 hrs)	£30,600
Workforce datamart project	£4,987
Staff recognition	£1,500
Survey tool	£1,200
Internal training costs	£10,000
Delivery of growth and goals training	£20,000
Learning at work week	£450
Total	£141,137

Risk assessment

5. No formal risk assessment has been completed, however there is a significant risk to the organisation (in terms of retaining existing and recruiting new staff, and being ready for change) if we do not continue with the planned approach.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

6. The people strategy will be in support of the climate change programme, intending to create a sense of responsibility and accountability for our people to make changes aligned to becoming more sustainable. This element is captured implicitly across all four themes of strong roots, grow, connect and empower.

In addition, development of further staff networks, all connected by the employee forum, will include links to the newly proposed climate champions group, embedding sustainability and climate action within the staff engagement activity.

Equalities implications

7. Inclusion is critical in the delivery of the people strategy and the values of empathy and fairness capture how this will be thread throughout. Our work is delivered through the lens of our new behaviours: positive, open and honest, adaptability, respectful,

work together, and take pride, all of which have inclusive behavioural commitments within them.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

8. Collecting and maintaining quality data about our workforce will be important to enable effective measurement of our success, whilst ensuring data usage complies with UK Regs and NFDC guidance.

9. Next steps

- Continue with planned activity in the people strategy action plan.
- Consider additional optional support and training for managers.
- Consider our future organisational development needs as LGR gets closer, and the capacity required to deliver.
- Plan staff event for summer 2026.
- Run a full staff survey in 2026 to measure impact.

Appendix

10. A more detailed People Strategy action plan progress report is shown below at Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1

Theme	Activity	Progress December 2025
strong roots	<p>Improve transactional HR processes, including recruitment and internal job moves. Create more guidance and information to support people to self serve to reduce HR contacts for highest volume enquiries.</p>	<p>Recruitment processes have been reviewed and redesigned using lists, forms and automation. Testing took place in September/October and went live in November. Initial teething problems have been resolved, and the process is now working effectively.</p>
strong roots	<p>Develop and launch a behaviours framework and tools to support implementation, including develop and launch a refreshed staff recognition scheme. Light touch option could be how colleagues and managers recognise each other. A more involved programme would be beneficial but may not be realistic.</p>	<p>Behaviour commitments developed with engagement across the organisation and launched in July 2025. Launch included sharepoint pages, employee and manager toolkits, and briefing sessions.</p> <p>Delivered a one day leadership development session based around mindset and behaviours.</p> <p>Staff recognition discussed informally at EMT and agreed to develop a more detailed proposal on values and behaviours based recognition. Proposal currently in development and will support embedding of values and behaviours.</p> <p>Growth and goals conversations also have behaviour commitments conversations embedded.</p>
strong roots	<p>Develop an organisational change management approach and toolkit to include tools, templates, guidance.</p>	<p>Change management toolkit has been created and is now being tested within the transformation team with the MARS and Netcall projects.</p> <p>MARS change readiness assessment is underway and the report and recommendations to be delivered before end December.</p> <p>Netcall following a more iterative process due to the agile method of development, and is testing the change management process.</p> <p>Embracing change programme delivered, with 9 team taster sessions, 2 half days and 8 topical sessions. Evaluation is positive with average satisfaction score of 4.8 out of 5.</p>

Theme	Activity	Progress December 2025
strong roots	Research and create staff personas to support targeted interventions across all aspects of the people strategy, e.g. engagement & comms, learning opportunities, ways to connect, wellbeing.	<p>Initial delay in starting this piece of work until Employee Engagement Officer started in role in July 2025.</p> <p>Informal interviews carried out with over 100 individuals across the organisation, all sites and types of roles. Analysis currently being undertaken to create a series of personas to represent staff groupings to enable more tailored approaches to training, communications and wellbeing. Personas to be developed by end December.</p>
strong roots	Establish core transformation competencies and create learning opportunities to upskill where needed. May include self awareness, managing change, customer service, systems thinking, co-production.	<p>Background work is underway for this action. Links closely with leadership development, behaviour commitments and change management toolkit.</p> <p>Leadership sessions delivered on supporting others through change, continuous change methodologies, and mindset and behaviours.</p> <p>Conflict management sessions delivered by an external provider to 46 people over 4 full day sessions, and handling challenging conversations one-hour webinar was attended by 79 people and the recording viewed 13 times. New customer service e-learning module launched.</p> <p>Systems thinking training being undertaken with the intention of delivering masterclasses in-house in the new year.</p>
strong roots	Create leadership and management competency framework and develop learning opportunities to support leaders and managers to reflect upon and achieve competencies and bring our values and behaviours to life.	This project is in the early stages of development as per the original timeline. Significant progress expected in early 2026.
strong roots	Identify and review key people policies where essential to reflect employment law and organisational changes.	Policies impacted by changes in law updated as needed. Neonatal leave as an example of new policy implemented.

Theme	Activity	Progress December 2025
strong roots	Improve workforce data quality and create service dashboards to support baseline measurement and empowerment of managers, as well as be devolution ready.	<p>An added module to i-Trent, called datamart has been purchased and the contract now runs alongside i-Trent. Initial work has been completed to error test and undertake security assessments to enable NFDC to access the full data from i-Trent. First access to data and familiarisation session scheduled for end November.</p> <p>HR Advisor trained in Power BI and ready to start designing workforce dashboards for managers. Anticipate testing phase in early 2026.</p>
grow	Review and develop mandatory course matrix by staff groups.	All training requirements are listed on the LMS system and records uploaded.
grow	Continue to utilise, and enhance coordination and management for successful apprenticeships and other development opportunities for existing staff, new recruits and hard to fill roles. E.g. young authority of the year, DCN management programme, projects.	<p>Currently 17 apprenticeships in progress.</p> <p>Five of our talented staff took part in the tri-sector challenge in October 2025. Sponsored the Student Gala Awards at Brockenhurst College presented the award for 'Apprentice of the Year.' Identified candidates for young local authority of the year event in March 2026.</p>
grow	Review and update appraisals and 1:1 processes to include behaviours framework and better support personal development planning, allowing for a flexible approach as we navigate change. To include clear guidance, training, and recording expectations.	<p>Full review and development of new Growth and Goals conversations to replace previous performance reviews and 1:1s. Process and forms launched with toolkit, sharepoint pages, videos, and process guide.</p> <p>Monthly meet sessions delivered in October and November, plus 2 briefing sessions.</p> <p>One day growth and goals conversations training being delivered for all managers across NFDC, to be complete by end of December. Feedback excellent so far.</p> <p>Larger piece of work than originally planned and ahead of schedule.</p>

Theme	Activity	Progress December 2025
connect	<p>Review, enhance and measure internal communication and engagement channels, media, purpose and messaging. To include content creation (corporate presentations, written briefings etc), a clear plan of campaigns which run aligned to the people strategy, with appropriate staff surveys to test engagement and identify new actions. To include a regular campaign to raise awareness of wellbeing resources.</p>	<p>Initial delay in starting this piece of work until Employee Engagement Officer started in role in July 2025.</p> <p>LGR staff survey completed.</p> <p>LGR Engagement plan in place and being delivered in advance of more detailed review, and includes newsletters and soundbites to test new ideas.</p> <p>Internal engagement and communications review is now underway, with plans in place for user testing and workshop sessions. Personas work also contributes to this review.</p> <p>Plan to complete review report and recommendations by end Jan 2026.</p>
connect	<p>Enhance staff intranet with accessible and engaging content.</p>	<p>Initial delay in starting this piece of work until Employee Engagement Officer started in role in July 2025.</p> <p>Sharepoint mapping exercise completed and initial ideas for re-design in draft.</p> <p>This works fits into the wider internal engagement and communications review which is now underway, with plans in place for sharepoint user testing and workshop sessions before end December 2025.</p> <p>Plan to complete review report and recommendations by end Jan 2026.</p>

Theme	Activity	Progress December 2025
connect	Create new and develop existing peer forums / staff networks / learning circles / collaboration cafes (both diversity and role related).	<p>Change champions group now merged with employee forum due to overlap, and first refreshed employee forum meeting took place November 2025.</p> <p>More streamlined connection between all staff networks, via Employee Forum as central coordinating group.</p> <p>Initial expressions of interest being obtained for additional staff networks for early careers, women, neurodiversity, plus social group and also in liaison with sustainability team for new climate champions group. All link up to avoid duplication of effort and engage different groups of people to ensure wider reach.</p> <p>New groups to launch early 2026.</p>
empower	Implement a 'Digital Skills for All' programme.	Tender process for a partner to deliver in 2026 has closed to applications. Evaluation of high number of submissions to complete in December, with a formal contract to appoint in early 2026.
empower	Create a learning hub. To include a menu of opportunities, detailed guidance for staff on learning and development opportunities and process to access and record.	<p>Vast array of learning resources identified and curated onto sharepoint as our learning hub, including activities to read, watch, reflect or do in relation to developing skills to meet our behaviour commitments.</p> <p>New learning considerations form launched as part of the growth and goals conversations to ensure we have a clear way of recording learning needs and allocating funding fairly.</p>

Theme	Activity	Progress December 2025
empower	Provide coaching, mentoring, buddy and shadowing opportunities. To include training in coaching and mentoring, guidance for buddying and shadowing, a hub of information on sharepoint to show opportunities available and contact details.	Two staff members ready to start coaching apprenticeship in January 2026, and combined with existing in-house skills, will enable coaching to be offered more easily to staff. Coaching supervision group to be set up in new year to support existing and new coaches.
empower	Develop a menu of targeted learning opportunities for different staff groups, for example a people managers essentials programme for first line chargehands and supervisors. Learning needs to be identified via skills audits and identification of staff personas.	Ad hoc delivery according to needs. Examples of delivery so far in 2025 include a series of toolbox talks to waste teams on conflict management and inclusion, and conflict management for customer facing roles. Operational supervisors have been at capacity due to waste service changes so delayed review of needs for additional line management training for this group until mid-2026.