

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Employment Committee
Date:	18 th June 2026
Subject:	Workforce Strategy update: focus on Staff Survey 2026
Chief Officer:	Will Tuckley: CEO MD Commissioner Ian O'Donnell: Executive Director of Corporate Resources
Contact Officer:	Bal Toor: HR Director
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Staff Survey scorecard Appendix 2: HR MI snapshot

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The Workforce Strategy has been in place for 1 year. At the previous Employment Committee a deep dive report was tabled, allowing committee members to understand notable areas of progress since the launch of the strategy alongside areas where HR intends to maintain momentum; this included our ambition to enhance our Learning and Development offer to all staff, further build on line management support and develop a working environment where our staff can thrive.
- 1.2 At the time of writing this paper, the staff survey results have just come in and therefore this paper will focus on presenting the headlines from this year's staff survey alongside the impact this will have on the workforce strategy for 26/27.

Recommendations:

- 1.3 To note staff survey results and how this translates to the delivery of the workforce strategy and approve areas of focus for 26/27

Reason: This paper is updated on a quarterly basis and assures the Committee on how HR maintains a targeted approach when supporting its workforce to thrive.

Commissioner Review

This is a clear report that sets out a positive journey of progress against the staff survey results, which is very encouraging to see. There must be no complacency however, so the next report would benefit from showing performance against further key metrics underpinning the workforce strategy along with some benchmarking data, so the Committee can be assured of grip and progress across the organisation.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

As set out in the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027, to achieve its objectives the Council requires a high performing workforce that operates within a positive culture. The Workforce Strategy is key to achieving this and the roadmap by which HR delivers its function and expects to be held to account. The recent staff survey results allow an appropriate moment to stock take about whether the strategy remains focused on the right areas and where we need to add additional momentum.

Background

The strategy is currently underpinned by four priorities.

1. **Getting the basics right:** focusing on ensuring our staff have access to timely and accurate data to discuss people priorities in an evidence-based way
2. **Empowering our people:** ensuring people have the tools and space to hold meaningful 1:1s, End of Year Review, with career pathways for all
3. **Fostering a healthy and inclusive environment:** renewed focus on supporting active travel, diversity and inclusion throughout the employee lifecycle, whilst establishing a culture of 'speak up'
4. **Building a positive and transformative culture:** creating a culture of belonging for all staff; recognising and celebrating diversity and bringing us together to volunteer, whilst broadening our connection with schools to cover work experience or placements.

Key items to note since April 2026 update to Employment Committee:

Work with Schools & young people

Continued progress has been made in strengthening links with Slough secondary schools through supporting (Baylis Court) with mentoring and judging for the climate change challenge. We also hosted Baylis Court Ongoing partnership with *Learning to Work* to identify 10 students for work experience placements this year (in comparison to two students last year) and are hosting two workplace visits (for Baylis Court/May 2026 and Lynch Hill School/July 2026).

Slough Children's First (SCF)

Regular communication continues with Slough Children's First on how we can support young people and care leavers. Slough Borough Council's ensures all their vacancies are supplied to SCF colleagues who support our care leavers to apply. This includes advertising shorter term placements such as 12-month researcher positions, in addition to apprenticeships or permanent roles.

Recruitment:

We continue to address the cost of interims and with the support of CDL conversions, we have saved the business £130,467.00 since October 2025. In tandem to this, we are working with business areas to recruit to permanent roles thus reducing our reliance on interims.

Blind Sifting

Since the introduction of blind sifting, overall, we have seen a wider spread in hires across both age and ethnicity groups in Q4 compared to Q3. Blind sifting is a screening approach in which identifying information, such as a candidate's age, gender or ethnicity, is removed from applications/CVs during the initial shortlisting stage, enabling managers to focus solely on skills, experience and job-relevant evidence. This approach helps to reduce the impact of unconscious bias in decision-making, promotes more objective and consistent assessments, and supports a fairer and more inclusive recruitment process. See table below for impact blind sifting. It is notable that the introduction of blind sifting has broadened the mix of ethnicity when hiring candidates:

Ethnicity	Offered / Hired Q4		Offered / Hired Q3	
	Total	%	Total	%
Grand Total	24	100%	33	100%
White - British	8	33%	4	12%
Indian	3	13%	6	18%
Pakistani	3	13%	2	6%
Asian - British	2	8%	5	15%
White - English	2	8%	2	6%
Caribbean	1	4%	0	0%
Irish	1	4%	0	0%
Italian	1	4%	0	0%
Nigerian	1	4%	0	0%
Polish	1	4%	2	6%
Prefer not to say	1	4%	1	3%

End of Year Reviews:

From January to April 2026 eligible staff (permanent, in service since April 1st, 2025, not on long term absence) completed their End of Year Reviews. 91.5% of staff completed the process which is an increase from last year (90.1%).

In 24/25 there were 79 people who did not engage in the process at all. In 25/26 this reduced to 37. A more targeted approach and individual support is attributed to the engagement levels.

The 25/26 reviews included a pilot of two new tools – 360 feedback for Senior Leaders (Head of Service and above) and a talent metric – the 9-box grid – for all line managers. Out of the 30 senior leaders who were eligible for an End of Year Review,

20 participated in the 360 feedback. The total number of responses per person varies from one to twelve. The results summarised below are a result of the total number of responses per question. The overall response shows a positive response.

Question	Always %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Total Responses
Acting Inclusively & Living Our Values Does this Leader encourage open communication and welcome feedback about their own leadership style?	83%	14%	3%	64
Communicating and Influencing Does the leader communicate effectively at all levels across the org?	70%	27%	3%	63
Leadership Does this Leader support a sense of accountability and shared responsibility within the team?	92%	8%	0%	64
Building Capabilities Does the leader set clear performance expectations for team members?	86%	14%	0%	63
Delivering Excellence Does this leader help create an environment where the team can learn from challenges?	83%	17%	0%	63
Driving Innovation How effectively does this Leader approach complex problems and involve the team in decision-making?	78%	21%	2%	63
Seeing the Bigger Picture How well does this leader translate an understanding of the complex and diverse issues facing Slough into action?	84%	16%	0%	64
Working Together Does this leader create a collaborative environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing ideas?	87%	13%	0%	63
Please provide feedback on your overall experience of this leader	0%	0%	0%	55
Grand Total	74%	15%	1%	564

The 9 box grid places individuals on a grid, based on a rating (low, medium, high) of their performance and potential. Below shows the total number of managers placed in each section of the grid. There were 139 managers placed on the grid.

On this occasion many managers were rated (by their manager) as being in the 'star' box, followed by the 'good' box i.e. high performing high potential. This year we did not introduce moderation across directorates, which is something we will be introducing next year alongside some additional criteria, however given the take up, we were reassured that this was a tool that would be useful for the business as part of our succession planning development.

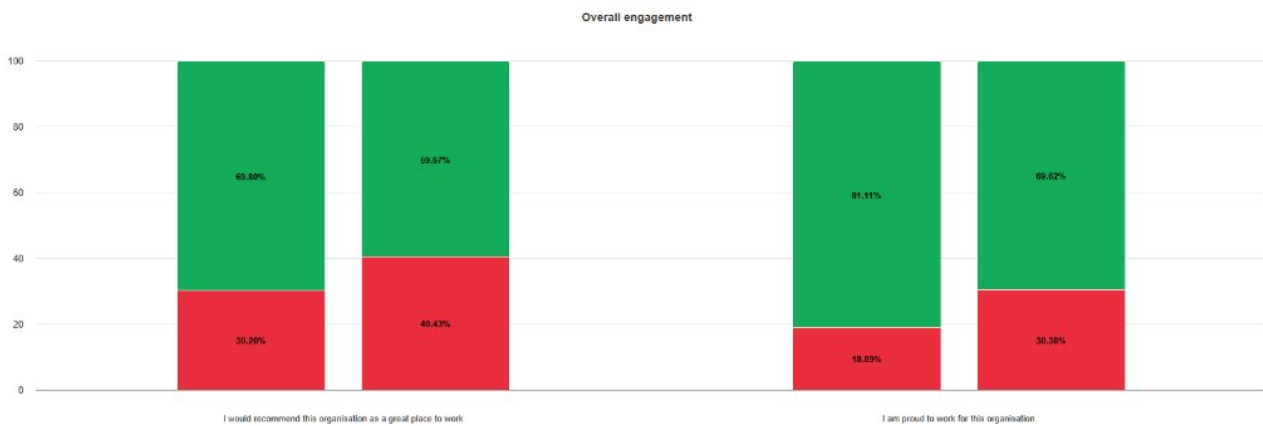
As with every year, we will hold feedback sessions with our line managers and staff to enhance the product for future years.

Staff Survey 2026

This full staff survey was held 18 months after the last survey (in November 2024). The participation was 53% (compared to 55% in 2024). The survey is made up of 9 sections ranging from Vision to Communications. This year, every section saw an overall positive increase in results.



Staff's overall engagement scores also increased, indicating staff are more positive about working from SBC:



Areas with the highest score are: *series 2 is 2024 results compared to series 1; 2026 results

Section	Question	N	Series 1 Score	Trend	Series 2 Score
My work	I feel responsible and accountable for my work	840	99%	↑ 2	97%
Working together	I have a good working relationship with my colleagues	835	97%	↑ 0	97%
My work	I feel a sense of pride about my job	841	94%	↑ 3	91%
Diversity	I am aware of our employee code of conduct	864	94%	↑ 1	93%
Making a difference	I understand my part in helping to deliver our priorities	851	94%	↑ 4	90%
Making a difference	I feel that what I do makes a difference	851	93%	↑ 5	88%
My work	My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment	840	93%	↑ 3	90%
Making a difference	I would feel comfortable telling my line manager if I made a mistake or did something wrong	851	93%	↑ 3	90%
Diversity	I am aware of our whistleblowing policy and procedures and how to use them	865	91%	↑ 1	90%
My line manager	My line manager is accessible when needed	847	90%	↑ 1	89%
Working together	There is good co-operation and teamwork within my team	835	90%	↑ 2	88%

Areas where SBC staff have expressed a notably increase in positivity are as follows: *series 2 is 2024 results compared to series 1; 2026 results

Section	Question	N	Series 1 Score	Trend	Series 2 Score
Overall engagement	I am proud to work for this organisation	831	81% 19	↑ 11	70%
Vision	I believe we are focussed on the right priorities	875	71% 29	↑ 11	60%
Communication	News and updates about the organisation are easy to find	831	83% 17	↑ 10	72%
Overall engagement	I would recommend this organisation as a great place to work	831	70% 30	↑ 10	60%
My work	Our processes and systems enable me to do my job effectively	840	64% 36	↑ 9	55%
Communication	Information provided by the organisation is straightforward and clear	832	77% 23	↑ 8	69%
Communication	The communications I receive from the corporate centre are relevant for me	831	73% 27	↑ 8	65%
Belonging	I feel like I belong within the organisation	867	81% 19	↑ 8	73%
Working together	Learning from best practice is shared across the organisation	835	71% 29	↑ 8	63%
Making a difference	I feel that my views, ideas and suggestions are valued and taken on board	851	81% 19	↑ 8	74%
Vision	I understand our vision for the future	875	78% 22	↑ 8	71%
My development	Our leadership team is committed to the development of its people	838	70% 30	↑ 8	62%
My development	The quality of learning and development or training I receive is good	839	70% 30	↑ 8	63%
Vision	I know how we are doing against our priorities	874	64% 36	↑ 8	56%

Areas where our staff are the least positive: *series 2 is 2024 results compared to series 1; 2026 results

Section	Question	N	Series 1 Score	Trend	Series 2 Score
My development	I can see how my career could progress within the organisation	839	59% 41	↑ 5	54%
Vision	The Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Directors are visible and approachable	873	62% 38	↑ 0	61%
Working together	Teams across the organisation work well and co-operate with each other to get the job done	835	63% 37	↑ 4	59%
Vision	I know how we are doing against our priorities	874	64% 36	↑ 8	56%
My work	Our processes and systems enable me to do my job effectively	840	64% 36	↑ 9	55%
Vision	Our senior leaders inspire me to do the best job I can	875	64% 36	↑ 5	59%
Vision	Our senior leaders listen to staff views	874	65% 35	↑ 7	58%
My development	I have the opportunity to learn and develop beyond my job role	839	66% 34	↓ -2	68%
Communication	Communication within the organisation is open and transparent	832	67% 33	↑ 6	61%
My development	I am provided with frequent feedback on how I can develop and improve	839	68% 32	↑ 4	64%

The two questions in the survey that saw a decrease in positivity are around learning and development alongside communication within my team (although this question remains 88% positive).

My development	I have the opportunity to learn and develop beyond my job role	839	66% 34	↓ -2	68%
Working together	Communication within my team is good	835	88% 12	↓ -1	89%
My work	On the whole, my workload is manageable	841	70% 30	↑ 0	70%
My work	I have someone at work that I can turn to when things are tough	841	85% 15	↑ 0	85%
Working together	I have a good working relationship with my colleagues	835	97% 3	↑ 0	97%
Vision	The Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Directors are visible and approachable	873	62% 38	↑ 0	61%
My line manager	My line manager cares about my wellbeing	847	89% 11	↑ 0	88%

Employee Net Promoter Score has increased by more than 10%: (this score is a calculation of 3 key questions which indicate how positive an employee feels about working for SBC)

Questions use to calculate	2026	2024
I would recommend this organisation as a great place to work	39.59	19.13
I feel valued and recognised for the contribution I make	44.87	32.09

4. **Building a positive and transformative culture:** We have successfully increased our apprenticeships and graduate intake year on year. However, whilst our staff have expressed, they feel more valued, we recognise a broader focus is required on celebrating staff and our culture of collaboration.

Next steps:

The HR team is currently analysing the full set of staff survey results and are triangulating this with other key HR information. The workforce strategy will be refined to focus on supporting the transformation of the organisational culture under:

- Leadership behaviours and accountability
- Learning and Development
- People systems/processes
- Communication

Key matters for Committee to consider and discuss are:

- Does the Committee have a preference of areas of focus in the revised 26/27 workforce strategy update?

Link to Statutory Equality Objectives

The Council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice.

As part of meeting its statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council has developed and published 6 equality objectives. There are 2 objectives that are specifically related to the workforce:

Objective 4: The Council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice, as well as benchmarking and sharing best practice

Objective 5: The Council actively ensures that the profile of its workforce (including the profile of major commissioned services) reflects the community it serves/local labour market.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 There are no decisions with financial implications in this report. All the activity set out in the report is managed within existing budgets.

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The effect of the Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 is noted below.

The reporting of equality data and taking any necessary action based on this data supports an approach which should also guard against any employment claims under the Equality Act.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 Currently the Corporate Risk register details a risk regarding our 'Failure to Attract, Retain & Engage with Our People', the Workforce Strategy supports HR focus on workforce and cultural initiatives to address this in a more detailed and transparent way.

3.4 Environmental implications

None

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 The Council is committed to being an inclusive employer and meeting its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and s.149, the Public Sector Equality Duty. Monitoring of workforce profiles and other key workforce metrics by equality groups, within regular management information reports, is the foundation of this analysis. A key issue remains the incomplete diversity declarations, but work continues to support our workforce to declare their protected information or state 'prefer not to say' to further drive HR initiatives that are designed to improve culture.

3.6 *Workforce implications:*

3.6.1 This information is vital to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and an equivalent set of HR MI is presented at a monthly DLTs, allowing for a discussion on whether deliverables remain right for the desired culture.

4. **Background Papers**

None