

# People Strategy

2024 - 2027



WE ARE SANDWELL





I am pleased to launch Sandwell Council's People Strategy 2024-2027. The culture, attitude and performance of any organisation is driven by its workforce, the people who know their services and know their communities.

This is an ambitious plan that recognises the great value of our staff and aims to ensure we have the workforce we need in place to deliver the priorities set out in our Council Plan.

In setting this plan I recognise the difficulties we have faced as a council. Whilst government intervention was necessary it also set us back in driving through our ambitions and aspirations and meant we had to focus on our governance and behaviours. Our move out of intervention has reset who we are as an organisation. Understanding what really matters; delivering excellent services to all our residents, tenants, service users and communities – this is our obligation as public servants and our residents' right as taxpayers.

At Sandwell Council we now have a clear cultural vision and a strategy for our workforce. Our One Team values and behaviours provide an excellent foundation for us to build upon in making Sandwell Council an employer of choice.

We have demonstrated great organisational resilience in recent challenges and this has provided us with opportunities for designing a way of working in the future that provides an improved work life balance for our staff, while keeping our customers at the heart of all we do.

We need to find ways to achieve more with less, and our focus is to be 'brilliant at the basics' working closer than ever with our communities to solve increasingly complex challenges and to transform our services so we are a modern, efficient and agile council. To help us find the best way to do this, we need everyone working at the council to develop a deep understanding of Sandwell and the existing strengths and assets within our borough, whilst also ensuring we are outward looking, strengthening our connections within the wider West Midlands region.

We are embracing new technology and will harness this to create a more agile workforce providing residents with more access to our services.

We have considered these factors alongside our current workforce profile to shape the plan for the next three years. I place great value on engaging with our staff and listening to what they tell us. This is central to the delivery of this plan. I am committed to developing and supporting our staff to provide for the future and attracting and retaining a workforce that reflects the community we serve.

I would like to thank colleagues for everything they have achieved. We will invest in you, your development and your wellbeing so that you have the necessary tools and resources to carry out your jobs and do the best work of your lives. I am wholly committed to becoming an outstanding council but that can only be achieved by empowering, enabling and supporting you, our workforce.

Together we can keep rising to new challenges to improve the lives of residents in Sandwell.



*My passion is making Sandwell the best place to live, work and visit.*

**Shokat Lal**  
**Chief Executive**

# Our Values and Behaviours



## Our Values and Behaviours

### One Team

United and working together with the shared purpose of achieving great results

#### Everyone

- Take the time to get to know and understand colleagues
- Support and help others
- Demonstrate enthusiasm and challenge negativity
- Work collaboratively and encourage others to do so
- Value and acknowledge everyone's contributions
- Approachable
- Display empathy and understanding
- Build respectful relationships and grow trust
- Promote a blame free culture
- Seek opportunities to learn and develop new skills

#### Leaders

- Actively role model and create trust
- Enable honest and open communication
- Visible and approachable
- Engage in regular communication
- Recognise contributions and success
- Display a coaching leadership style and inspire others
- Encourage best practice and cross team collaboration
- Drive a healthy work-life balance
- Develop and grow future talent

### Customer Focused

We care about providing the best possible public service

#### Everyone

- Deliver a first-class customer service and be outcome focused
- Know, understand and demonstrate our customer commitments
- Communicate openly with customers and listen to them
- Seek to do the right thing for customers
- Be a great ambassador for Sandwell Council
- Demonstrate empathy to customers and colleagues and be kind and compassionate

#### Leaders

- Manage customer's expectations
- Ensure the service works to the best outcome for the customer
- Create accessible channels for customer communication
- Encourage customers to lead in service provision
- Take a holistic view of services
- Be accessible to residents, service users, customers and employees
- Engage with customers, seek feedback and enable continuous improvement



# Our **Values** and **Behaviours**

## Inclusive

**Treating each other with respect and knowing our diversity is our strength**

### Everyone

- Value the importance of equality, diversity and inclusivity
- Be transparent, open and honest
- Create opportunities to listen to others
- Ask questions to understand others
- Welcome and encourage healthy debate and challenge
- Freely share knowledge, ideas and experiences
- Communicate with clarity and seek to ensure understanding
- Recognise and respond to diverse needs

### Leaders

- Create an inclusive environment to encourage a voice for everyone
- Create opportunities and champions diversity and inclusivity
- Seek feedback from all audiences to facilitate co-production
- Seek to understand our diverse communities
- Actively challenge barriers to inclusion
- Encourage diversity of thought and perspectives to overcome challenges

## Accountable

**Delivering what we say we will**

### Everyone

- Take personal responsibility
- Empower others to deliver
- Deliver what is promised
- If it is the right thing to do, step outside job-role or boundaries
- Be outward looking
- Ask for help when needed
- Make decisions with confidence
- Show resilience and persistence when problems arise
- Step outside own comfort zone
- Ensure resources are used effectively

### Leaders

- Create a clear vision and strategy
- Consider external and internal factors
- Encourage learning from feedback and complaints
- Promote resilience and adaptability
- Set clear expectations and standards for self and others
- Provide resources for service provision
- Empower others to solve problems and take ownership
- Give support to strengthen team and personal resilience
- Make timely and well-judged decisions

# Our **Values** and **Behaviours**

## Ambitious

**Striving for excellence, always looking to get better and making sure everyone can take pride in our borough**

### Everyone

- Bring out the best in others
- Celebrate success
- Address underperformance in self and others
- Talk positively about Sandwell Council and show pride in work
- Set and deliver high standards for self and others
- Challenge the status quo and seek to improve
- Take appropriate risks
- Openly give feedback and call out unacceptable behaviour
- Ask for feedback
- Embrace change and be curious

### Leaders

- Promote a growth mindset
- Communicate the organisation's ambitions and desired outcomes
- Lead, manage and communicate change
- Encourage and inspire creativity and innovation within boundaries
- Seek and encourage everyone to be the best in class
- Create channels for giving and receiving feedback
- Tackle under-performance early and challenge unacceptable behaviour with courage
- Grow personal credibility
- Communicate with passion and integrity to maintain and elevate the reputation of the service and the council



Meet Julie, FM Team

*"I am proud to live our values everyday."*



WE ARE **SANDWELL!**

An aerial photograph of Sandwell, West Midlands, taken at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The town below is densely packed with buildings, including a prominent modern building with a curved roof. In the foreground, there are residential streets with houses and a large brick building, possibly a church or school. A road with cars is visible in the bottom right corner.

# OUR STORY

In Sandwell, we care about each other and it is our community that makes us proud to call this place our home.

We're down to earth and proud of our heritage as a powerhouse of the industrial revolution, and this history is still evident today in the unique and distinct character of our towns and neighbourhoods.

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of Sandwell Council, when our six towns were brought together under our current boundaries.

Sandwell is at the heart of the West Midlands and we have a young and rapidly growing population. We're proud of the diverse communities that bring so much to our borough.

Our borough is full of wonderful green places, like our much-loved Sandwell Valley Country Park. We're the green gateway to the Black Country from Birmingham and have great connections to the rest of the country.

We already have an outstanding track record in bringing funding into our borough and are passionate about supporting businesses to grow in a way that ensures people and communities benefit too.

We are determined to make the most of our peoples' skills, abilities, and resourcefulness to create good jobs and opportunities that will boost everyone's life chances and attract even more investment into Sandwell for the long term.

The Sandwell Aquatics Centre showed what we can do when we get the chance. We played host to visitors from all over the world during the Commonwealth Games and we now have a state-of-the-art community leisure centre for all of our residents to enjoy.

But the thing that really makes Sandwell bostin is our people.

It's not like us to shout about our achievements or put ourselves in the spotlight.

We know that we face some big challenges here. Too many of our residents' have their health and life expectancy impacted by their social circumstances. Child poverty is double the national average and some people's prospects – especially when it comes to health – might not always be as good as they can be.

Times have been hard for many of us in recent years.

But we also know our community is amazing when we come together, and there is so much potential to unlock.

The council hasn't got everything right in recent years, but we've maintained vital services for our residents most in need.

As we mark our 50th anniversary, our focus is on being brilliant at the basics. That means getting things right for our residents – delivering high-quality services that are easy to use and working for the people who need them.

And our ambition doesn't stop there. We want our borough to be a great place for children to grow up. We want to make Sandwell a cleaner, greener and safer place to live and for our residents to live longer in good health. And we want to create the good jobs and opportunities that will help everyone realise their potential.

Together we can deliver a great future for Sandwell and change people's lives for the better.



**Shokat Lal**  
Chief Executive



**Alan Lunt,**  
Executive Director  
Place

Housing Services

Regeneration & Growth

Environment



Executive Director  
People (Vacant)



**Liann Brookes Smith**  
Interim Director Public  
Health



**Rashpal Bishop**  
Director Adult  
Social Care



**Sally Giles**  
Director  
Childrens Services



**Alex Thompson,**  
Executive Director  
Finance &  
Transformation  
(S151)

Finance

Legal & Assurance

Registration Services

Revenues & Benefits

ICT & Transformation

Business Management



**James McLaughlin**  
Assistant Chief  
Executive

Communications

HR & Organisational  
Development

Service Improvement  
(Vacant)

Equality, Diversity, &  
Inclusion

Strategic Improvement

Democratic & Member  
Services



# Our One Council One Team Commitments

We want our people to feel empowered when they work for Sandwell Council. Committed to our customers, productive and enjoying the role, supporting each other with health and wellbeing. Recognised for their contributions and to feel valued.

It's important that our Council is a place that attracts and retains talent. Colleagues are proud to work here and will recommend Sandwell as an employer of choice based on their excellent experience of employment.

We want to be an inclusive employer that recognises and acts on the value of diversity. Embedding a creative, innovative learning culture through coaching and development of skills, enabling our people to be the best version of themselves.

Our Council is committed to our people and through collaboration we can deliver the best possible outcomes for the communities that we serve. To do this we will provide clarity on the council objectives, the contributions expected from colleagues, development opportunities and regular feedback.

## Everyone

- Clarity on job role and contribution to the council plan and objectives
- Everyone will participate in an annual review where constructive feedback will be provided on performance and new goals will be set for the year ahead, underpinned by regular check-ins
- Completion of compulsory training and embracing opportunities for development
- Healthy and safe working practices and environments
- We are all committed to inclusion and diversity in everything that we do.
- We live our values everyday.

## Leaders

- Are part of a culture of 'Leadership at every level'
- Access leadership and management opportunities
- Access relevant guidance and appropriate support on policies and procedures.
- Role modeling the One Team leadership behaviours
- Demonstrating inclusive management practices

## Together

We will provide excellent services to the resident of Sandwell.  
We will work as one team being accountable, customer focused, ambitious and inclusive.

**We are Sandwell!**





# Sandwell Council Workforce 2023-24

Number of Employees

**4118**

Actual Headcount

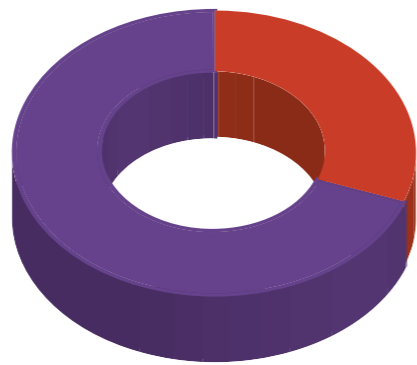
**4066**

FTE

**3603**

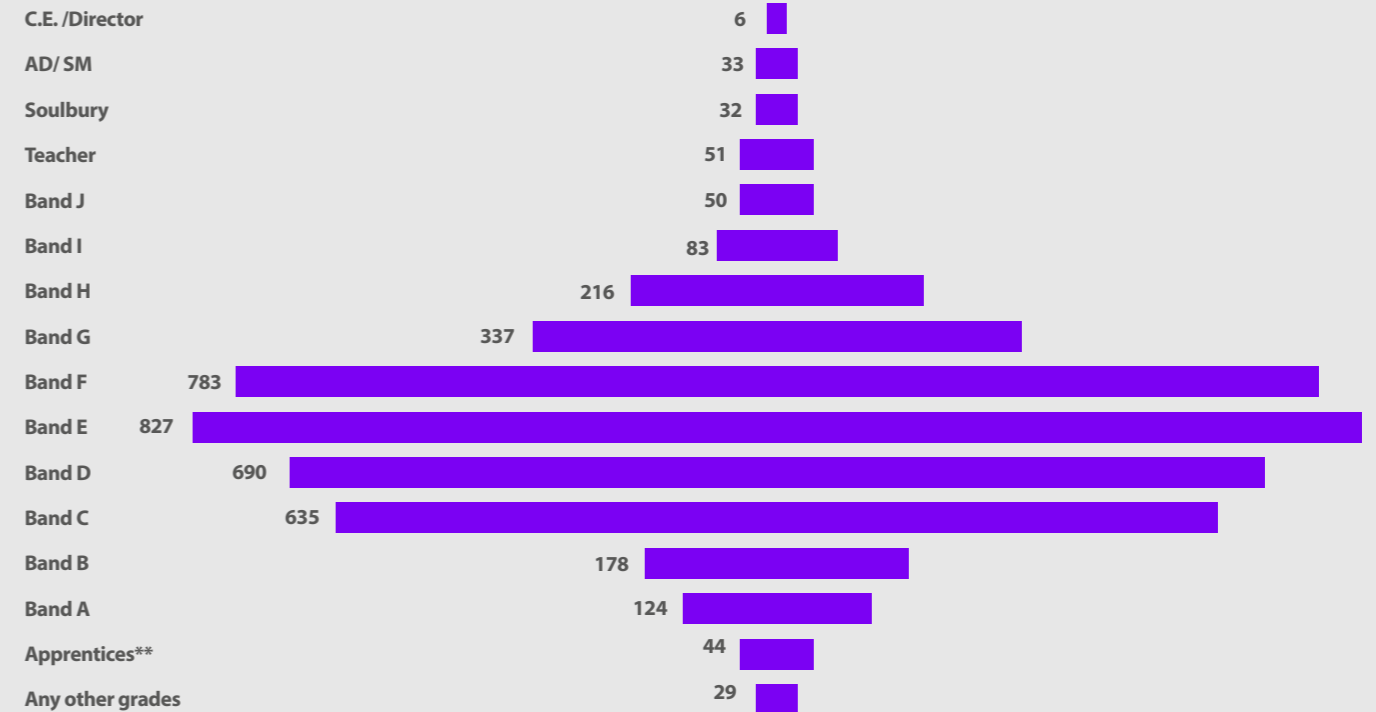
Part-time Full-time

Full-time  
2856 | 69%

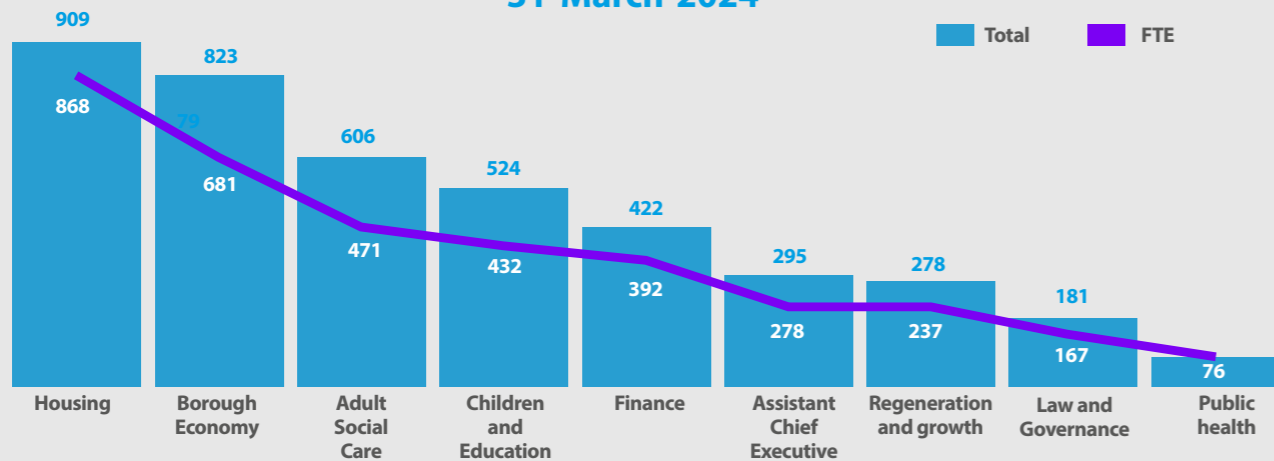


Part-time  
1262 | 31%

Grade Composition

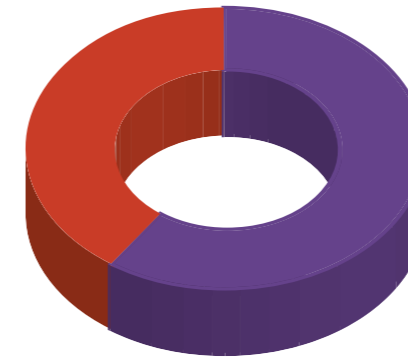


Summary of number of employees by Directorate  
31-March-2024



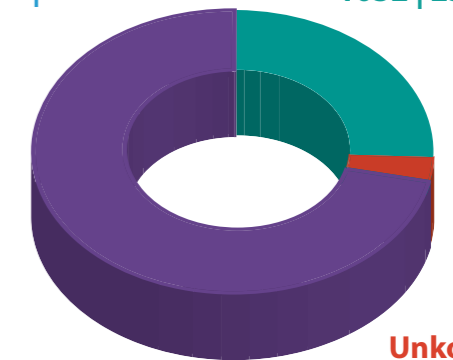
Male,  
1667 | 40%

Female,  
2451 | 60%



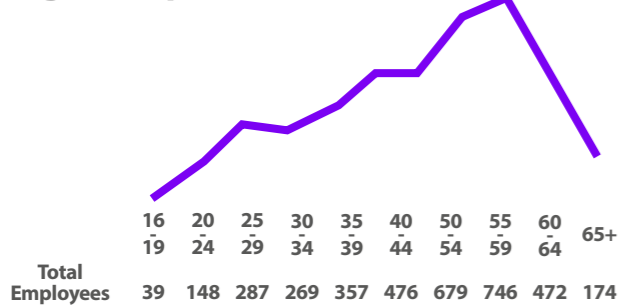
White,  
2955 | 72%

Ethnic Minority  
1052 | 25%

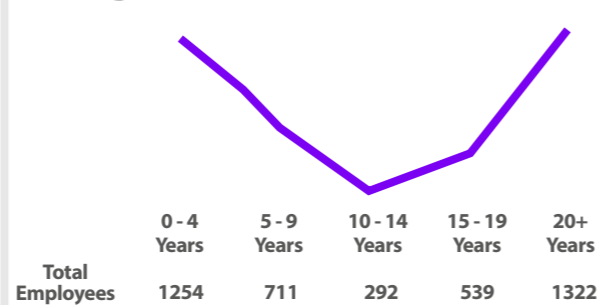


Unknown  
111 | 3%

Age Composition

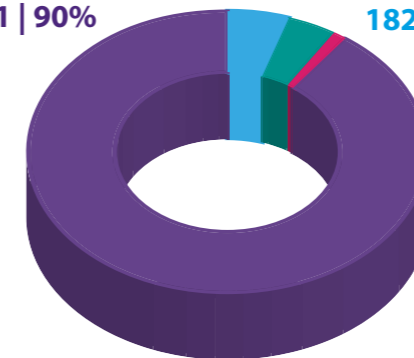


Length of Service with Sandwell



Not Disabled  
3711 | 90%

Disabled,  
182 | 4%



Unknown,  
193 | 5%

Prefer not to say,  
32 | 1%

Employee engagement  
Survey Oct-23) overall score

**60%**

Meet Jamella, Events Marketing Officer  
*"I am proud to live our values  
everyday and I can be my authentic  
self at work."*



WE ARE **SANDWELL!**



# The Future: Workforce Challenges



Cultivating a positive and authentic workplace culture across the whole organisation



Understanding our future workforce pressures and demands, and building robust workforce plans



Employer branding and positioning to attract candidates



Developing our future leaders and promoting fair and inclusive career progression



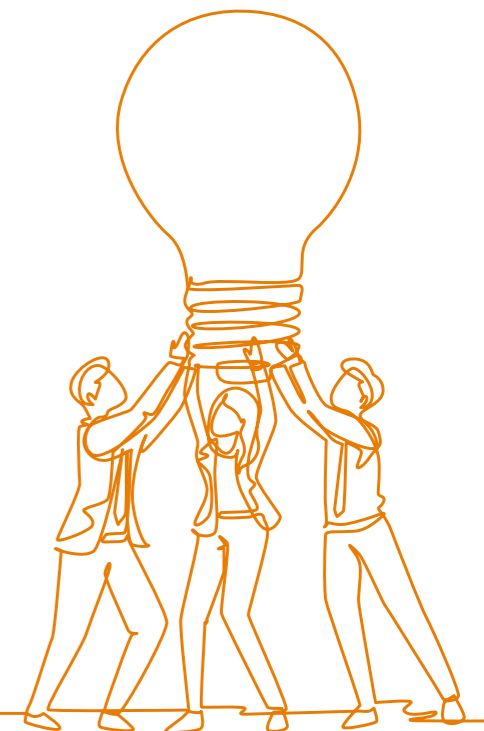
Delivering high quality services within a challenging financial context



Upskilling the workforce with future and new skills sets



A healthy, safe and engaged workforce supported by an outstanding health, safety and wellbeing offer



# Our People Strategy Priorities

Our People Strategy is structured into three core themes with nine priorities.



## OUR SUCCESS MEASURES

How agile, skilled, engaged and productive we are as an organisation. As captured in our Council Plan performance indicators.

### One Team

United and working together with the shared purpose of achieving great results.

### Customer Focused

We care about providing the best possible public service.

### Inclusive

Treating each other with respect and knowing our diversity is our strength.

### Accountable

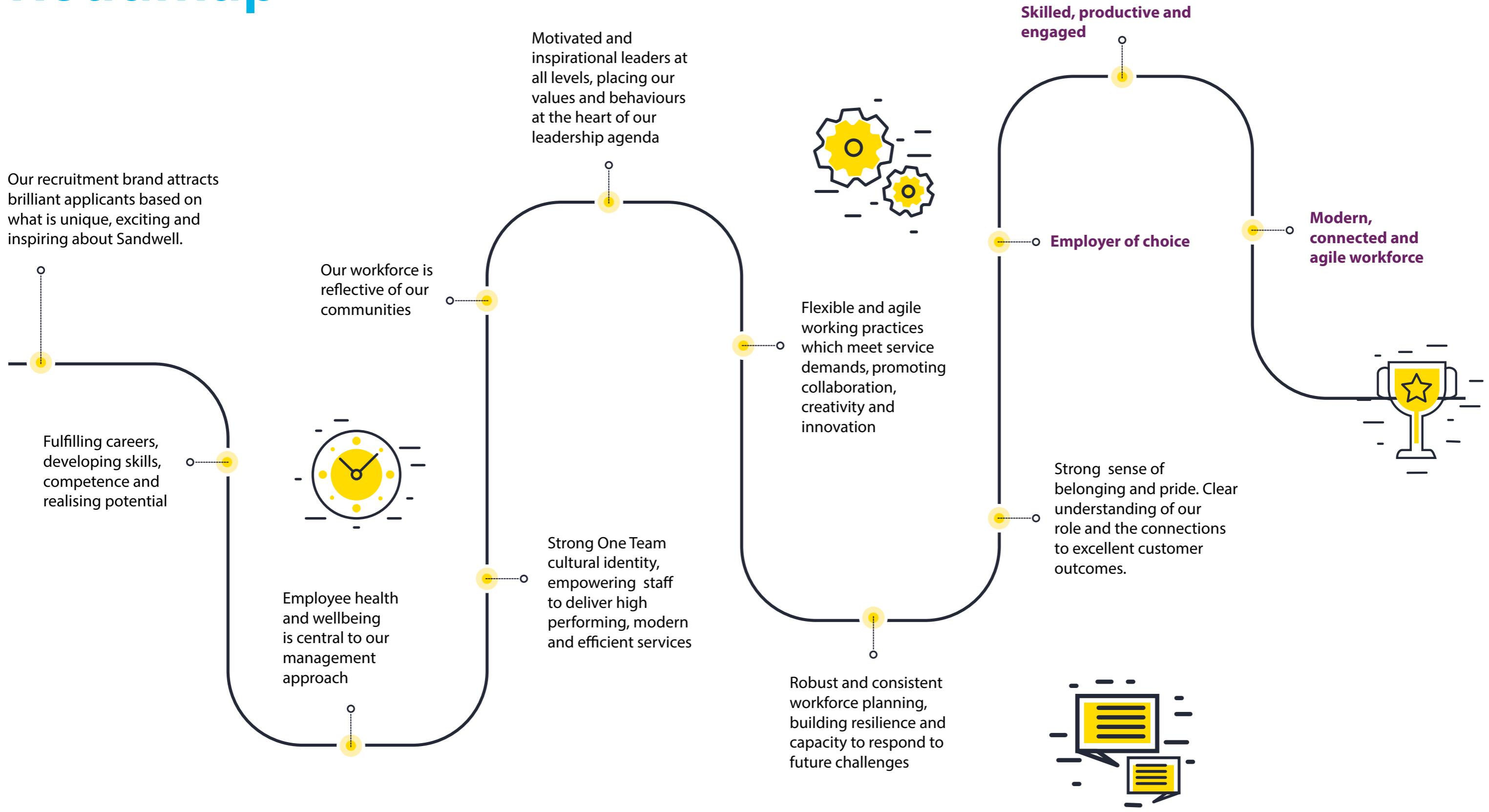
Delivering what we say we will.

### Ambitious

Striving for excellence, always looking to get better and making sure everyone can take pride in our borough.



# Roadmap



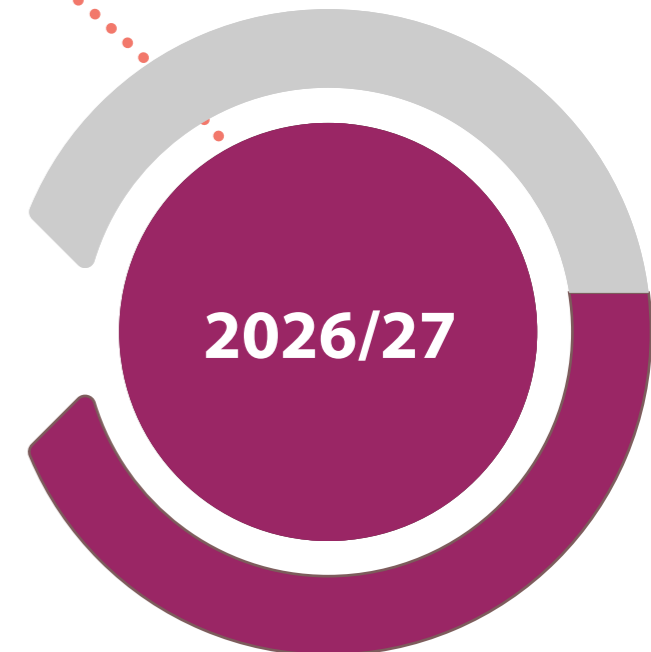
# People strategy **annual delivery plans**



- Bespoke Recruitment campaigns for hard to fill roles
- Induction and onboarding relaunch
- Utilise Oracle Fusion functionality to improve workforce intelligence/drive business decision making.
- Inclusive recruitment development and implementation
- Implementation of organisational design principles
- Workforce planning in further service areas
- Leadership and management development offer launched
- Policy alignment to culture and fusion systems.
- Career pathways mapped for hard to fill posts
- Digital inclusion for workforce

- Refresh our recruitment branding
- Improve workforce intelligence using our new Oracle Fusion system to drive decision making
- Redesign the onboarding and induction experience which sets clear expectations for culture, values and behaviours, customer service and inclusion
- Enhance line manager capability for people skills through our learning and development offer
- Re-design and launch our annual review/check-in processes, placing our One Team values at the centre
- Enable strategic workforce planning in key service areas
- Deliver on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion actions
- Attract Future Talent to the workforce project managed by our National Graduate Development Programme cohort
- Creation of an annual employee awards celebration based on our One Team values
- Review and update our workforce wellbeing offer

- Actions to be agreed in response to strategic priorities and horizon scanning as we approach 2026.
- Next full Employee Engagement Survey to inform new strategy development.



Meet Safina

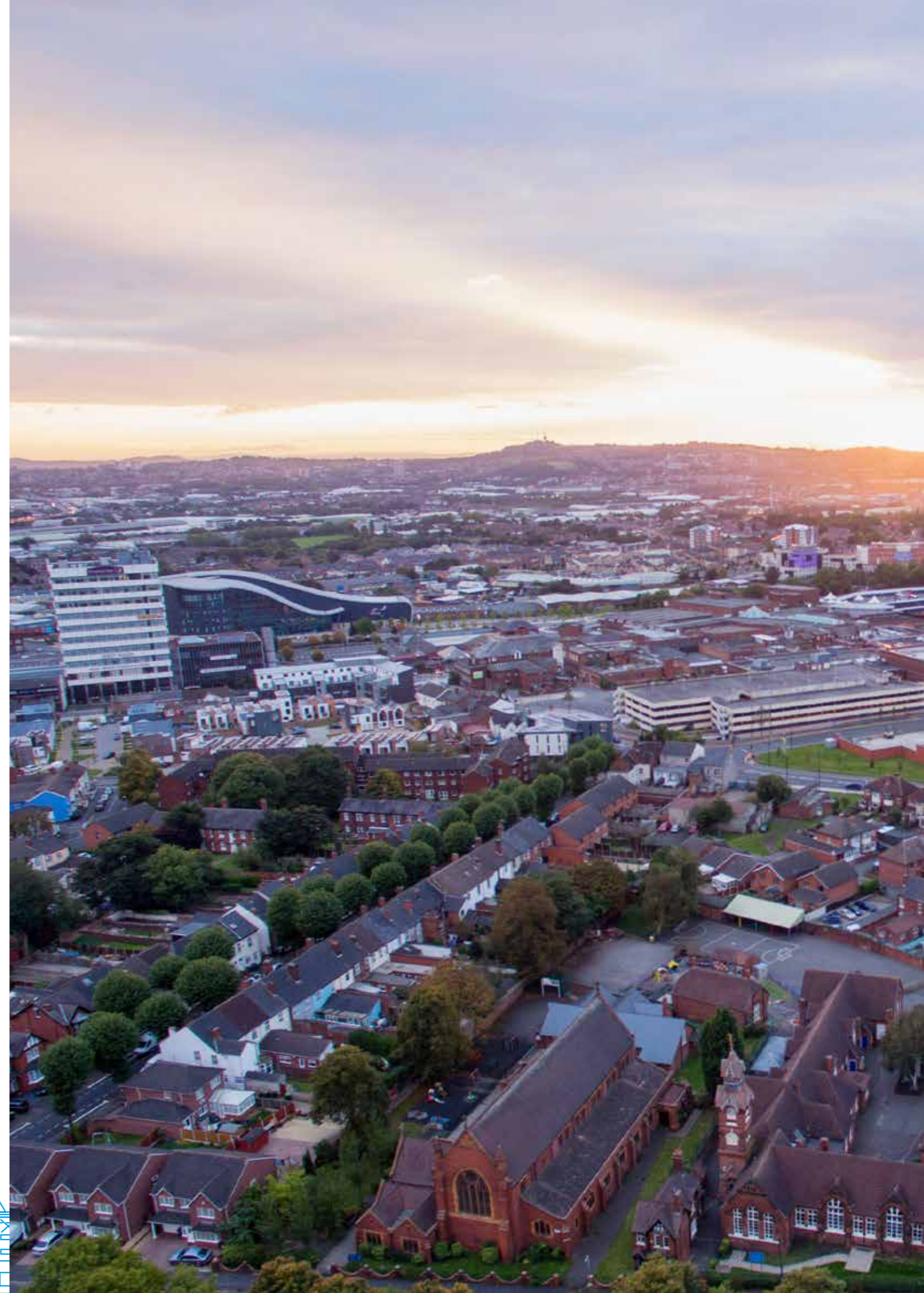
*"The guidance and support I have around me is absolutely fantastic. I really enjoy working as part of a team."*



# How we will involve other people in the **delivery of the strategy**

We will adopt a co-production approach to the development and implementation of priorities in the strategy. The strategy is for the whole organisation. Stakeholders therefore include:

- Strategic Leadership Team
- Trade unions
- Future Talent Working Group
- Culture Champions, Wellbeing Champions and other relevant ambassador groups
- Staff EDI Network Groups
- Staff Panels and working groups
- HR Services
- All managers
- All employees
- Cabinet, Scrutiny Panel and Joint Consultation Panel





# How we will monitor progress and measure success

## Monitoring and Governance

The priorities will be incorporated into business planning  
Actions will be contained in a specific annual delivery plan  
Updates will be made to Strategic Leadership Team on a quarterly basis  
Scrutiny Boards may receive updates as required

## Performance - Council Plan measures

Workforce measures are within the updated Council Plan to provide the high-level progress and performance position.



Meet Zak, Level 3 Desktop Services  
Apprentice

*"The guidance and support I have  
around me is absolutely fantastic. I  
really enjoy working as part of  
a team."*



 Sandwell  
Multi-employer Partnership Limited



WE ARE **SANDWELL!**



# Delivering our People Strategy

We are committed to delivering our ambitions to become an outstanding Council.

**We are Sandwell. We are One Council One Team.**





Sandwell

Metropolitan Borough Council