



CASE STUDY



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Strategic Workforce Planning: From Short-term Fixes to Long-term Futures

Like many local authorities, Telford & Wrekin Council is operating in a complex and fast-changing environment - facing increased demand for services, significant financial pressure, and a workforce profile that reflects both deep expertise and significant risks linked to succession, retention, and future skills.

Telford & Wrekin Council, shortlisted for LGC Council of the Year 2025, is widely recognised as a high-performing and forward-thinking authority. With a strong track record of innovation and a readiness to look further ahead than most, the Council is committed to staying ahead of the curve - not only in service delivery, but in how it develops and supports its people.

When the Council welcomed in our consultancy support, it wasn't about writing a plan. It was about embedding a new way of working - one that would help them see beyond the immediate pressures and begin shaping the workforce it would need not just in 2025, but in 2040. The Council wanted to think beyond vacancies and short-term fixes to create a resilient, future-ready workforce that would be supported by robust insight and leadership buy-in.



Our role

With an OD mindset, our approach was to build a new way of working: one where workforce planning is not seen as a one-off HR task, but a strategic leadership function embedded across all services.

Together, we designed and delivered a staged programme of activity that would build understanding, generate ownership, and shift the culture.

Our journey together

The work began by laying strong foundations, with short and impactful briefing sessions delivered to senior leaders, heads of service, and senior managers. These initial introductions to the core principles of strategic workforce planning were delivered in partnership with The CIPD to build early awareness and understanding.

From that point forward, WME led the support, working closely with the Council's HR and OD team to embed SWP as a sustained way of working. Business Partners were supported to move from reactive problem-solving to confident, strategic dialogue - asking the right questions, providing insight, and connecting service-level thinking to shape a coherent, council-wide workforce picture.

Telford & Wrekin's Senior Leadership Team played a central role. In a focused session, we helped them explore what SWP could unlock for the Council - and in doing so, secured their commitment and enthusiasm for a 'Grow Your Own' ambition. They acknowledged that, like much of local government, they couldn't always compete on pay - but they could offer something more compelling: purpose, continuous learning, flexibility, and the chance to grow and thrive in a values-led organisation. . That realisation created alignment around a clear and compelling direction.

"WME's guidance and expertise has been invaluable in helping us to develop and implement a strategic approach to workforce planning across the Council.

From our initial conversations, through the planning process and throughout the roll out of this first phase of the pilot, WME's innovative and insightful advice and expertise has enabled us to develop a robust and forward-thinking approach to workforce planning, as well as equipping our managers with the skills and capability to deliver this.

Acting as a critical friend, WME has encouraged us to develop our thinking further than we would have been able to on our own.

We feel confident that through WME's input and support, we are better placed to plan for and navigate the complex, evolving landscape in which we work."

Hannah Preece, HR & OD Service Delivery Manager and Debbie Brown, HR Policy and OD Manager

From concept to action

We worked in depth with four pilot services - Finance, Social Care, Development Management, and Education & Skills - helping each understand their workforce context, risks, and future requirements. That meant taking a longer view all the way to 2040 factoring in AI and automation, reimagined career pathways, anticipating generational shifts in workforce expectations and asking bold questions.

To support this, we introduced the **Service Snapshot** - a structured but simple tool that enables services to reflect on things including:

- › Who they are now
- › What risks they're facing
- › Where the skills gaps are
- › What needs to change
- › How they can grow talent from within

It wasn't a form to fill out. It was a conversation starter. A way to think forward. A way to capture insight without creating additional burden. And, critically, a way to spot patterns and opportunities across the council when snapshots are viewed together.

Through the snapshot process, the council began uncovering and connecting pockets of existing practice - including some creative 'grow your own' initiatives already happening, but not always visible or shared. That clarity helped shape the early foundations of a council wide Grow Your Own framework.

Meanwhile, HR Business Partners were supported to keep the conversation going - building snapshots into their role as a continuous, strategic dialogue, not a once-a-year submission.



What changed

By the end of this initial phase, the council had:

- > **A strategic commitment from senior leaders**
- > **A confident HR team enabling services to sustain the work**
- > **A replicable SWP model ready to engage all services**
- > **Four detailed service snapshots articulating their challenges and future priorities**
- > **A clearly emerging Grow Your Own approach with strong leadership sponsorship**
- > **A better understanding of where investment should be focused - including the skills needed for AI, digital transformation, and the reshaping of traditional roles**

SWP is no longer a form to complete, it's a live conversation. Services are beginning to talk about succession, development, and future capability not just resourcing gaps.

SWP is further cementing the Council's reputation as a front-runner in workforce transformation, not only responding to today's pressures, but actively shaping what great public sector employment looks like for the future.

As part of supporting the Council's long-term workforce planning ambitions, we also developed a bespoke Employer Value Proposition (EVP) to help position Telford & Wrekin as a future-focused, people-first employer. The EVP aims to reflect both the unique strengths of the Council and the broader context of a changing workforce, evolving skills needs, and increasing competition for talent. It acts as a unifying message that brings together the insight emerging from service-level planning - from skills gaps to career pathways - and reframes it as an opportunity to attract, retain and grow the workforce of the future. It provides a foundation for targeted attraction strategies, supports the council's Grow Your Own ambition, and ensures there is a clear narrative for why someone would choose to build their career with Telford & Wrekin.

For other councils...

Whether you're preparing for Local Government Reorganisation, navigating ongoing transformation, or simply trying to make limited budgets go further you need to know what kind of workforce you'll need, and how you'll develop it.

Strategic Workforce Planning gives you a way to:

- > **Move from reacting to recruitment and retention challenges to being ready for them**
- > **Align workforce decisions with future service delivery**
- > **Attract and retain a resilient and capable workforce**
- > **Shape learning and development around anticipated needs, not just current demand**
- > **Embed AI thinking, rather than bolt it on**
- > **Break down silos and create a connected workforce strategy**

In a sector facing extraordinary pressure, Telford and Wrekin council is showing what's possible, proving that strategic workforce planning isn't just a tool for survival, but a platform for ambition.

This isn't just about planning ahead, it's about reshaping how we think about workforce capability in a changing world. We embedded GenAI exploration into our SWP work and helped this council look not just at the roles they'll need now, but the mindset and skills that will matter most in the future.



If your council is ready to take a similar step, we'd love to help you make it real - combining future-focused workforce planning with practical GenAI insight.