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# Workforce Development Strategy 2025-2028

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# Workforce Development Strategy 2025-2028

## 1. Introduction

### Purpose of the Workforce Development Strategy

The Workforce Development Strategy sets out how Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council will support, develop, and manage its workforce to ensure the successful delivery of its strategic priorities.

The Council recognises that our staff are our most important asset. Their skills, dedication, and performance are the driving forces behind the successful delivery of services to our residents and businesses.

By investing in our employees, we foster a motivated and capable workforce that is empowered to deliver the Council's strategic objectives. This Workforce Development Strategy reflects our commitment to valuing and supporting our staff, ensuring they have the resources and opportunities to succeed.

We believe that by prioritising our people, we will enhance service delivery, drive innovation, and sustaining a positive, collaborative working culture. Adopting a new well-defined Workforce Development Strategy is crucial in maintaining a motivated, skilled, and engaged workforce that can meet the challenges of the future. By fostering a strong organisational culture and embedding our values, we will ensure that staff are equipped to continue to provide high-quality services to our residents and businesses across the borough.

The overarching aim of our Workforce Development Strategy is focussed on four key pillars:

### Talent and Development

**Develop Talent:** By investing in targeted learning, we create opportunities for staff growth and progression.

### Recruitment and Retention

**Attract and Retain skilled employees:** Adaptable approaches to recruitment strategies and clear career pathways for staff development.

### Wellbeing and Recognition

**Enhance Employee Wellbeing and Recognition:** Providing a positive, supportive work environment which recognises its employees, improving job satisfaction, productivity, and service delivery.

### Ensuring Staff Are Ready for Change

**Prepare for Future Challenges:** Ensuring staff have the skills and adaptability to navigate change, particularly in relation to local government reorganisation and evolving service demands.

By aligning our people practices with the Council's corporate objectives, we will continue to have a workforce that is resilient, adaptable, and committed to delivering high-quality

services.

## 2. Alignment with the Corporate Strategy and other Corporate Priorities

The Workforce Strategy cannot exist in isolation; to be truly effective it must embed and be strongly linked to the Council's Corporate Strategy and other key corporate priority areas.

### Our Vision

To be an innovative and forward-thinking council, that leads the people and businesses of the borough towards a vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable future.

### Our Values

- **Innovation:** Embracing new ideas and technology and proactively finding solutions that improve our services to residents.
- **Transformation:** Adapting so we can meet the standards residents, businesses, and all those involved with the borough council rightly expect.
- **Delivery:** Ensuring we set ambitious targets that we strive to meet, in order to provide high-quality public services for our residents.

### Our Priorities

1. Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council
2. Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment
3. Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance
4. Investing in our local economy to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth

### New Core Behaviours

TMBC employees are expected to demonstrate the following core behaviours and values in their daily work:

- **Teamwork:** Working collaboratively and sharing knowledge to achieve the best outcomes.
- **Can-Do Attitude:** Embracing challenges, adapting to change, and striving for continuous improvement.
- **Respect:** Treating colleagues and customers with courtesy and professionalism.
- **Integrity:** Maintaining trust through transparency, honesty, and accountability.

### Alignment with the Corporate Strategy and Staff Feedback

This Workforce Development Strategy supports the delivery of TMBC's Corporate Strategy by ensuring our workforce is equipped, empowered, and motivated to meet the key priorities of the organisation.

By aligning our people practices with these priorities and fostering a culture of **Innovation, Transformation, and Delivery**, we will ensure that TMBC remains an agile, effective and high performing organisation.

Insights from the **Staff Survey Action Plan 2025** have been incorporated to address workforce concerns and opportunities for improvement.

### 3. Workforce Profile

TMBC employs 268 employees across various functions, dedicated to providing high-quality services to the community.

The overall staffing number is not anticipated to change significantly between 2025 to 2028.

However, the Council’s Management Team regularly considers issues related to staffing capacity and reviews staffing structures to identify opportunities for re-aligning operational practice with available resource. Any changes or increases to the Council’s permanent staffing structure need approval from the General Purposes Committee.

#### Workforce gender and full time/part time profile

<b>Total number of Employees</b>	<b>268</b>
Female	175
Male	93
Full time employees	184
Part time employees	84
Female full time / part time	98 / 77
Male full time / part time	86 / 7

#### Workforce age profile

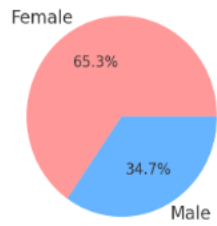
Age range	Total employees	Female	Male
60 +	37	21	15
55-59	56	38	18
50-54	45	29	16
40-49	72	51	22
30-39	39	21	18
20-29	19	15	4
Under20	0	0	0

#### Workforce pay profile

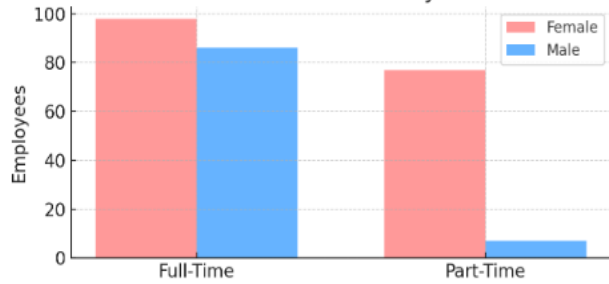
Pay grade	Total employees	Female	Male
M Grade	90	40	50
Main pay scale	178	135	43

#### Workforce profile graphical summary:

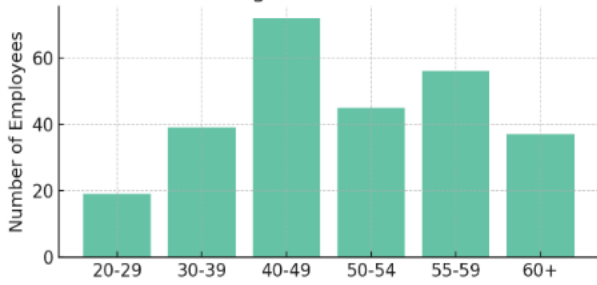
**Gender Distribution**



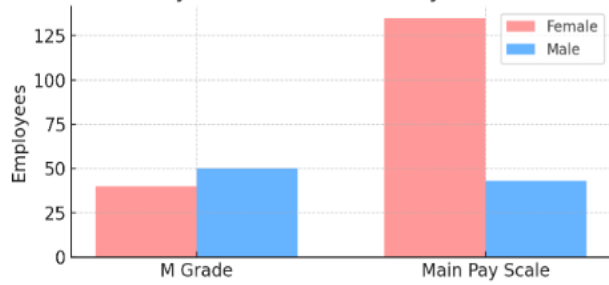
**Full-Time vs Part-Time by Gender**



**Age Distribution**



**Pay Grade Distribution by Gender**



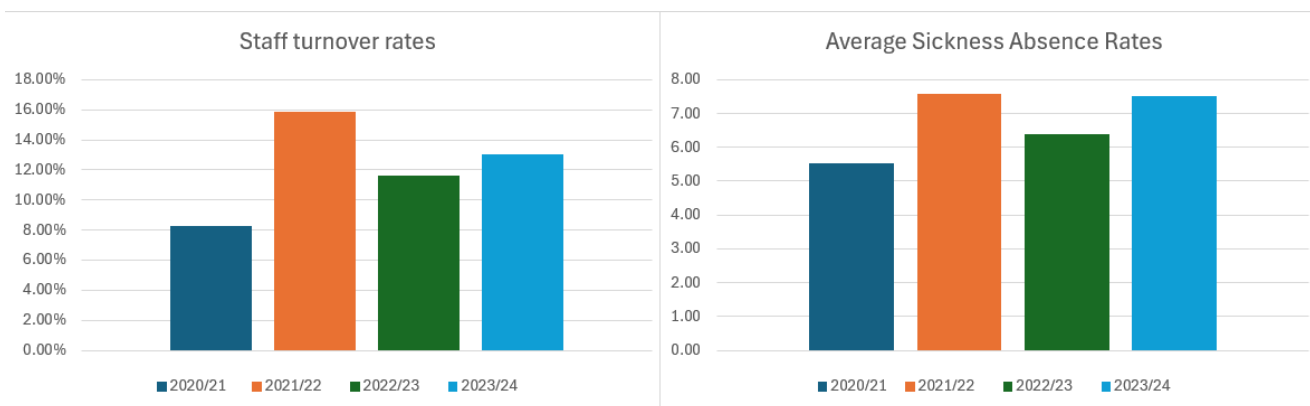
**Staff turnover rate 2023/24**

Year	Turnover Rate
2020/21	8.30%
2021/22	15.90%
2022/23	11.60%
2023/24	13.00%

**Staff sickness absence**

Year	Average sickness (days) per employee
2020/21	5.52
2021/22	7.59
2022/23	6.39
2023/24	7.50

**Staff turnover and staff sickness absence rates graphical summary:**



## Workforce analysis

### 1. Gender Distribution

The workforce consists of 268 employees, with 175 females (65%) and 93 males (35%).

There is a clear female-majority workforce, with nearly two-thirds of employees being women.

Full-time employment is more evenly distributed (98 females, 86 males), but part-time work is heavily dominated by females (77 females, 7 males).

#### Key observations & issues:

The large percentage of women working part-time could indicate a lack of flexible full-time opportunities or barriers preventing women from working full-time (e.g., caregiving responsibilities).

If part-time roles offer fewer career progression opportunities, this could impact the gender balance at senior levels.

### 2. Age Profile

The Council clearly has a significant number of its workforce in the higher age ranges.

There are 37 employees (14%) aged 60+.

There are 56 employees (21%) in the 55-59 age range and 45 employees, 17% in the 50-54 age range. Over 50% of the Council's workforce is aged over 50.

Employees under 30 make up only 7% (19 employees) of the organisation, and there are no employees under 20.

#### Key observations & issues:

**Aging Workforce:** With over 50% of employees aged 50 and above, a significant portion of the workforce has the potential to look to retire in the near future.

There is a lack of younger employees, the low number of employees under 30 suggests possible succession planning challenges.

It is clear that strategies will need to be put in place ensure the transferring of knowledge, to

avoid the loss of expertise.

Gender Distribution in Age Groups: Women outnumber men in all age groups, except for younger employees (30-39), where numbers are more balanced.

### 3. Pay Grade Distribution

M Grade (Higher Pay Level): 90 employees – 40 females, 50 males.

Main Pay Scale (Lower Pay Level): 178 employees – 135 females, 43 males.

#### Key Observations & Issues:

The Council has a significant gender pay gap with men more likely to be in higher-paid roles (M Grade), despite women making up nearly two thirds of the workforce.

There are a significant number of more women concentrated on the lower main pay scale (135 out of 178).

#### Workforce Demographics:

Understanding the composition of our workforce is crucial in ensuring that we have the right skills, diversity, and talent to meet future challenges.

Several key areas require focused attention:

- **Succession plans:** A significant portion of our workforce is nearing the age where they may consider retirement, posing risks of knowledge loss and skills shortages. There is a need to develop succession plans for critical posts and ensure knowledge transfer is given a high consideration.
- **Gender Representation:** Women are not as well represented compared to men in senior posts. The establishment of a **Women's Network** can play a crucial role in supporting career progression and mentoring opportunities.
- **Skills Gaps and Future Workforce Needs:** An refreshed and revised recruitment policy, in-house training programs, and management development initiatives will play an important tools in addressing future workforce needs.
- **Flexible and Hybrid Working Patterns:** Reviewing and refining policies related to flexible working, remote working to ensure alignment with operational needs and employee expectations.
- **Health and Wellbeing Considerations:** Expanding employee wellbeing programs, promoting Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP), and regularly organising wellbeing events.

By trying to address these workforce demographic areas, the Council can create a future-ready workforce that aligns with our strategic goals.

## 4. Summary of Staff Survey Results

The Staff Survey, undertaken in October 2024, provides valuable insights into the experiences, engagement, and priorities of our workforce. Understanding these results allows us to make informed decisions and tailor our Workforce Strategy to better support

staff, ensuring they feel valued, motivated, and equipped to contribute effectively. The results underpin this strategy by highlighting key areas for development, such as career progression, wellbeing, and leadership engagement.

The Council is committed to conducting an **annual staff survey** to track progress and identify emerging challenges. This will enable us to adapt our approach, refine our initiatives, and ensure continuous improvement in our people practices. By embedding staff feedback into our strategy, we will create a more dynamic, responsive, and inclusive workplace that aligns with the needs of both employees and the wider organisation.

## Results of Staff Survey

The latest **Staff Survey results from October 2024**, achieved an impressive **77% response rate**. The survey provides valuable insights into employee engagement, satisfaction, and areas for improvement.

Key findings include:

- **Engagement and Values Alignment:** 83% of staff agree that they understand and align with TMBC's priorities and values.
- **Workplace Culture:** 79% of employees feel positively about the organisation's culture and working environment.
- **Leadership and Communication:** 91% of employees feel well-informed about the Council's priorities, while 75% believe there is effective two-way communication between staff and leadership.
- **Recognition and Wellbeing:** 86% of employees feel that their work is appreciated, with 95% recognising the importance of employee wellbeing initiatives.
- **Career Development:** 74% of employees reported satisfaction with their career progression opportunities, highlighting an area for further development.

Key actions derived from the survey results include:

- Strengthening career development initiatives, including a **new online appraisal system** and enhanced **internal job vacancy promotion**.
- Implementing a **formal staff awards scheme** to improve staff recognition and morale.
- Expanding leadership visibility through **regular staff briefings**, and further **engagement events** with management team.
- Enhancing employee wellbeing initiatives, including continued promotion of the **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** and new **wellness-focused staff events**.

These survey results directly inform this Workforce Strategy, ensuring that the Council's workforce remains engaged, motivated, and aligned with TMBC's strategic priorities.

## 5. Embedding the new Core Behaviours

The Council has developed a set of new core behaviours during the early part of 2025. All staff are expected to demonstrate the following core behaviours and values in their daily work:

- **Teamwork:** Working collaboratively and sharing knowledge to achieve the best outcomes.
- **Can-Do Attitude:** Embracing challenges, adapting to change, and striving for continuous improvement.
- **Respect:** Treating colleagues and customers with courtesy and professionalism.
- **Integrity:** Maintaining trust through transparency, honesty, and accountability.

These new core behaviours will take time to embed. It will be important to ensure these core behaviours are fully embedded across the organisation, this be achieved by implementing the following:

- **Leadership Development:** Ensure managers understand the behaviours and they are able to model and reinforce these behaviours in their teams, ensuring expectations are clear and consistently upheld.
- **Recognition:** Introduce an employee recognition programme that highlights and celebrates staff who consistently demonstrate TMBC's core behaviours.
- **Behaviour-Based Appraisals:** Align all staff appraisals with core behaviours, ensuring that employees are assessed not just on outcomes but also on how they work collaboratively and ethically.
- **Employee Engagement Initiatives:** Continue to prioritise engagement surveys and feedback mechanisms to understand how well these behaviours are being demonstrated and identify areas for further improvement.
- **Induction Programme Updates:** Revise the onboarding process to ensure that new employees understand and adopt these behaviours from day one.
- **Cross-Team Collaboration Projects:** Encourage employees from different departments to work together on projects that reinforce our behaviours.
- **Regular Staff Communication:** Use all-staff briefings, staffnet, and all internal platforms to continually promote and reinforce the importance of core behaviours.

## 6. The four Key Pillars of the Workforce Strategy

### Introduction

The following four key pillars are the essential themes and priorities which form the foundation of our newly updated Workforce Development Strategy and are critical to ensuring that TMBC continues to be a forward thinking and high performing organisation.

The themes have been developed by taking into account the Council's Corporate Strategy and priorities, the current workforce demographics, the new core behaviours expected of all staff and the staff survey results.

The four key pillars of **Talent and Development, Recruitment and Retention, Wellbeing & Recognition and Ensuring Staff Are Ready for Change** are all interconnected, reinforcing our commitment to developing a high-performing workforce that is engaged, valued, and equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

Investing in our workforce is key to achieving the Council's broader objectives. By nurturing talent, we enable employees to grow and take on new and more senior roles, ensuring that TMBC has the right skills in place to deliver services effectively. Recruitment and retention approaches are essential in a competitive job market, the Council must focus on attracting and keeping the best talent through a strong employer brand, career development pathways, and clear progression opportunities.

Staff wellbeing and recognition remain central to our Workforce Strategy. We aim to create a working environment where employees feel supported, recognised, and empowered to balance their professional and personal lives effectively. This is essential for maintaining motivation, productivity, and overall job satisfaction.

Finally, as local government continues to evolve, ensuring our workforce is ready for change is more important than ever. Change management, resilience training, and employee engagement initiatives will help staff navigate future challenges confidently.

### Key pillar 1: Talent and Development

The development of our workforce is fundamental to ensuring TMBC continues to deliver high-quality services to our residents. By equipping employees with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to grow, we create a resilient and adaptable workforce capable of meeting future challenges. Investment in talent and development ensures that staff are engaged, motivated, and able to progress in their careers within the organisation.

- Establish a **robust learning and development framework** to identify what the key corporate priorities across the organisation are focusing on enhancing leadership, technical, and soft skills.
- Identify critical posts and develop a **succession plan** across the organisation to address the risks of an aging workforce and ensure knowledge retention.
- Implement a **new online appraisal system** that aligns staff ambitions with career development plans.
- Ensure all training and development activities align with our values of **Innovation, Transformation, and Delivery** to foster a forward-thinking and adaptable workforce.
- Develop a **comprehensive suite of training programme for all new and inexperienced line managers**, covering managing performance, sickness management, and recruitment best practices.
- Establish **mentoring and coaching programs**, to help develop clearer career pathways to aid with succession planning.
- Encourage knowledge-sharing and capture through **peer learning networks** and cross-departmental projects.

### Key Pillar 2: Recruitment and Retention

Recruiting and retaining the right people is fundamental to be able to continue to deliver high-quality services at the Council. A clear and adaptable approach to recruitment ensures that we attract diverse and skilled talent, while robust retention initiatives create an environment where employees feel valued and have clear career progression opportunities. By focusing on employer branding, induction & onboarding, and professional development, we can position TMBC as an employer of choice and build a workforce that is resilient, motivated, and aligned with our organisational values.

- Update the Council's **Recruitment and Selection policy** to ensure that is adaptable to attract diverse talent and fill critical skill gaps.
- Provide a greater focus on **clear career progression pathways** ensuring the Council can promote and retain top talent.
- Modernise recruitment processes to **reduce the time-to-hire** and improve candidate experience.
- Adopt on an "**always on approach**" to recruitment by ensure vacant positions are always available online for staff to apply.

- Improve the **induction and onboarding processes** to ensure new employees feel engaged and supported from day one by developing a **comprehensive welcome pack** for new starters and develop a new brochure for prospective employees to highlight why the Council is an excellent place to work and progress.
- Ensure the Council's **Women's Network** can evolve to support career growth and leadership opportunities in underrepresented senior positions.

### Key Pillar 3: Wellbeing and Recognition

Creating a positive and supportive work environment is essential for employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. TMBC is committed to ensuring that staff feel valued, recognised, and supported in both their professional and personal lives. By offering competitive benefits, mindful health initiatives, and work-life balance policies, we aim to foster a culture of wellbeing and recognition that aligns with our organisational values and enhances overall employee engagement.

- Ensure regular promotion of **mental health and wellbeing initiatives**, including counselling, flexible working options, and resilience training.
- Review and look to enhance the Council's **benefits packages** to ensure TMBC remains competitive in attracting and retaining talent.
- Promote **work-life balance** through hybrid working options, flexible scheduling, and family-friendly policies.
- Implement **financial wellbeing support programs**, including pension guidance and financial literacy training.
- Encourage **peer recognition and appreciation initiatives** to create a culture of positivity and engagement.
- Introduce a **formal staff award scheme** linked to TMBC's Vision and Values, with regular recognition events.
- Ensure that we continue to identify and nominate colleagues and teams for recognition at **external and professional awards ceremonies**
- Enhance the **long-service awards scheme**, ensuring all staff are recognised at key milestones linked to important anniversary of service dates.
- Expand **peer-to-peer recognition platforms**, allowing staff to highlight colleagues' achievements on StaffNet.
- Regularly promote the expanded **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** to support staff mental and physical wellbeing.
- Run regular **employee wellbeing events**, focusing on mental health, physical fitness, and work-life balance.

### Key Pillar 4: Ensuring Staff Are Ready for Change

As local government continues to evolve, it is crucial that TMBC staff are equipped with the skills, confidence, and adaptability to embrace and manage change effectively. Preparing staff for change ensures that they remain engaged, resilient, and proactive in responding to organisational shifts, such as Local Government Reorganisation. Through structured training, enhanced communication, and employee engagement initiatives, we will create a workforce that is prepared for future challenges while maintaining high levels of service delivery and collaboration.

- Prepare staff for **Local Government Reorganisation** by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to transition successfully.
- Provide **change management training** to help employees navigate restructuring and organisational shifts.

- Implement **internal mobility programs** to support career development and adaptability in an evolving public sector landscape.
- Develop **resilience and adaptability training** to support employees through periods of change and uncertainty.
- Continue to establish **regular staff engagement forums** to provide updates on organisational changes and address concerns proactively.
- Increase leadership visibility by ensuring **regular staff briefings, Q&A sessions, and directorate-wide meetings**.
- Establish a **staff suggestion scheme** to gather employee feedback and drive continuous improvement.
- Regularly communicate **good news stories and achievements** from across Council services to enhance engagement.

## 7. Specific Actions & Milestones (2025-2028) and Reporting

The Workforce Development Strategy positions TMBC's workforce to successfully support the Council's strategic priorities while embracing change, fostering development, and ensuring staff are motivated and engaged. By embedding our **Vision and Values**—Innovation, Transformation, and Delivery—throughout our people practices, we will create a resilient, high-performing organisation that delivers exceptional public services.

Regular feedback, staff engagement, and performance reviews will ensure this strategy remains dynamic and responsive to any emerging challenges and opportunities.

### Year 1 (2025-2026):

- Embedding the new core behaviours across the Council.
- Launching and embedding the Council's new and updated online appraisal form.
- Launch a training programme for all new managers on managing employee policies.
- Revise the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedure to ensure that it can be adaptable to recruit to national recognised hard to fill vacancies across Local Government.
- Revise the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedure to ensure that opportunities for our staff are maximised.
- Manage and target vacant posts covered by agency staff to look to look at alternative ways to deliver what is needed by the post.
- Increase the promotion of employee wellbeing initiatives to promote mental and physical health.
- Roll out a variety of core behaviour initiatives to ensure they are integrated across the organisation.

### Year 2 (2026-2027):

- Provide learning and development opportunities on devolution and change management to prepare staff for local government reorganisation.
- Continue to revise recruitment strategies to attract key talent, particularly in high-demand roles.
- Develop succession planning frameworks to mitigate risks associated with an aging workforce.
- Expand internal mobility programmes to improve talent retention and development.
- Strengthen recognition and award mechanisms to encourage buy-in to core behaviours.

### Year 3 (2027-2028):

- Provide targeted training initiatives for different staff groups to ensure they are well prepared for the changes linked to Local Government reorganisation, including preparing for recruitment and selection processes.

### Reporting on Progress of the Workforce Development Strategy

To ensure transparency and accountability, the Council's Management Team will receive biannual updates on the progress of the Workforce Development Strategy.

Additionally, an annual report will be presented to the Members of the General Purposes Committee, providing a comprehensive update on progress, as well as any modifications or additions to the Workforce Development Strategy itself for their consideration.

### How We Will Measure Success and What We Will Report

Progress on the Workforce Development Strategy will be assessed using a range of key indicators, including:

- Further feedback from future staff engagement surveys
- Insights from learning and development activities
- Key performance indicators related to workforce effectiveness
- Regularly updated workforce reports
- Staff turnover and absence rates
- Feedback and data on recruitment processes

It is hoped that providing updated information on these metrics will provide valuable insights into workforce trends, helping to shape future workforce planning and development initiatives.

## 8. Funding the Workforce Development Strategy

To ensure the successful delivery of the initiatives outlined in this Workforce Development Strategy, the Council is committed to providing the necessary resources and financial investment.

A dedicated **Learning and Development Plan** will be costed annually, with a total funding allocation of **£120,000 per annum for 2025 to 2028 (made up of annual approved budget allocation and use of Training Reserve)**. This will factor in training identified during the appraisal process.

This funding will support a wide variety of learning and development initiatives. These will include formal training programmes, management and leadership development, post qualification training, career progression initiatives and change management programmes to equip staff with the skills needed to meet current and future challenges.

In addition to the Learning and Development budget, annual financial provisions will continue to be allocated to support:

- **Employee Wellbeing Initiatives:** Funding will continue for mental health and wellbeing programmes, including access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and regular wellbeing events. (Budget of £3,150 in 2025/26).
- **Recognition and Award Schemes:** There is no new funding required for any of the proposed recognition programmes, such as the staff awards scheme. There is a commitment to review the long-service awards to ensure staff are recognised for their long service whilst employed at the Council. There is no anticipated rise in costs to the long-service awards as we look to recognise and award long service in new ways. (budget **TBC**)

The Council is committed to continually improve the culture of appreciation and recognising achievement.

The Council will regularly review and assess the budget to ensure it meets the evolving needs of the workforce while delivering value for money. This sustained investment underlines TMBC's commitment to prioritising staff development, wellbeing, and engagement.

Finally, in terms of recruitment and retention, the Council adopted a market supplement policy in September 2023. The Council's medium term financial strategy from 2025/26 includes provision for the payment of market supplements to the value of (up to) £150,000 per year.