



# 1. Introduction

I write this report as we finalise budget proposals for 2017/18. However in writing this report I have focused on life in the council and county beyond the need to balance the budget. In no way does this underestimate the challenge we have financially – we are going through the most significant changes in local government financing seen in recent times – however it is the reform that this necessitates, the way we deliver this reform and the impact it has on residents that underpins being able to live within our means. This reform and the staff who deliver reform are the focus of my 2016 annual report.

I have started with why we are here – to listen to what our residents say and to continuously improve how we respond to what they say. I have highlighted the reform and change staff have delivered during 2016 and plans to continue developing our staff so we are able to be a workforce fit for the future.

I am proud of our staff, both those who work directly for the Council and those who deliver on our behalf. They are our greatest asset and investment and for that reason this report focuses particularly on their contribution. Our endeavour to deliver better outcomes for Worcestershire residents in challenging times gets even greater as we move into 2017 and I am confident we can deliver.

# 2. Worcestershire residents – what residents said and what we did

We have spoken to over **55,000** residents over the last 5 years. Through surveys, roadshows, focus groups and conversations, Worcestershire's residents have told us their priorities are:

- **Safeguarding vulnerable children;**
- **Protecting vulnerable adults;**
- **Maintaining roads and highways.**

In response we have invested an extra £12 million into improving our roads and £500k on footpaths; over the last three years we have spent an extra £11 million on vulnerable children; over the same period we have invested an extra £8 million on the county's most vulnerable adults.

For the first time more than **1,000** residents attended our Public Roadshows this summer. I'd like to thank all of those who came and spoke to us – it's always the most satisfying part of my role to speak to those who live and work in our ambitious county.



Public Roadshows 2016



While more than **7/10** people said they felt that they belonged to their local area, **8/10** people in the county say that Worcestershire is a good place to live and satisfaction with the county council is at **52%**, persuading people that they have an ability to influence County Council decisions remains a challenge.

This may be in part because our communication and engagement methods until recently have been fairly traditional. In response this year we have increased our engagement across social media by **120%**. We have launched new channels including Instagram to reach younger audiences. Posting much more frequently on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter has helped us to establish meaningful conversations with our growing social media communities and we plan to continue utilising these channels throughout 2017. We also need to get better at demonstrating how resident's views have shaped policy and delivery. A good recent example of this is our commissioning of care for the elderly in Worcestershire, which is amongst the very best in the country, according to the Care Quality Commission.

More people believe that as a Council we are providing value for money in 2016 compared to 2009. This is good but we still have progress to make – often a key measure of value for money for residents is the helpfulness with which enquiries are dealt with and what they can see happening immediately around the area they live. We are making good progress on this with our contact centres for residents achieving an average **67%** satisfaction rating and our Driving Home investment having improved **63** miles of road, benefiting over **6,000** homes across the county.

Whilst listening to residents is paramount, we have also spoken to more than **1250** businesses in Worcestershire in this year's Business Viewpoint Survey, which is the biggest survey of business confidence in Worcestershire since the EU referendum. It was encouraging through this survey to see continuing positive growth anticipated by businesses, albeit at levels lower than the previous year. Of particular note was the appetite from local businesses for both superfast broadband and voice and data mobile coverage, and the latter will be a focus for us as go through 2017.

I do believe we have maintained the right focus on keeping checking back with residents and acting on their views. This hasn't always been easy, for example our investment in safeguarding the most vulnerable children whilst targeting a reduced early help spend being contentious for some members of the community. However it is clear in local government we do need to balance our budgets and with increased demand and reduced central government funding, choices do have to be made. Looking forward this will continue to be the case – whatever these choices are I know we will continue to engage with all residents in Worcestershire and ensure decisions debated at Cabinet and full Council are made on the basis of this evidence and professional expertise.

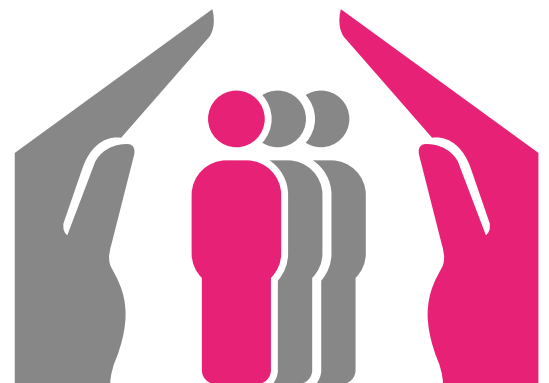
## 42% OF PEOPLE BELIEVE THE COUNCIL ARE PROVIDING



## FOR MONEY IN 2016 COMPARED TO 31% IN 2009

## THE QUALITY OF CARE FOR ELDERLY IN WORCESTERSHIRE IS

## THE 2<sup>ND</sup> BEST IN THE COUNTRY



## 9/10 CARE HOMES IN THE COUNTY PASSED INSPECTIONS THIS YEAR

### 3. Delivery of change in challenging times

These are unprecedented times we live in.

The model of local government finance will have changed beyond recognition by 2020 with our Council's income deriving from local council tax and business rates and not central government grant. This means a medium term challenge we have not seen previously, but by 2020 we will be self-sufficient.

However, the more significant shift we see is that the demands for our services, particularly for those most vulnerable in our county - the elderly and frail and those vulnerable children in need of our protection – are rising and will continue to.

Both of these changes compel us to do things differently, that we continue to reform and change. I am proud of how our staff have risen to this challenge over the course of 2016.

**Staff in Adult Services** have worked with partners to enable **340** adults with a Learning Disability to live in Supported Living units which supports them to be more independent. They have helped more than **2000** people to be supported in their own home through the home care we either commission or provide. Our social workers supporting vulnerable adults have enabled more than **1200** people to have a Direct Payment giving them maximum control over their care and support. In the last year our staff have supported more than **1200** people to leave hospital as soon as they were clinically ready to leave so that they could continue recuperation and reablement in their own home. To enable staff to work more effectively devolved budgets have been introduced, enabling decision making to happen at the front line and new technology was introduced in December to enable staff to work more effectively when mobile – this will be further rolled out in 2017.

In parallel we have worked alongside the Worcestershire and Herefordshire health economies to develop their **Sustainability and Transformation Plan**. This has been difficult at times as the NHS has a very different operating model from that of local government with clear governance through central bodies such as NHS England and NHS Improvement. With a plan finally published in November, our role in local government will be key, working with health colleagues to ensure that the clear 'hospital to home' strategic intent is effectively implemented. One particular focus for us will be to ensure funding follows increasing demand in social care and that the role of prevention is not seen as purely the role of public health but built into every element of the health service, particularly in primary care. We also have a key role to play in demonstrating to the health service how the back office across the multitude of NHS organisations can be reformed, based on our track record in this area over recent years.

During 2016, **staff in Children's Services** have got to grips with a range of challenges emerging over recent years. The contract with Babcock for school improvement services has begun to show evidence of emerging improvement plans with a real focus on key stage 2 results and outcomes for vulnerable learners. Our school improvement overall continues to be something to be proud of with our GCSE results above national figures and those of our statistical neighbours.

Similarly our focus on apprenticeships continues to benefit Worcestershire's young people with a reduction in the number of young people not in employment, education or training from **5% to 3%** and the number of apprenticeships rising again in 2016 by a further **7%**.

The implementation of the **family 'front door'** in July was a huge step forward for Worcestershire's most vulnerable children, providing a single point of access for referrals to social care, supported by many of our Worcestershire partners, including West Mercia Police who have played a key role in its establishment.





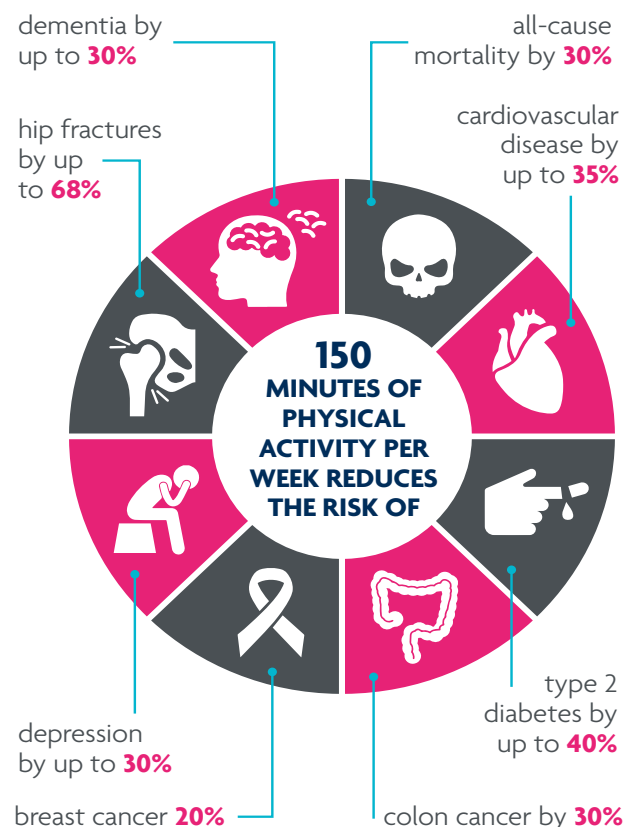
The arrival of a permanent Assistant Director, **Tina Russell** in October was a welcome step forward in leadership of children's safeguarding services and I would expect the report from our recent Ofsted inspection to highlight both as significant changes to improve our safeguarding of children despite having a long way to go to ensure workforce planning is implemented effectively and at pace. Our fostering and adoption services have also seen improvements with **49%** of children looked after by the Council placed with in-house carers, an increase from **39%** last year and time taken to progress adoption proceedings improving to **70%** being adopted within 14 months of **being looked after**. We still have significant challenges to face in improving Safeguarding Services, particularly around caseloads, workforce development and consistency of practice and this will be a major focus in 2017.

## By 2030 we are projected to have over **90% more people over 90 years old** and **33% more over 65 years old.**

**Public health staff** have started to make a bigger impact both within the Council and across the County. This year we have formed a new Public Health Directorate which will focus on enabling colleagues, partners and residents to think differently about health and well-being, to improve public health outcomes, and to make sure that our services are based on the best possible evidence.

The above changes in demographics are a challenge for us as a Council and County if we go on as we are but also an opportunity, particularly in how we exercise our Public Health duties – living well and healthy in older age is something we can and are starting to influence.

The Director of Public Health's report this year was compelling with the links between physical activity and healthy older age endorsed by the Health and Well Being Board. Public health staff have begun to harness the positivity and incredible kindness of Worcestershire's residents and communities with over **10,000** Dementia Friends now trained to raise awareness and help create dementia friendly communities. We are working with communities and partners through the GO ON Worcestershire Partnership to help residents get on line and develop basic digital skills. Digital Connectors based in each of districts have recruited **102** volunteer Digital Champions to help residents get online. These officers and volunteers have supported **3409** of our residents to develop basic digital skills to go online, for example to apply for jobs, access better details on fuel tariffs and access other online services.



Our **staff delivering economic development and infrastructure** have had a hugely busy year, with our second year of delivering an unprecedented level of major infrastructure schemes. Early evidence suggests this is making a real impact on our county's economy with Worcestershire LEP area seeing the:



**1<sup>ST</sup> STRONGEST GROWTH IN HIGHER LEVEL WORKFORCE SKILLS**

OF ALL LEP AREAS NATIONALLY BETWEEN 2010 - 2014



**2<sup>ND</sup> HIGHEST GROWTH IN PRODUCTIVITY**

OF ALL LEP AREAS NATIONALLY BETWEEN 2009 - 2014



**3<sup>RD</sup> HIGHEST GROWTH IN PROSPERITY**

OF ALL LEP AREAS NATIONALLY BETWEEN 2010 - 2014

The Southern Link Road has made significant strides forward with Phase 3 well underway, Hoobrook Link Road (or Silverwoods Way) is now open and reducing traffic congestion as well as making the area more accessible for housing and employment and Bromsgrove station opened in July. The year ended well with the team's ability to deliver major, complex, infrastructure involving a number of private and public sector partners anticipated to be rewarded with additional monies from the competitive, national Growth Deal 3. These planned programmes of work are alongside needing to respond in a timely way to emerging issues such as the collapse of Eastham Bridge, where a scheme has been developed and is well underway to construct a new permanent bridge.

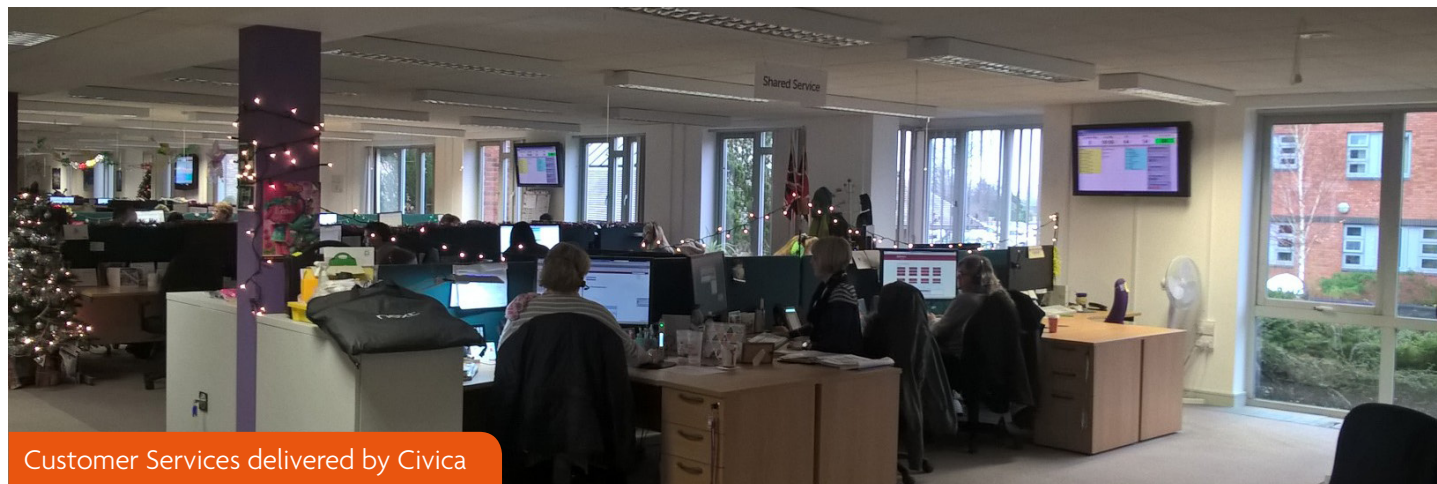
Much is still to do but with approvals for Worcestershire Parkway obtained in December, key infrastructure projects which have waited years to become a reality will do just that over the next two years, including the Energy from Waste plant EnviRecover which is well into its commissioning phase.

In July the Superfast Worcestershire Broadband programme achieved a key milestone by increasing broadband coverage to business premises from **44%** to over **90%**. A further **60,000** premises overall now have access to improved speeds as a result of the programme, over **2,000** more than originally expected, with take up beyond **35%**. The progress on these and other projects is a testament to the increasing maturity of the major projects team within the Council.



Artists impression of Worcestershire Parkway

Our **staff delivering support services across finance, commercial, legal, democratic, human resources, property management, systems, programme management, complaints handling, customer access and technology**, have continued to push boundaries and look at alternative ways to reform services. Our performance data, and management through use of that data is getting better but I would expect this focus to increase during 2017 with forecasting of performance trends given greater emphasis.



Customer Services delivered by Civica

With an already established ambition to deliver **100%** of our services online we have transformed over twenty key services and enabled more than **£2m** savings. These include new 'registration services,' enabling customers to request and pay for copy certificates online with online self-service rising from **40% to 78%**. Customer self-service in libraries has risen to **67%** and **97%** of applications for school admissions are completed online.

We have become more commercially minded with the end of 2016 marking the 1st anniversary of the establishment of our commercial team. We are still at the beginning of a journey to become an '**excellent commissioning authority**' but the Liberata contract for HR and Finance transaction processing, which came into effect in February, is a good example of a robust commercial partnership. Liberata has now established a base in Worcestershire, renting space at County Hall and is delivering transformation within the Council, Schools and the Police, with Staffordshire County Council now joining the framework. The embedding of social value, enabled through the contract, has seen apprentice roles recruited to the team based in Worcester, and opportunities for Worcestershire care leavers to participate in work experience placements – a real example of best practice.

We invited in a Local Government Association Peer Review team to review our progress in April and there were some clear positives coming out of this, including:

- A clear track record of delivery against priorities
- Good partnerships and positive relationships with external organisations and agencies – a real sense of 'Team Worcestershire'
- Innovation and experimentation seen as vital ingredients for continued transformation of the organisation
- A great deal of enthusiasm and an appetite to develop demand management, resulting in some impressive early thinking and examples

They recommended moving forwards:

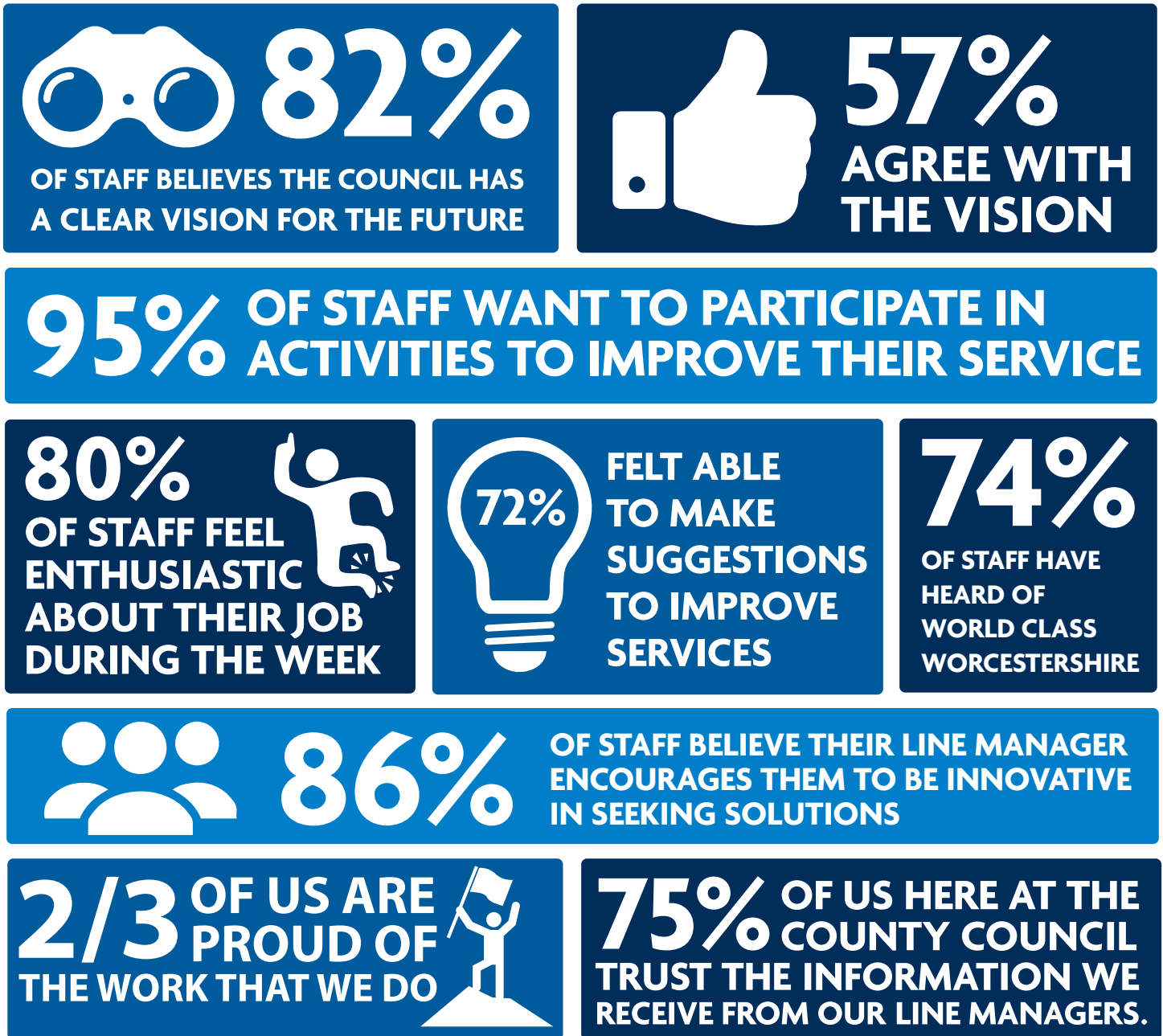
- Using the opportunity of the Corporate Plan refresh to ensure a focus on places and people, and new relationship with residents
- Staying focused on the current financial challenge and also the longer term strategy required
- Create the space for innovation
- Refine the approach to commissioning to ensure earlier engagement and co-creation
- Consider how to re-calibrate the approach to taking calculated risks to deliver our ambitions
- Gain a broader consensus about demand management with organisations and partners

As a result we have undergone extensive consultation and engagement with partners on the Corporate Plan and direct questions asked of more than **1000** people at our Public Roadshows fed into the Corporate Plan priorities. Innovation workshops, supported by an incentive scheme and innovation spaces, are due to be launched in January to stimulate a culture of thinking differently where great ideas can come forward and flourish.

## 4. Investing in a workforce fit for the future

Our staff are our biggest asset as a council. Their passion, desire to deliver excellent public services and willingness to champion different ways of doing things are what will stand us in the best possible position to face challenges ahead. With **2456** full time equivalents or approximately **3200** individual members of staff one of my principal focuses for 2016 has been how we ensure this workforce is fit for the future.

Our staff survey results were shared in April with an estimated total of **3,300** staff members eligible to take part in the survey. We received over **1600** responses, which is a **49%** response rate, a great improvement since the previous year - thanks to those who took the time to have their say.



However, a number of issues were also raised, including:

- **42%** of staff do not feel they have enough time in their working week to manage their current workload
- **45%** of staff have been negatively affected by accommodation changes
- **46%** of staff believe commissioning has had a negative impact on their work





These staff survey findings have been invaluable. Staff told us that they wanted to feel more informed about the decisions made by the Strategic Leadership Team so we now record a podcast of the key points discussed following every weekly senior meeting and upload on our staff intranet as well as Yammer. We have improved engagement between managers and staff, as well as fostering collaboration across all staff, through the use of Yammer where we have more than **2700** members and over **200** groups, resulting in **6000** posts to date sharing information and ideas.

We began 2016 with an agreement by staff to extend our Mandatory Unpaid Leave scheme for another two years and for that I am grateful to all staff for that as it ensures **600k** per annum can be spent on front line services.

Our first Talent Programme for **'growing our own'** was formally launched in October. We are re-focusing our approach to Talent Acquisition, giving an injection of adrenaline into our old recruitment systems and processes. But more importantly, we are recognising the value of investing in our existing workforce, exploiting the 'grow your own' philosophy for the benefit of both the employee and the organisation. This ensures effective and systematic succession planning, key for any organisation developing its staff and looking to its future.

On our first cohort we have 1 Strategic Talent (Future Directors), 3 Top Talent (Future Heads of Service), 15 Key Talent (Future Senior Managers) and 18 Aspiring managers, focused in our recruitment hotspot areas; Adults and Children's Social Care.

We have launched our very first **Graduate Scheme** and successfully appointed 8 graduates working in key services across the Authority. We have invested in additional Apprenticeships again in some of our key service areas. However this Apprenticeship focus will be maximised through the introduction of both the Apprenticeship Levy and the new Public Sector Quota as we move into 2017.

We brought some excellent talent into the organisation during 2016 including a new Director of Children, Families and Communities **Catherine Driscoll** and demonstrated agility in development of existing talent when **Sander Kristel** moved to take on the role of Director of Adult Services. We have 'grown our own' starting at the top of the organisation when **Frances Howie** became Director of Public Health in August 2016. At the same time during 2016 we reduced our overall number of managers by a further **13%**.

We will develop our 2015 launch of **'Investing in the workforce'** further as we move forwards – in 2016 this included building on Front Line Manager and Senior Management one to one coaching and mentoring in areas of particular focus such as Children's Safeguarding. A corporate approach to leadership development is now embedded with the roll out of Managing Beyond the Basics, Proactive Performance Management, Commercial Awareness, Finance and Resource Management and Insights now complete. In January we launched 'Leading for the future' which is now a coherent leadership development programme. This has included delivery of nearly **300** events to over **1200** attendees.

There is always more to be done on developing and investing in our workforce and we will continue this through 2017.

## 5. Looking forwards to 2017

2017 will see county elections happen across Worcestershire and so we will look forward to welcoming new and returning councillors in May. The financial challenge is as acute as ever as we look forward to 2018/19. However we should not lose sight of the fact that we become financially self-sufficient by 2020 and this amount of self-determination will be a game changer in how we can set priorities and allocate resource.

In conclusion our staff do incredible things each and every day helping those most vulnerable in our society, working to make communities more cohesive and deliver the infrastructure to improve our prosperity in years to come. In 2016 we delivered this in a climate which is challenging and offers little thanks. To each and every council employee my heartfelt thanks to you for all you did in 2016.



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To the best of our knowledge all information was correct at the time of printing: January 2017.