

ANNUAL WORKFORCE REPORT 2023/24

Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Support Services

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 We are delighted to present our Annual Workforce Report, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to transparency in workforce data. This report highlights our dedication to ensuring the best outcomes for our residents, workforce, and the broader communities we proudly serve.
- 1.2 This report aims to present a comprehensive overview of our progress from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, focusing on the advancements made in our One Team People Plan. It outlines the new initiatives we have implemented to achieve our goals, underscoring our commitment to driving meaningful change and promoting a One Team approach.
- 1.3 Additionally, this report provides an analysis of our workforce, featuring key metrics that offer insights into our overall performance and strategic direction. It presents our strategic initiatives for the next 12 months, emphasising the importance of maintaining focus on these priorities. Doing so is essential for ensuring ongoing progress, aligning our efforts with long-term objectives, and strengthening our competitive advantage.
- 1.4 Our workforce is the heart and soul of our Council. Their dedication, hard work, and passion drive our success and enable us to deliver exceptional services to our community. We are incredibly proud of our colleagues, who continuously go above and beyond in their roles, demonstrating resilience, creativity, and a commitment to excellence.
- 1.5 The One Team People Plan serves as our workforce strategy and guiding framework, steering our initiatives to support, develop, and empower our colleagues. This plan is not just a document but a dynamic framework that evolves with the needs of our workforce and the community we serve. It aligns with one of our key enabling programmes in the council plan, focusing on our workforce.
- 1.6 By investing in our One Team People Plan, we ensure that our workforce remains motivated, skilled, and ready to meet future challenges. This strategic approach helps us create a positive and supportive work environment, fostering growth and innovation. It also ensures that we are well-equipped to serve our residents and contribute to the overall success and well-being of our community.

2. KEY MESSAGES

- 2.1 As we reflect on our workforce's journey during the reporting period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, we acknowledge our achievements and the critical insights that will drive our future success.
- 2.2 The following key messages highlight our performance, accomplishments and priorities for the upcoming year:
- **Actionable Data Insights:** Our workforce data reveals transformative trends that will shape our strategic initiatives moving forward.
 - **Celebrating Achievements:** We have launched impactful initiatives that significantly enhanced employee satisfaction and productivity.
 - **Advancing Diversity and Inclusion:** We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, making strides towards our EDI goals.
 - **Empowering Colleague Development:** Investing in leadership and skill development is paramount to unlocking our workforce's full potential.
 - **Prioritising Wellbeing:** Our unwavering focus on colleague wellbeing is crucial for sustaining a happy and engaged workforce.
 - **Strategic Vision Ahead:** We have set strategic priorities for the year ahead that will drive sustained growth and success, ensuring that we remain adaptable and responsive to the evolving need of our workforce, Council and community.

3 WORKFORCE OVERVIEW

Number of Employees

- 3.1 As of 31 March 2024, the Council employed a total of 2930 colleagues (headcount) This number has remained stable over the last couple of years, reflecting our commitment to maintaining a robust and reliable team to deliver essential services.
- 3.2 Stability in employment figures also underscores our success in creating a supportive and engaging work environment, which contributes to employee retention. Additionally, it highlights our ability to manage resources effectively, ensuring we meet the needs of our community while adapting to any changes in service demands. Workforce stability is a testament to the Council's strategic planning and the dedication of our employees.

Demographic Breakdown

- 3.3 Our workforce is composed of a diverse group of individuals, with 73% identifying as female and 27% as male. The age distribution ranges from 17 to 85, with many colleagues falling within the 45-54 age bracket which makes up 28% of the workforce and has been consistent over the last 2 years. It is important to note that less than 3% are aged between 16-24.
- 3.4 Ethnic diversity remains a priority, with 12.22% of our workforce representing various minority groups. There is a small percentage of the workforce who have chosen not to share their data. We continue to focus on increasing voluntary declarations in this area.

Workforce Trends and Changes

- 3.5 The overall workforce turnover rate for the reporting period is 12.39%, representing a reduction of 2.58% compared to the previous year. This turnover rate includes both voluntary departures (resignations) and involuntary (such as redundancies and dismissals). In contrast, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reports that the average employee turnover for UK workers was 27.4% from January 2022 to December 2023.
- 3.6 The highest attrition rate was observed in Development and Regeneration, where it reached 17.99%. However, this is one of our smaller departments in terms of headcount, so the number of leavers, is relative to the total size of the team.
- 3.7 The voluntary turnover rate for permanent contract holders (excluding those with temporary contracts who are potentially more likely to change jobs) for 2023/24 is 9.97%.
- 3.8 The data on employee departures shows that the highest number of leavers (84), consists of those who have 2-5 years of service with the council. This group represents the largest proportion of leavers across all years of service, highlighting a significant trend. This pattern suggests that after reaching this specific length of service, employees are more likely to leave the council. This is consistent with national tenure figures for 2023 published by the CIPD where the most common length of service is between two and five years.
- 3.9 The largest proportion of our colleagues (38%) have a length of service ranging from 2 to 10 years, reflecting our strong focus on employee retention.
- 3.10 Retaining experienced employees is crucial as it contributes to organisational stability, continuity, and the preservation of valuable expertise and knowledge. At the same time, we recognise the importance of healthy turnover, which brings fresh perspectives and new skills into the workforce. Balancing these elements is key to maintaining a dynamic and resilient organisation.
- 3.11 Our extensive efforts, which have significantly contributed to higher retention rates, are thoroughly detailed later in the report, highlighting the various strategies and initiatives that have been implemented.

Workforce Development Initiatives

- 3.12 In response to the evolving needs of our workforce, we have launched a development initiative aimed at enhancing skills and supporting career progression. Our updated Leadership Foundation Programme has been particularly successful, with 60 new managers completing it so far.
- 3.13 This initiative not only equips our colleagues with the necessary skills to excel in their roles but also reinforces our commitment to continuous learning and professional growth.
- 3.14 Our dedicated Organisational Development team continues to offer a wide range of training and development opportunities for colleagues, providing a variety of blended learning opportunities.

This focus on continual development is vital for ensuring that our colleagues are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge, empowering them to excel in their roles and adapt to the changing needs of our organisation. Continuous learning not only enhances individual performance but also bolsters our collective ability to tackle future challenges effectively.

Future Workforce Projections

- 3.15 We are prioritising the strengthening of our talent pipeline as part of our long-term strategy for continuous improvement and success, with a particular focus on our early careers programme. This initiative offers comprehensive training, mentorship, and career development opportunities for recent graduates and young professionals, ensuring that we cultivate the next generation of leaders who will enhance our organisation's effectiveness.
- 3.16 A significant portion (28%) of employees fall in the 45 – 54 age bracket and less than 3% are aged between 16-24. This aligns with the broader trends seen in the Local Government Workforce Data report, published in August 2024, which shows only 4.6% are under the age of 24. These figures, sourced from the LGA Earnings Survey 2019/20, highlight a similar need across local government to attract and develop younger talent.
- 3.17 Building a pipeline of younger talent is essential to ensure business continuity, particularly considering the significant representation of colleagues within the following age groups. The 2021 Census for Stockport Borough indicates that just under 14% of our residents fall within the 45-54 age group, with the highest percentage in this category being those aged 50-54 at 6.99%. In contrast, 28% of our workforce is in the 45-54 age group, with 14% specifically in the 50-54 bracket—double the percentage of residents in this age range.
- 3.18 This demographic reality highlights the need to prepare the next generation of workers to gradually replace those who are retiring. By investing in early career talent, we are not only planning but also fostering innovation and building a skilled workforce that will maintain our competitive edge and sustain our organisational excellence over time. This proactive approach ensures a balanced and sustainable workforce for years to come.
- 3.19 We will continue to sustain our current early careers schemes, including, supported internships, opportunities for care leavers, and work experience placements. By working closely with colleges and universities, we aim to attract top talent and ensure sustained organisational success through a steady influx of skilled and motivated individuals prepared to contribute to our long-term goals.

4. WORKFORCE PROGRESS AND ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS

- 4.1 Our One Team People plan is a crucial enabler in the Council plan, and sets out:
- Our aspirations about how all our colleagues in Stockport work together
 - How the council supports colleagues throughout their career at the council
 - Integrating and embedding our values
 - Forward-looking objectives focused on innovative recruitment strategies and
 - Becoming a more inclusive organisation

- 4.2 The One Team People Plan has been refreshed following the All-Colleague Survey 2023 results, received in Q3 2023/24, and the EDI Survey results, received in Q1 2024/25. We will continue to grow and develop the plan in collaboration with our workforce.
- 4.3 The workforce data highlights key workforce trends and areas of focus, with initiatives to address and support these outlined in section 10, ensuring a comprehensive approach to fostering an inclusive, engaged and future-ready workforce.
- 4.4 To ensure a clear and organised structure for this report, we have framed our progress and key achievements within the context of our comprehensive 5 delivery pillars in our One Team People Plan. This approach ensures that each area of focus is thoroughly addressed and aligned with our strategic objectives.

OUR FIVE PILLAR PLAN

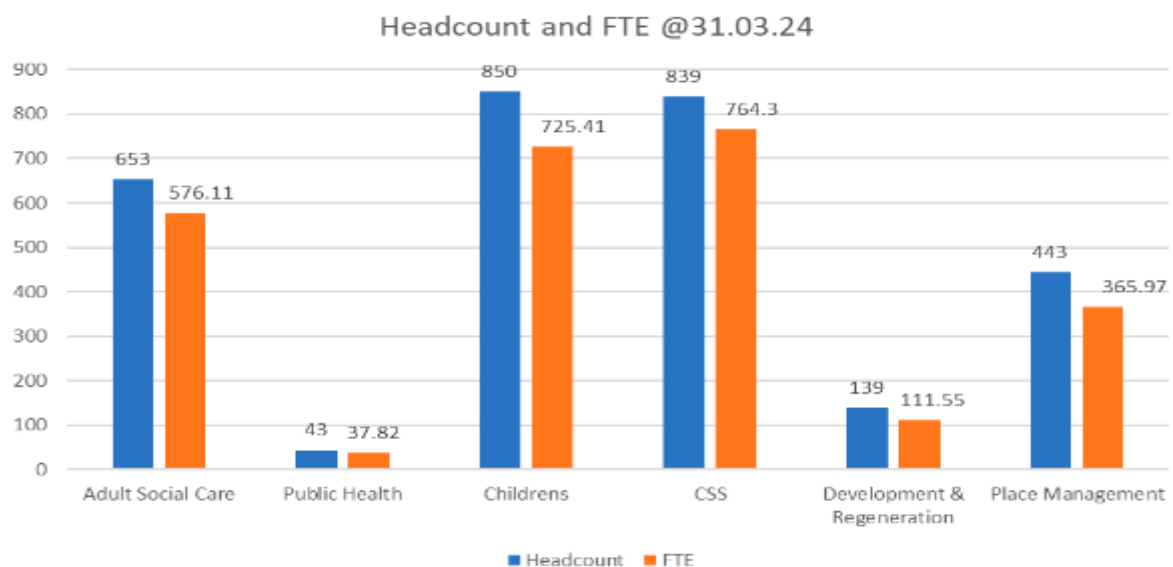


5. JOIN US

5.1 We are committed to establishing the Council as a premier employer through innovative strategies and impactful initiatives that attract top talent, enhance employee satisfaction, and foster a dynamic workplace culture.

5.2 The employee headcount in each of the council’s directorates is detailed in chart 1 below:

Chart 1 – Employee headcount and Full-Time equivalents (FTE) by Departments



- 5.3 During the reporting period, a total of 488 jobs were advertised. These positions attracted 6,490 applications from individuals keen to pursue a career within the council. This figure includes those who applied through standard channels and excludes additional targeted recruitment efforts. This number represents a substantial pool of candidates, each bringing their own skills, experiences, and aspirations.
- 5.4 The Human Resources (HR), Organisational Development (OD) teams and managers play a pivotal role in the entire colleague lifecycle, from initial recruitment to ongoing support, ensuring a seamless integration of new colleagues into the Council. This process begins with the diligent efforts of our recruitment team, who work closely with hiring managers to identify and attract top talent that aligns with the Council's strategic needs.
- 5.5 Once candidates are selected, our HR and OD team, collaboratively manage the critical tasks of drawing up employment contracts, ensuring timely payment, and making certain that all new employees are onboarded efficiently.
- 5.6 The induction process, meticulously designed and executed by our OD team, ensures that new employees are well-acquainted with the Council's values, policies, and expectations from the outset. Beyond induction, the HR and OD teams continue to provide essential support throughout the colleagues' tenure, addressing any HR-related inquiries and facilitating their professional development.
- 5.7 This comprehensive approach has led to 347 colleagues successfully securing positions and starting their careers with the Council, reflecting our commitment to effective workforce allocation and the strategic alignment of our staffing resources. The HR and OD team's ongoing involvement in every stage of the colleague journey not only supports the individuals but also strengthens the overall workforce, contributing to the Council's capacity to meet its objectives and serve the community effectively.
- 5.8 Building on our commitment to becoming a top employer, we have implemented innovative strategies and impactful initiatives. Here is a summary of our achievements:
- Through improved social media engagement, we have expanded our reach and visibility, successfully attracting top talent to our diverse range of roles within the Council.
 - We created a captivating recruitment video that highlights the variety of roles available while also highlighting Stockport as a vibrant and attractive place to live and work. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gerOns1k920>
 - As part of our One Team approach, colleagues from HR, OD and Adult Social Care collaborated to launch a national recruitment campaign targeting critical job vacancies. This effort included two recruitment events – one online and one in-person – which collectively garnered 83 applications and resulted in 18 appointable candidates.
 - A referral scheme has been introduced to support recruitment in the REACH service, and it has led to multiple job offers, highlighting our commitment to utilising community networks for effective recruitment.

In addition, the bespoke recruitment support provided to the REACH team has resulted in it being fully staffed for the first time in two years.

- In September 2023 we hosted our second comprehensive jobs fair which attracted over 700 delegates. Candidates had the opportunity to engage directly with hiring managers, submit their CVs, and participate in on-the-spot interviews, effectively streamlining the hiring process.
- We have reviewed our recruitment process and designed a values-based recruitment strategy. This is important because it ensures that we attract and hire individuals who align with our core values, leading to a more cohesive and motivated team. By prioritising candidates who share our mission and principles, we enhance workplace culture and increase the likelihood of long-term employee engagement and success.
- In partnership with Pure Innovations, we continue to offer work placements within the council for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). 6 interns graduated during a celebration event on 11 July 2024 and the next cohort of eleven started in September 2024.
- We launched our Jumpstart scheme for care leavers with 3 participants enrolled. Two of them have successfully secured apprenticeship positions within the council, while another has earned a placement at their preferred university.
- Collaborating with Stockport College for T Level placements has allowed us to provide students with practical industry experience. This partnership has resulted in one successful placement so far, bridging the gap between education and work experience.
- In partnership with several Higher Education Institutions, we launched the care cadets programme, enabling students to gain practical experience in the healthcare sector. So far, three students have been placed with our commissioned care providers, receiving outstanding feedback and significantly contributing to the enhancement of care quality.
- We also continue to support health and safety inductions for new starters, work experience, jump start colleagues and Pure Innovation College interns. A total of 24 young persons have received training so far this year, with a further 11 Pure Innovation colleagues set to attend.

6. GROW AND THRIVE

- 6.1 We are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive, with access to learning and development opportunities that empower them to grow, advance, and realize their full potential.
- 6.2 In 2022 and revisited in 2023, the Corporate Peer Challenge praised our leadership and ambitious changes with local partners, enhancing service delivery. They noted our commitment to long-term transformation and innovation, highlighting strong workforce development, core values, and staff pride.

- 6.3 We continue to transform service delivery by automating HR and OD processes and tasks, resulting in streamlined, reliable digital transactions with 360-degree visibility. These efficiencies enable us to deliver better quality service and value to the public.
- 6.4 Building on our commitment to creating an environment where everyone can thrive and access opportunities for growth, here is a summary of our achievements to date.
- In 2023, we launched "Leading Stockport," a leadership development programme including the Leadership Foundation for foundational skills and masterclasses for advanced training. Our Aspiring Leaders Programme, with Salford College, offers leadership qualifications, fostering growth across our organisation.
 - Over 1,500 colleagues attended our leadership forums during 2023, providing them with crucial opportunities for personal development, networking, and the exchange of ideas that are vital for fostering strong leadership within our organisation.
 - During 2023/24 60 colleagues have participated in the leadership foundation course, gaining essential skills and knowledge that are crucial for building strong, effective leaders within our organisation.
 - We currently have 39 colleagues undertaking leadership apprenticeships at various levels, which is vital for developing future leaders who will drive our organisation's success and ensure long-term growth and stability.
 - The 'Leading Stockport' initiatives have had a substantial positive impact on our colleague survey results. All metrics relating to line management and development improved between 2022 and 2023, with 95% of colleagues reporting trust in their line manager, 92% feeling fairly treated, and 91% feeling listened to.
 - We have refined our apprenticeship guidance to better target essential roles, ensuring that our programmes are more effectively aligned with organisational needs.
 - We have optimized the use of our levy funds to maximize their impact, achieving an impressive 73% completion rate for apprenticeships, which significantly surpasses the 53% national average. This strategic approach not only enhances the skillset of our workforce but also ensures that we are making the most of our available resources.
 - We have expanded our pool of certified coaches, providing colleagues with access to a diverse and experienced coaching team which includes executive coaching for assistant directors and above. This is crucial for fostering personal and professional growth, as it ensures that all colleagues can connect with a coach who can offer tailored guidance.

- We have successfully embedded the innovative ‘My Conversation’ approach into personal development reviews, fulfilling our commitment to improving all aspects of the colleague journey.

By incorporating our values into ‘My Conversation,’ and aligning objectives with those in the council plan, we have enhanced the overall colleague experience, creating a more meaningful and personalised development process demonstrating how each and every colleague enables us to deliver our strategic priorities.

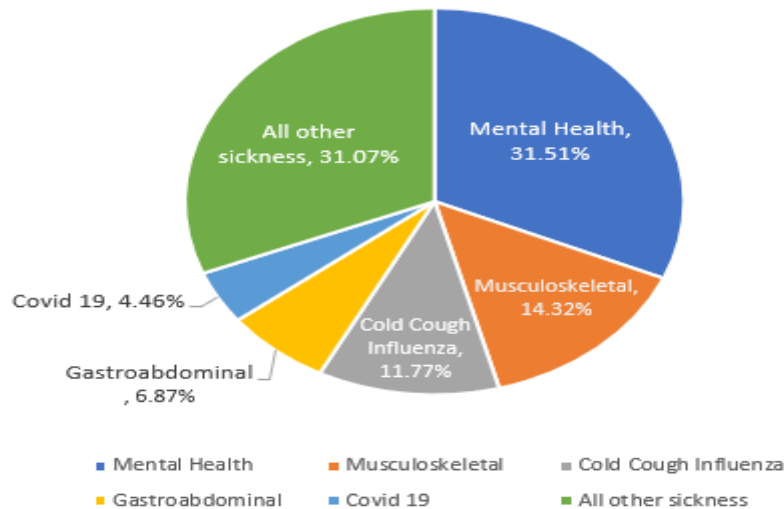
- The effective implementation and management of health and safety is best achieved by involving colleagues and utilising their knowledge and skills to create a healthy and safe working environment. We continue to provide, develop or commission training to support key health & safety topics, such as: manual handling, fire safety, first aid, evacuation chair training, violence and aggression, personal safety, health and safety for school caretakers, power tool safety, health and safety for school leaders and risk assessments.
- We have recently applied for the Council’s health and safety training provision to be CPD certified. Four courses; Asbestos Awareness, Legionella Management, Working at Height and Manual Handling have been evaluated to industry standard and have achieved CPD accreditation. This means the learning value has been scrutinised to ensure integrity and quality.

7. FEEL SUPPORTED

- 7.1 Wellbeing is our top priority, ensuring everyone feels supported and valued. By embracing a ‘people first, professional second’ approach, we have implemented initiatives that prioritise the mental, physical, and emotional health of our workforce, fostering a supporting and inclusive environment.
- 7.2 Our dedication to wellbeing is evident through various programmes and resources designed to support our workforce’s health and happiness. Our 2023 survey confirmed this dedication, showing a 3% increase in our workplace wellbeing index indicators.
- 7.3 The HR team remains committed to supporting managers with employee relations cases. During this reporting period, we’ve observed an increase in cases, excluding those related to sickness absence. While some of these cases involve disciplinary actions initiated by management, the rise also reflects our proactive approach to maintaining a fair and respectful workplace. This ensures that issues are addressed promptly and with the necessary support for all involved.
- 7.4 Sickness absence has decreased to an average of 8.67 days per full-time equivalent (FTE), marking a significant improvement compared to the 9.86 days per FTE recorded for the 2022/23 period. Benchmarking data through LG Inform at the time of writing was only available for 2022/23. At that time, the national average was 8.5 days per FTE.
- 7.5 The leading causes of sickness absence within the council are visually represented in chart 2, which shows the percentage breakdown of these factors.

Mental health issues stand out as the most significant, accounting for nearly 32% of all absences. This emphasises the critical need for our strong well-being offerings, designed to support our colleagues mental and emotional health as detailed in section 7.10.

Chart 2 – Percentage breakdown of leading causes of sickness absence



- 7.6 Our Occupational Health provision saw steady growth in usage, peaking at 808 cases in 2021/22. As part of our colleague wellbeing approach, our primary aim is to support our workforce. In 2022/23, the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team implemented a programme to ensure that Occupational Health referrals are of high quality and comply with organisational guidelines. In addition to our broader wellbeing initiatives and the support offered to colleagues, these efforts have been key contributory factors in reducing referrals, from 705 in 2022/23 to 597 in 2023/24. This has also resulted in financial savings for the council whilst ensuring colleagues continue to receive the most appropriate wellbeing support.
- 7.7 Access to our counselling services has remained consistent, with 237 requests in 2022/23 and 223 in 2023/24. This steady demand underscores the importance of supporting colleagues’ mental health and well-being. Providing professional counselling not only helps colleagues address personal and workplace challenges, but also promotes a healthier, more productive work environment, reduces absenteeism, and boosts job satisfaction and retention. By offering crucial support, we foster a culture of care, demonstrating our commitment to colleague well-being and creating a more engaged and motivated workforce.
- 7.8 Overall, the proactive efforts of our HR team, in close collaboration with our directorates and dedicated support from our managers in managing sickness absence, have been instrumental in creating a supportive environment for all colleagues. This teamwork has ensured that everyone receives the guidance and resources they need to manage their health effectively, contributing to our collective wellbeing.
- 7.9 Health & Safety performance is monitored by way of workplace inspections and/or audits. The audits are carried out using the current Code of Practice and the approach advocated by the HSE of Plan, Do, Check, Act. Positive aspects

as well as any deficiencies are identified within the implementation of the services safety management system (SMS). Following the audit, a comprehensive report is provided to the service area manager and head of service. In areas where improvements are required, support is provided to the team manager.

Chart 3 - Corporate services audits completed April 23 – March 24

Place	CSS
Highways Strategy, Growth and Improvement Highways Transportation Team Pest Control Porters and Caretakers Capital Delivery	AVA Team Democratic and Electoral Services Mayoralty

7.10 We are dedicated to cultivating a vibrant workforce by embracing a comprehensive approach to wellbeing which directly contributes to creating a supportive environment where both colleagues and the council can thrive.

Here is an overview of our impactful initiatives:

- We have successfully developed a wellbeing hub and established a network of 73 wellbeing champions as part of our ongoing commitment to enhancing employee support.
- Our internal coaching pool significantly increased its delivery to 534 hours of coaching, compared to 355 hours in the previous year. This growth, driven by the Apprenticeship Levy, has empowered more colleagues with personalized development opportunities.
- We successfully hosted our second Mind, Body, and Bank Account event, featuring contributions from Life Leisure, the Credit Union, and the Greater Manchester Pension Fund. Colleagues also had the opportunity to receive free basic wills from a local legal firm and gain insights into electric vehicles available through our salary sacrifice scheme.
- We prioritised colleague wellbeing through our comprehensive wellbeing calendar, which ensures a year-round focus with diverse activities. A selection of these includes a central hub for resources, colleague-led yoga and fitness classes, men’s talk more week, a workplace choir, enhanced benefits, and the Workplace Menopause Café. These initiatives are designed to boost morale, productivity, and overall satisfaction, fostering a healthier and more supportive workplace culture.
- At our second annual Ambitious Stockport Awards ceremony, we successfully elevated our approach to colleague recognition, making it an enjoyable and memorable event. We received over 200 nominations, which is a testament to the incredible contributions of our workforce and the high level of engagement across the council.

Based on feedback from last year, we introduced additional awards, including a surprise award presented to Mockingbird on the day. We also honoured the remarkable milestone of 40 years of service achieved by some of our colleagues, celebrating their outstanding dedication and commitment.

- We conducted our second Destination Go activity challenge to tackle sedentary working habits.

This 9-week competition encouraged teams of colleagues to engage in a friendly contest to achieve the highest number of steps. The challenge not only fostered team spirit and camaraderie but also offered long-term benefits, including coaching to enhance physical health and practical tips for improving mental well-being. By making small, everyday changes, participants were able to make a significant impact on their overall health in an enjoyable and engaging way. The winning team, consisting of colleagues from Estates and Asset Management, walked an incredible 10 million steps during the competition. In a follow-up evaluation report, 87% of participants said that they were more aware of their health and 86% said that they had improved their ability to cope with stress as a result of taking part.

- We expanded access to a variety of benefits and discounts, which is important because it enhances employee well-being and satisfaction. By offering a broader range of benefits, we aim to support our colleagues both personally and professionally, contributing to a more motivated and engaged workforce. This, in turn, helps attract and retain talent, fostering a positive work culture.
- We have consistently delivered accurate and timely workforce data, which continues to enhance informed decision-making across the council. This reliable data has enabled us to identify trends, address challenges proactively, and allocate resources more effectively. As a result, we've been able to implement targeted strategies that drive better outcomes for our employees and the council.
- Our all-colleague survey results show that 81% of colleagues know how to seek support through work for their emotional and mental wellbeing and 76% know how to seek support through work for their physical wellbeing, up from 80% and 74% respectively in 2022.
- Health and Safety took part in a full procurement exercise to source and evaluate the provision of an occupational health service for Greater Manchester Local Authorities. A provider was chosen, and the contract commenced in April 2024. The contract is managed within the health and safety team, ensuring value for money, savings and quality control.
- We are members of the Stockport Water Safety Partnership (STWSP), which consists of the Canal and Rivers Trust, Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and GMCA. The purpose of the STWSP is to work towards prevention of drowning deaths across Stockport Borough by working in partnership to ensure consistent guidance for the safe enjoyment and management of activities in, on and

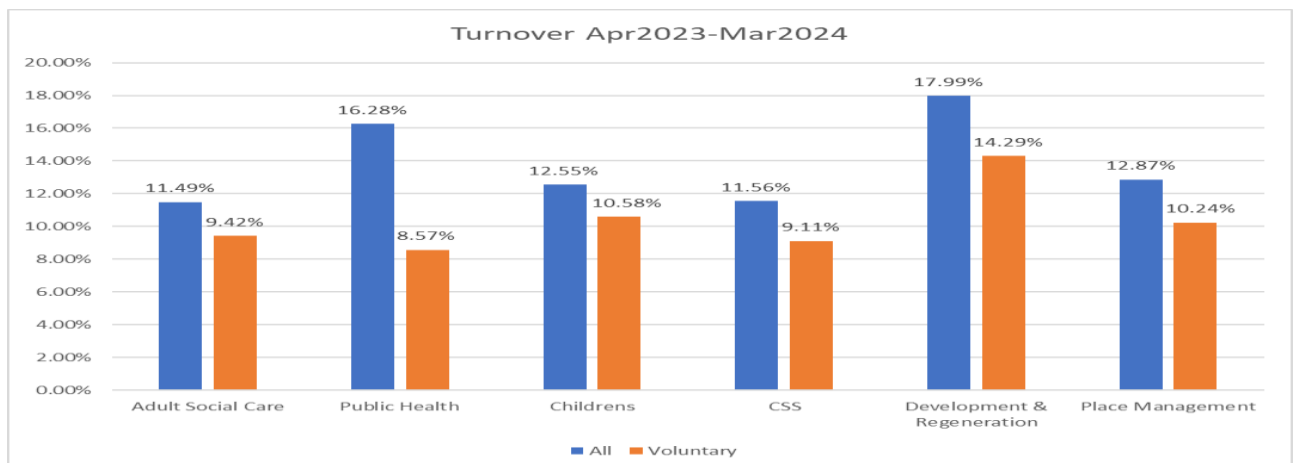
around water. As a group, incorporating Health and Safety colleagues, 17 high risk locations were identified within the borough and 15 risk reviews were completed which have highlighted control measures that need to be implemented such as signage and water buoyancy aids. From the 15 sites completed, Health and Safety colleagues identified the priority sites which will potentially have teenagers/children in attendance and have worked with schools to highlight the danger posed.

8. BELONG HERE

8.1 The council is committed to fostering a keen sense of belonging for every colleague. We believe that when individuals feel valued and included, they are empowered to contribute their best work. By celebrating diversity, encouraging collaboration, and providing comprehensive support through training and development, we create an environment where everyone can thrive.

8.2 Turnover in the council is a critical metric that provides insight into colleague satisfaction, engagement, and retention across various departments. As shown in Chart 4 below, the percentage turnover in each department reflects the dynamic nature of our workforce.

Chart 4 – Percentage turnover by department



8.3 Research conducted by the CIPD indicates that, between January and December 2023, the most common length of service for UK employees fell between two and five years. This trend mirrors our own data, as highlighted in Chart 5, which shows that a significant number of our leavers had between 2 and 5 years of service at the time of their departure.

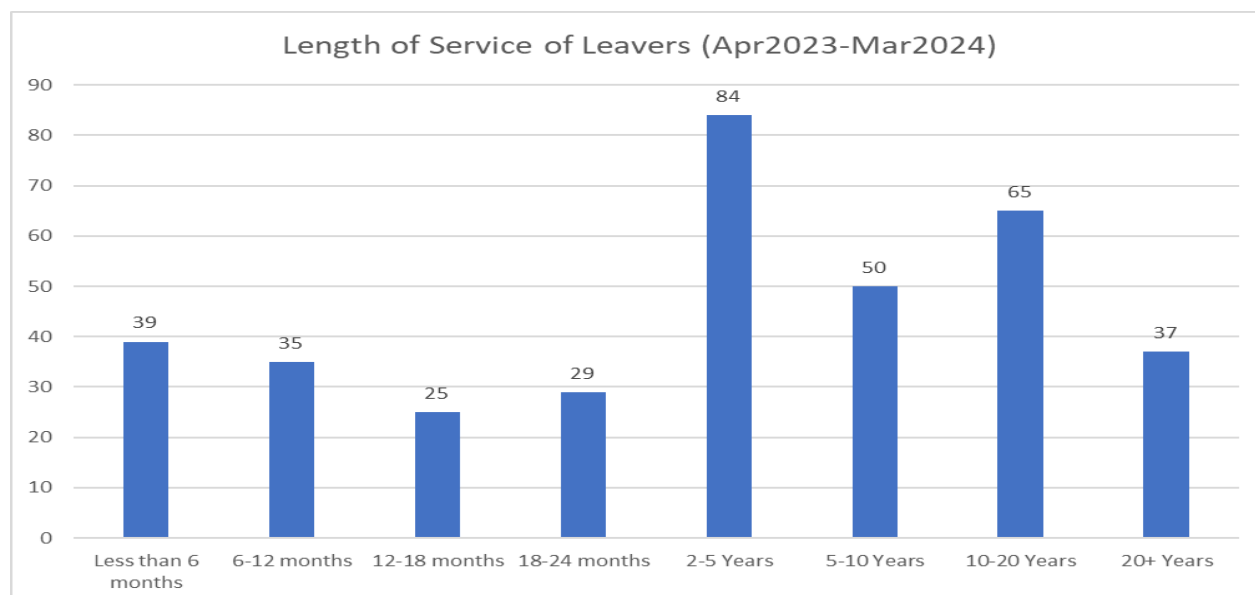
8.4 In the 2022/23 period, we identified relatively high staff turnover within two key timeframes: employees with 6 to 12 months of service and those with 2 to 5 years. As we transitioned into the 2023/24 period, this pattern persisted, particularly for employees in the 2 to 5 years of service group. The challenge of retaining staff within this mid-tenure range remains a notable concern, requiring ongoing efforts to address the underlying causes driving this turnover.

8.5 By analysing this data alongside insights gathered from exit forms and interviews, we can better understand the underlying reasons for employee departures.

This valuable insight is regularly shared with our senior management teams, enabling them to address potential issues, enhance employee experiences, and implement targeted strategies to improve retention and foster a stronger sense of belonging within the organisation.

- 8.6 This insight into employee tenure is crucial as it highlights the critical period in which employees are most likely to leave the council. Understanding these patterns allows us to address potential issues such as job satisfaction, career progression, and overall colleague engagement.

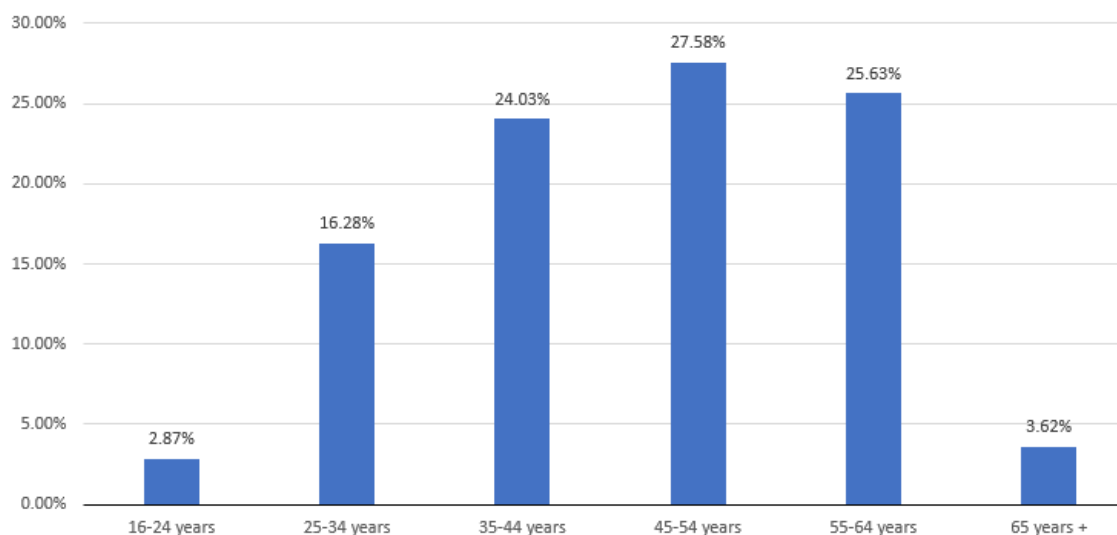
Chart 5 – Length of service of leavers



- 8.7 The ethnic breakdown of our workforce provides important insights into the diversity within our organisation. However, it is important to note that 9.56% of colleagues have not disclosed their ethnicity, which means the data may not fully represent the true diversity of our workforce. We are encouraging more colleagues to share this information as it is crucial for gaining a more accurate understanding of our workforce, which in turn allows us to tailor our diversity and inclusion initiatives more effectively and ensure that all groups are appropriately represented and supported.
- 8.8 As a Disability Confident accredited employer, the council is dedicated to eliminating discrimination, removing barriers, and promoting opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including employees and job seekers. To help us provide the best support and effectively monitor outcomes, we encourage employees to share their disability status. Currently, 5% of our total workforce have reported having a disability.
- 8.9 It is important to note that 15% of employees have not yet shared their disability status. This suggests that the current figure of 5% may not fully reflect the actual number of employees with disabilities.
- 8.10 The age distribution of our workforce reveals that the highest percentage, with nearly 28% of employees, falls within the 45-54 age bracket. Analysing this data for the entire organisation provides valuable insights into our overall demographic composition.

8.11 Understanding the age structure is crucial, as it allows us to tailor workforce planning, development programmes, and succession strategies to meet the specific needs of different age groups. Additionally, it enables us to anticipate future challenges, such as retirement trends or the need for skills development, ensuring that we maintain a balanced and capable workforce across the council.

Chart 6 – Age band distribution and percentage breakdown for the council



8.12 Our recent initiatives demonstrate our dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive workplace:

- We have introduced an employee wellbeing passport scheme, developed with our Colleague Disability Network, to provide a clear and structured way for colleagues to share their needs and highlight necessary adjustments with their line managers. This system ensures that reasonable adjustments are electronically recorded and maintained, offering transparency and continuity, especially during team leadership changes.
- After a successful trial, we have implemented a reverse mentoring scheme across the council. Unlike traditional mentoring, this scheme empowers colleagues to mentor senior leaders, offering a unique perspective on organisational life. This approach creates a safe space for open dialogue, enabling senior mentees to understand the experiences of others and drive meaningful change based on these insights.
- Our colleague networks are expanding rapidly, driven by passionate chairs, and backed by executive supporters, reflecting our commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace. We now have seven active networks—Bereavement, Carers, Dis-Ability, LGBTQ+, Palettes of Colour, Menopause, and Neurodivergent—with more in the pipeline. These networks are vital for creating safe spaces, amplifying diverse voices, and driving meaningful change across the council.
- We conducted an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) survey in April 2024, in collaboration with our colleague networks.

The feedback gathered has led to a prioritised set of actions, agreed upon with the Equalities Steering Group, which will be integrated into our corporate EDI action plan. This initiative reinforces our commitment to inclusivity and sets a clear path for ongoing improvement within the council.

- Inclusive Employers led a design and challenge session with the corporate leadership team, aimed at raising awareness of the challenges faced by colleagues with protected characteristics in the workplace. These sessions helped to critically evaluate our current practices and foster the development of a truly inclusive culture for all employees.
- We launched a proactive data cleanse initiative, encouraging colleagues to update and complete their personal records. This effort was crucial in ensuring the accuracy and comprehensiveness of our data management, enabling more informed decision-making and better support for our workforce.
- We have developed an inclusive calendar to recognise and celebrate the diverse cultures and identities within our workforce. This initiative is important as it fosters a sense of belonging and respect, promoting a supportive work environment where everyone feels valued. By embracing inclusivity, we enhance employee engagement and strengthen our organisational culture.

9. LIVE OUR VALUES

- 9.1 Living our values is crucial because they define our culture, guide our actions, and build trust within the council. When we consistently embody these values, we create a supportive and collaborative environment where everyone feels valued and empowered. This alignment not only strengthens our internal relationships but also enhances our reputation, driving our collective success and long-term impact.
- 9.2 The 2023 All Colleague Survey highlighted the strong integration of our values across the council, with 92% of colleagues recognising our values and 77% observing these values being demonstrated by their peers. In addition, 95% of our workforce told us they understood how their work benefits Stockport residents and 87% are motivated to make a difference to Stockport residents.
- 9.3 In 2023, we conducted our All-Colleague survey, with 69% of our colleagues participating. This led to the identification of key outcomes and priorities:
- Advancing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion by building on the efforts of our employee engagement groups and enhancing collective initiatives across the organisation to ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of our communities.
 - Implementing our new 'My Conversation' approach to Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) in 2024, with a focus on aligning development objectives with the council's vision, mission, values, and the Council Plan.
 - Reevaluating how we lead change and transformation, with an emphasis on improving meaningful consultation and engagement with colleagues,

both within and beyond formal processes, to ensure they are supported throughout any changes.

- Closely monitoring employee workload by analysing detailed data to identify service areas of concern and collaborating with relevant Heads of Service to address these issues.
- Enhancing Reward and Recognition by building on the success of the Ambitious Stockport Awards, further strengthening the Employee Value Proposition, and fostering a culture of recognition.
- In response to the feedback from the 2023 All Colleague survey, we developed and launched an EDI survey in 2024 achieving a 60% colleague response rate. This initiative is crucial as it enables us to gather targeted insights into our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion efforts, ensuring that our actions are aligned with the needs and experiences of our workforce. By actively addressing colleague feedback, we will make informed decisions that foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

9.4 In response to the all-colleague survey, we have developed comprehensive action plans, along with tailored service plans to address feedback specific to each directorate. These plans are regularly monitored to ensure that we effectively address the concerns and needs identified by our employees.

9.5 Our continuous efforts to instil our core values and strengthen colleague engagement have produced substantial results:

- By further embedding Restorative Practice in Stockport Family and Education, rolling out Family Hubs, implementing Glorious Ordinary Lives in Adults, and driving the Ambition Board in Place, we consistently support our colleagues in embodying our values. These initiatives help us to continuously enhance our workforce offerings and ensure that putting people at the heart of everything we do remains a core focus.
- We have consistently revised our policies and guidance to ensure that our values and leadership behaviours are integrated into all key HR practices. Our values are embedded in every aspect of our operations, including recruitment, induction, My Conversation, service plans, and our approach to colleague recognition.
- We remain committed to prioritising colleague engagement, ensuring that colleague voice actively shapes and influences organisational changes. This includes a range of initiatives, from All Colleague Briefings that deliver corporate messaging to Let's Talk sessions within Directorates.
- We continue to work closely with partners through the Neighbourhoods Programmes and the One Stockport Workforce group to drive meaningful cultural change, foster deeper collaboration, and ensure that the people of Stockport remain at the heart of all our initiatives. By engaging key stakeholders and community leaders, we are building a shared vision that aligns with local needs and priorities, enhancing the delivery of services and creating sustainable, long-term improvements.

- Our commitment to a people-centred approach across our public sector partners ensures that decisions are made inclusively, promoting equity and strengthening the resilience of our communities reaching over 15,000 colleagues in our collective workforce. Through ongoing dialogue, we are not only addressing immediate challenges but also laying the groundwork for a more connected and thriving Stockport.

10. STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

- 10.1 Following incidents of racism, Islamophobia and discrimination during the summer months, we have taken the opportunity to reflect and further develop our work to ensure Stockport is a fair and inclusive borough and employer. We recognise that achieving a truly inclusive society requires continuous strategic efforts. We have re-prioritised and expedited some of the work that was already in development and are enhancing our initiatives and focussing on our commitment to ensure that everyone feels safe, welcome and included in Stockport.
- 10.2 It is recognised that to advance further and faster, a whole organisation approach is necessary drawing in on the involvement and input of our whole workforce. This underscores the critical role we all play in fostering a more inclusive organisation. There is a clear need for consistent language and for communications to be reviewed through an EDI lens, while also ensuring the messaging feels authentic and personal.
- 10.3 In addition, over the next 12 months, our strategic initiatives will focus on key areas, including, further strengthening our business partner approach by providing senior management teams with enhanced workforce insights. By doing so, we will reflect on performance, highlight key areas of focus and further support strategic workforce planning.
- 10.4 We will support our workforce by delivering against the five priorities within our One Team People Plan, which are detailed below and further outlined in **Appendix One**.

Delivered by:

11. JOIN US

- 11.1 Stockport Council is an employer of choice providing local employment for our communities.
- 11.2 We will continue to work to further increase our online and social media presence, delivery of recruitment campaigns and jobs fairs, alongside work to improve our employer brand.
- 11.3 We will strengthen our talent strategy to attract, develop and retain top talent, which will contribute to reducing agency costs. This effort continues with our innovative recruitment practices, enhanced professional development programmes, and a commitment to fostering a supportive work environment.

- 11.4 Additionally, we will work to further decrease agency spending across the council, with a particular focus on high-expenditure areas like social care, by transitioning agency contracts to permanent roles wherever feasible as part of our workforce planning.
- 11.5 We will continue to grow our early careers offer to nurture emerging talent and ensure continued professional growth in line with an enhanced work experience programme, and our existing work placement programmes for care leavers, called Jumpstart and supported internships for young people with special educational needs or disabilities.
- 11.6 We will also strengthen our work experience process to enable young people to get an understanding of the range of careers that are available in local government to attract talent and further strengthen our employer brand.

12. GROW AND THRIVE

- 12.1 The council aspires to be a place where everyone thrives and has access to learning and development that supports them to reach their potential.
- 12.2 We will continue our comprehensive “Leading Stockport” leadership development programme which is designed to cultivate strong leaders within the council and has resulted in increased performance from our leadership and management groups. This is complemented by our leadership forums, which provide a platform for leaders to share insights, collaborate on challenges and drive our strategic vision forward.
- 12.3 We will enhance all aspects of the colleague journey by fully integrating the innovative ‘My Conversation’ in delivering an innovative approach to our personal development reviews.
- 12.4 We will also continue to expand our use of apprenticeships to increase the skills of our colleagues further, opening development opportunities as well as bringing in new talent to the organisation.
- 12.5 We will begin rolling out Health and Safety learning activities that meet the required continuing professional development standards and benchmark, where relevant and appropriate.

13. FEEL SUPPORTED

- 13.1 Wellbeing is a priority, and everyone should feel supported and valued. We are people first, professional second.
- 13.2 To enhance employee satisfaction, we will review and strengthen our reward and recognition approach. Our aim is to ensure that colleagues are acknowledged for their achievements in a manner that reflects our council values and motivates continued excellence.
- 13.3 We are expanding successful initiatives like the colleague choir and wellbeing walks to boost connectivity and engagement among colleagues. These activities help foster a sense of community, reduce stress, and improve well-being, ensuring colleagues feel more connected, motivated, and valued in a positive and productive work environment.

- 13.4 Our commitment to sickness management remains resolute, guided by our data to uphold health, safety, and overall wellbeing within the council. These initiatives reinforce our commitment to fostering a thriving and supportive workplace culture.
- 13.5 With the advent of hybrid working, the problem of managing building evacuation and sweep and search arose. In order to address the issue of which colleagues would be available to act as fire marshals, a new system has been developed by the health and safety team. All colleagues will receive training by way of a video co-produced by and featuring colleagues from Stopford House. This will resolve the issue presented, as any colleague once trained is able to carry out the search using the disc system.

14. BELONG HERE

- 14.1 We have an inclusive culture where all individuals are respected and treated fairly, where diversity is celebrated and where everyone can be themselves and thrive.
- 14.2 By working closely with our colleague engagement groups and community equity networks, and utilising insights from our employee voice via our EDI survey, together, we will continue to shape and co-create our EDI priorities and approaches to steer future initiatives.
- 14.3 We will review and enhance all colleague EDI training to create a dynamic and inclusive learning experience, ensuring it is mandated and performance-monitored, so every colleague is given the training and support to be more inclusive. This includes focused leadership development on equalities within the Senior Leadership Group (SLG) and its integration into the broader Leading Stockport programme through inclusive leadership training, with the aim of increasing diverse representation at all levels.
- 14.4 We will develop a Zero Tolerance/Dignity at Work Policy to ensure a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace. This policy will set clear expectations and consequences for harmful or discriminatory behaviour, reinforcing our commitment to a positive and supportive organisational culture.
- 14.5 Under the priority of "Report and Support," we will provide a secure and confidential platform where employees can report discrimination or racism. This ensures everyone has a safe, impartial avenue to voice concerns focussed on building psychological safety reinforcing our commitment to a respectful and inclusive workplace.
- 14.6 We will strengthen existing colleague networks and support the growth of new ones. These networks are crucial for fostering a sense of belonging, encouraging diverse perspectives, and ensuring all voices are heard and valued. By doing so, we create a more inclusive workplace that enhances collaboration, boosts colleague satisfaction, and drives innovation.
- 14.7 We will refine our targeted recruitment initiative by launching an inclusive recruitment sub-group, introducing diversity recruitment targets, rolling out values-based recruitment, and testing if our job promotions effectively reach ethnic minority communities.

- 14.8 We will address the ethnicity pay gap by implementing targeted development programmes to upskill and equip staff with protected characteristics, enabling their progression into leadership roles.
- 14.9 We will review and update the induction process and My Conversation framework to explicitly address and support employees with protected characteristics.
- 14.10 We will strengthen data and intelligence by implementing regular reporting and conducting deep dives, including analysis on pay gaps.
- 14.11 We will conduct regular reviews of HR case management practices and outcomes through an equality's lens.
- 14.12 We will review and update the Reasonable Adjustments policy to ensure inclusivity and compliance.
- 14.13 We will roll out Race Equality groups across all directorates to promote inclusivity and drive equality initiatives.

15. LIVE OUR VALUES

- 15.1 Our values and behaviours are at the core of how we work to deliver our One Team People Plan.
- 15.2 We will continue to prioritise colleague engagement, ensuring that the voice of our colleagues actively shapes and influences organisational changes. We will be embedding our values and behaviours through a communication and engagement plan and ensuring they are part of the whole colleague journey.
- 15.3 We are enhancing our approach to community engagement through volunteering and plans are underway to revise our volunteering policy to empower our colleagues to contribute to local community groups. This initiative underscores our commitment to social responsibility and community support.
- 15.4 We will continue our work with partners to deliver cultural change that enables joint working and continues to put the people of Stockport at the heart of what we do.
- 15.5 We will develop and implement the 'Ambitious Stockport Experience' that unites colleagues from across the workforce, fostering connections, networks, and a shared understanding of our collective work within the council and as one cohesive team. This initiative will embody our values in action while addressing key insights from the all-colleague survey and the EDI survey.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16.1 CRMG is asked to note the considerable progress in launching key initiatives within the One Team People Plan. These efforts have enhanced our borough focus, improved team experience, reinforced our values, and supported workforce growth, all crucial for professional development, talent retention, and long-term success.

- 16.2 CRMG is asked to formally acknowledge the hard work and ongoing commitment of the HR, OD and Health and Safety teams. These teams have shown outstanding dedication in supporting our workforce, advancing organisational development, and safeguarding employee well-being. Their efforts have been crucial in sustaining a positive and safe working environment.
- 16.3 Approve the strategic focus for the next 12 months as detailed, which emphasises key areas crucial for driving future growth and success.

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 There are none.

17.2 Anyone requiring further information should contact Kathryn Rees on kathryn.rees@stockport.gov.uk or Jennie Neill on jennie.neill@stockport.gov.uk