

# Local heroes?

Assessing leadership and management  
in local government

Richard Hyde  
Niamh O Regan

**SMF**

Social Market  
Foundation

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In partnership with



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## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

This report uses evidence from a range of sources. These include:

- A SMF convened expert roundtable on leadership and management in local government.
- A survey of public sector leaders and managers across the UK. Opinium was commissioned to poll 1,000 leaders and managers in the public sector. Among survey respondents was a sub-sample of 133 leaders and managers in local government. It is the answers from these respondents that are presented in this report.

In addition, qualitative research was undertaken into four local government organisations in England where best leadership and management practices have been implemented. The findings from this research are presented in the case studies in this report.

Finally, the primary research was supported by broader desk research into:

- The existing stock of literature on the influence of leadership and management on local government performance.
- The four councils used in the case studies and the areas they serve.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **The quality of leadership and management in local government is vitally important**

- Good leaders and managers deploying best leadership and management practices are associated with better public sector organisational performance. Local government is no exception.
- Local authorities are responsible for providing many services to the public. In recent years their role has evolved with a stronger focus on place-based cross-cutting issues such as local growth and the environment. International evidence suggests that decentralised administration can have a positive impact on local economic development and therefore a place-based focus by local authorities is likely to bring benefits to localities.
- Successful local government requires high performing local administrations. Further, a shift towards place-based policy and more anticipatory approaches to problems (e.g. ageing and poverty) by local government is widely seen as desirable. Both of which will require an evolution in the types of skills required for leadership and management roles in local councils.

### **The factors that constitute good leadership and management in local government**

- Official data and the existing research into what characterises good leadership and management in public administration is limited. However, that which is available identifies, as key ingredients of success: a clear vision, good communication, strategic planning, recruiting and retaining high quality staff, building strong networks and performance management amongst other factors.

### **The local government leadership and management picture**

- The findings from an expert roundtable, local government case studies and the results of a survey of UK local government leaders and managers are set out in this report. Together they offer new insights into how leadership and management in local government is performing, what the deficiencies are and what good practice involves.

### **Many leaders and managers in local government doubt the effectiveness of senior leadership**

- Leadership quality (40%) was cited most often by local government leaders and managers when asked about the factors that are most influential on organisational success. This was followed by 37% highlighting motivation and morale and 36% saying having a clear and appropriate strategy (36%) was vital.
- Just over two-thirds (67%) think that the senior leadership in their organisation is effective at ensuring the organisation succeeds, raising questions about how widespread good leadership is across local authorities in the UK.

### **Inadequate recruitment, poor retention levels, low morale and limited adoption of performance management systems are common problems in some parts of local government**

- Recruitment is a notable area of weakness for much of UK local government. Less than half (45%) of surveyed leaders and managers agreed that in 2022, the leadership in their council was effective at attracting talent.
- Retention, while faring better, is also a challenge. Almost a third of respondents (30%) noted that retention rates were worse in 2022 than in previous years. Failure to retain staff is not only expensive, but frequently leads to capacity and capability deficits.
- Retention issues can be caused by poor motivation and low morale levels. 40% of leaders and managers reported that the senior leadership in their authority were poor at motivating staff or failed to do it at all. Being able to motivate staff, even in challenging times, is an important influence on performance and one that good leaders are able to utilise effectively.
- Nearly one in five respondents (19%) agreed that their council was poor or very poor at promoting the best people and only 15% said their organisation was very good at this.
- Performance management is also an area of concern. Only 44% think that their organisation is doing well in ensuring accountability for failure. Just under a quarter (24%) think addressing staff underperformance is poor in their workplace. While 23% said their authority was good at utilising data to manage performance, 18% suggested their council was poor or very poor at doing so.

### **Training for local government managers is common but frequently unaccredited**

- Experts at the roundtable raised concerns about the quantity and quality of leadership and management training across local government and especially the training of those in junior and middle management positions. Notably, the majority of survey respondents (77%) had taken part in some leadership and management training in 2022 although, overwhelmingly, it was unaccredited.

### **There is a sizeable minority of leaders and managers failing to develop the internal and external networks that spur on organisational performance**

- More than three-quarters of leaders and managers think that their senior leadership does well at developing good working relationships within the organisation, however a fifth (21%) said they were either poor or failed to develop relationships at all in their organisations.
- More than eight in ten (83%) of survey participants described the senior leaders in their local authority as performing well or very well at forging relationships with relevant external organisations. More specifically, a third (33%) said that leaders in their organisation did this very well, i.e. are at the frontier of good practice in this aspect of leadership.



## **Workforce issues are the most frequently faced obstacles by leaders and managers to doing their jobs**

- 69% of local government leaders and managers reported obstacles to them doing their jobs more effectively.
- Workforce problems (e.g. recruitment and retention) were the most frequently reported type of challenge, with 38% saying they faced such barriers.
- Poor recruitment and retention mean local government organisations are beset by not having enough staff in general and too few leaders and managers in particular. This understaffing can further hinder efforts to recruit and retain staff.
- Other constraints inhibiting leaders and managers and raised by survey respondents included internal bureaucracy (33%) and finance issues (32%).
- A knock-on effect of organisational changes such as the de-layering of management in local authorities – which has been in-part a consequence of the resourcing difficulties that have impacted local government for more than a decade – has been that, even where leadership and management training is available, there is not always the time for it.

## **Recommendations for improving leadership and management in local government**

Good leadership and management practices need to be more prevalent if local government leaders and managers are to improve service delivery, tackle place-based cross-cutting problems and be more proactive in dealing with future issues. To that end, measures to spread best practice, upskill leaders and managers, and reduce the obstacles standing in the way of them doing their best are required.

In order to achieve these ends, an accurate picture of the current state of leadership and management across local government is required as well as putting in place the mechanisms for enabling the spread of best practice. Therefore, the new Office for Local Government (Oflog) needs to make leadership and management quality a key focus of its work. Equally importantly, the obstacles that hinder leaders and managers need to be reduced. Perhaps most pressing of the latter are those associated with workforce capacity and capability (e.g. recruitment and retention in particular). Therefore, we propose that:

Oflog, together with key stakeholders, should work together to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing good leadership and management in local government. Oflog should then use those standards to evaluate the quality of leadership and management in local authorities.

- The Department for Levelling-Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) should partner with relevant stakeholders, to design a comprehensive 10 year workforce strategy for local government.
- The workforce strategy needs to be accompanied by a funding boost to councils to improve the recruitment and retention of staff at all levels in general and for leadership and management roles in particular.

- To aid in the development of leaders and managers, DLUHC should establish a leadership academy, so that all levels of management in local government can have access to consistent, high-quality leadership and management training.
- The workforce strategy should recognise the wealth of experience that can come from those outside of local government and create a direct entry system for older career changers who may already have leadership and management experience in the private sector or other parts of the public sector.

## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

### Effective local government has a role to play in boosting local economies

Local government in the UK plays a pivotal role in the day-to-day lives of citizens.<sup>i</sup> Often, it is through the provision of key services such as refuse collection, social care and local road maintenance that residents of an area are most familiar with local administration. However, local government plays a wider role. That role is “place making”.<sup>1 ii</sup> A central aspect of place making is the development of local economies.<sup>2</sup>

3 4

#### Box 1: The link between local government and economic prosperity

The OECD has shown that decentralised administration is linked to higher growth. There are a number of channels that local government in the UK has at their disposal, through which they can influence place-based prosperity levels.<sup>iii 5</sup>

However, the available evidence also suggests that decentralisation only tends to make a notable impact on the local economy when local institutions are of sufficient quality i.e. they are administratively effective.<sup>6 7</sup> The latter is heavily influenced by the competency of the leadership and management of an organisation.

The levelling-up agenda explicitly looks to bolster local institutions as a route to both closing socio-economic gaps between regions and localities and boosting overall levels of prosperity across the country.<sup>8 9</sup> The importance of the role of local government in the economy is recognised in the levelling-up agenda, with the levelling-up white paper and subsequent Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, reflecting that renewed interest in the UK’s economic geography.

One of the most visible examples of this focus on place-based prosperity has been the efforts to encourage the establishment of combined authorities along with the devolution of powers, as a key mechanism for achieving the goals of the levelling-up agenda.<sup>10</sup> However, to have the kind of positive impact that is needed, as Box 1 indicates, the efficacy of the leadership and the management within local authorities will be key determinative factors behind whether the agenda succeeds or not.

<sup>i</sup> See Annex One for more on the importance of local government in England and Annex Five for more on the complexity of its organisation.

<sup>ii</sup> See Annex Two for more on the evolving role of local government, such as the emergence and importance of place making through place-based policy as a focus of local government activity and the implications for the attributes required of good leaders and managers and in-turn the kinds of leadership and management skills needed to develop and implement place making approaches.

<sup>iii</sup> See more on ways that local government can boost place-based prosperity, in Annex Three.

## The centrality of leadership and management to all local government functions

The efficacy of local government is important to ensuring all its functions are carried out well, not just those associated with place making. For local authorities to deliver across the full range of obligations with which they are tasked by both the law and local electors, to the best standards possible, administrations need to be high performing. As the research evidence shows, the most:<sup>11</sup>

*“...capable organisation manages its physical, human, informational, and financial resources..[and]...high capacity governments...have a combination of strong policy, programme and resource management, which in turn enable them to be ‘adaptable, effective and efficient’”.*

That effective management of resources in particular, is largely the job of the leaders and managers of an organisation. It therefore makes leadership and management central to the performance of a body like a local administration, with its many component parts along with an often changing external environment.<sup>iv</sup>

Of course there are outside influences and internal factors, which are not necessarily easily conditioned and changed by leaders and managers, that also shape organisational performance.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the importance of leaders and managers and their oversight, marshalling, command and deployment of physical, human, informational and financial resources to deliver the outputs and outcomes required of any local authority, remains key.

### Good leadership and management practices are associated with better performing governmental organisations

The impact of leaders and managers on organisational performance depends upon their quality. The latter, in large part, is a function of the deployment of established leadership and management approaches and practices that are known to be linked with good organisational performance in the public sector.<sup>13</sup> Diagram 1 illustrates the kinds of elements that the research evidence suggests are most closely related to better organisational performance among local administrations.<sup>14 15</sup>

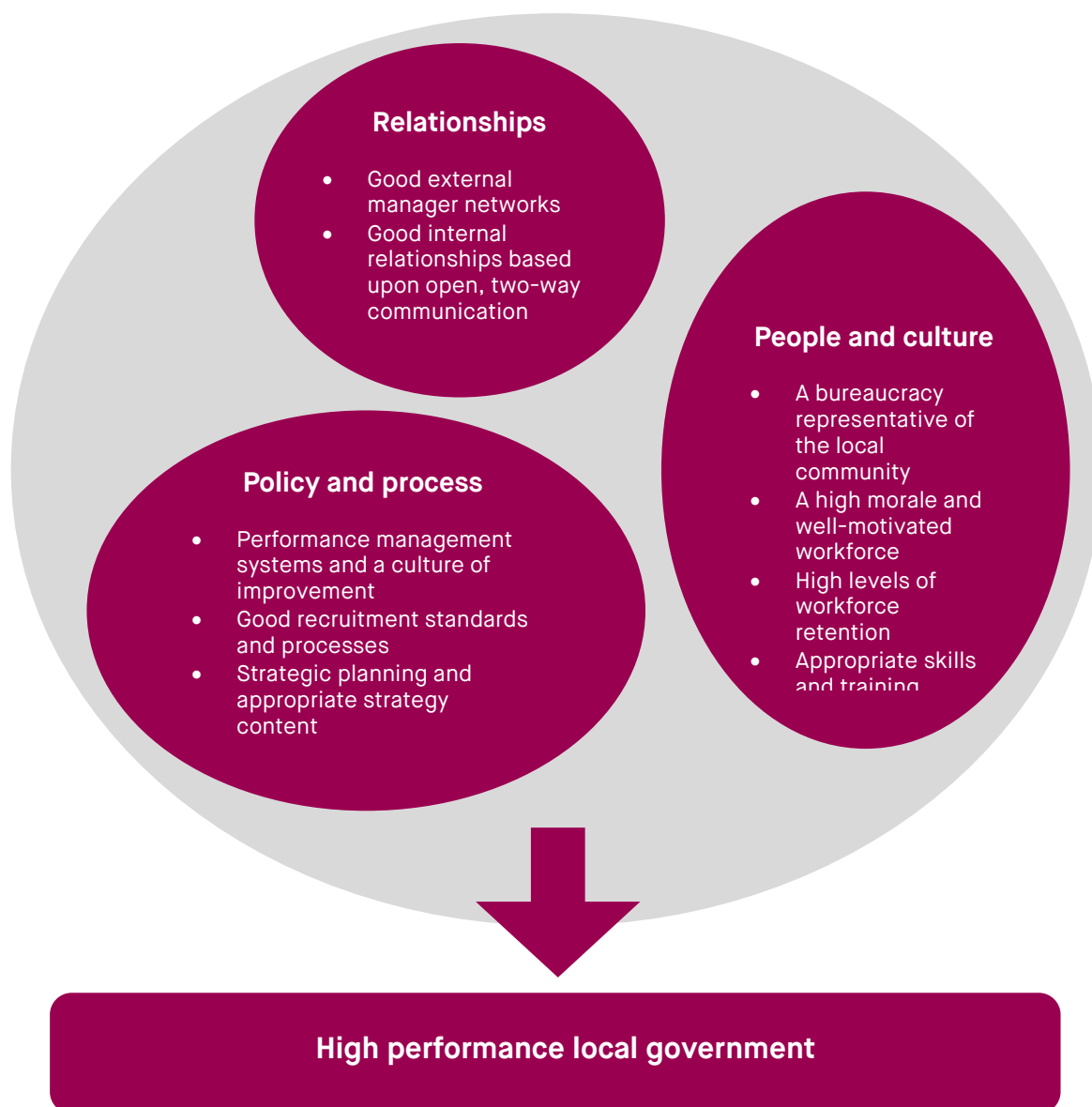
*“Leadership does make a difference in the public sector...results across 151 studies establish a strong association with beneficial outcomes and a moderate relationship with detrimental outcomes...transformational leadership shows a significantly stronger relationship with positive outcomes than laissez-faire leadership. The same applies to controlling leadership...there are several other leadership styles that have no weaker associations between beneficial outcomes than transformational leadership”.*

**Backhaus, L and Vogel, R. (2022). Leadership in the public sector: a meta-analysis of styles, outcomes, contexts and methods.**

<sup>iv</sup> See Annex Four for more on the differences between leadership and management.

To help identify the scale on which good leadership and management practices are deployed across local government in the UK, Chapter Two presents data from a survey of local government leaders and managers. The research asked leaders and managers about the extent to which best leadership and management practices are utilised in their local authority.

**Diagram 1: Key elements of good leadership and management in local government**



Sources: Davis, H., Downe, J and Martin, S. (2004) and Walker, R M and Andrews, R. (2013).

## Box 2: Local government transparency, accountability and quality

Local authorities are required to deliver “best value” and continuous improvements in services.<sup>16</sup> Statutory guidance places a duty on councils to provide services of high quality, which are cost-effective and accessible to all citizens.<sup>17</sup> Further, since the 1990s, quality management efforts have become more widespread in local government<sup>18</sup> and there are indications that some of the budget cuts imposed on local authorities during the coalition government years may have led to productivity improvements.<sup>19</sup>

However, since the abolition of the Audit Commission there has been a notable gap in the availability of quality comparative information about local government performance.<sup>v</sup> This makes thorough evaluations of the performance of local authorities difficult. One contributor to the SMF’s expert roundtable on local government leadership and management highlighted the impact of the absence of the Audit Commission:

*“A range of things that have happened in recent years is why the existence of the Audit Commission would have been hugely beneficial to local government...because it had information about council’s management, quality, their financial position, all the things that are useful”.*

Recent high-profile examples of council failures might reasonably be seen as the kind of consequences that can result from a lack of transparency and the absence of an oversight body to highlight incompetence and underperformance.<sup>20 vi vii</sup>

Notably, the current government has seemingly recognised some of the problems caused by the abolition of the Audit Commission and has established the Office for Local Government(Oflog).<sup>21</sup> It will carry out some of the role that the Audit Commission used to, such as producing information about service quality and efficiency.

<sup>v</sup> The absence of data on local government performance is a glaring gap and stands in contrast to other parts of the public sector where inspections and other mechanisms produce (albeit imperfect) comparable performance metrics.

<sup>vi</sup> As the National Audit Office noted in 2021, the local audit approach which replaced the Audit Commission, has some fundamental weaknesses. Source: National Audit Office, “Timeliness of Local Auditor Reporting on Local Government in England, 2020,” 2021, <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Timeliness-of-local-auditor-reporting-on-local-government-in-england-2020-.pdf>.

<sup>vii</sup> The Redmond Review was a recognition by the then Department for Housing Communities and Local Government of the failings of local auditing model developed after the abolition of the Audit Commission. Source: Sir Tony Redmond, “Independent Review into the Oversight of Local Audit and the Transparency of Local Authority Financial Reporting,” 2020, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/916217/Redmond\\_Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916217/Redmond_Review.pdf).

## This report

- **Chapter Two** explores the degree to which good leadership management practices are prevalent within local government organisations in the UK, using the responses from leaders and managers in local government to our public sector survey.
- **Chapter Three** details the obstacles which leaders and managers face in effectively performing their roles.
- **Interspersed between the chapters are four case studies** of different types of local authorities that have utilised best leadership and management practices to varying degrees.
- Together Chapters Two and Three and the case studies help generate a picture of how far good leadership and management in UK local government has spread and therefore where there remains space for improvement and what the obstacles are to delivering improvement.
- **Chapter Four** presents recommendations for politicians and policymakers to consider, about how the best practice deficit in local government can be closed, and in-turn all local authorities can maximise their performance.

## CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT – SUSTAINING SUCCESS AT CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council is part of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.<sup>22</sup> The former services a population of 206,600 people and covers 140 square miles. Around 80% of the Calderdale area is rural.<sup>23</sup> It has recently received a broadly positive review from a Local Government Association's (LGA) peer review exercise, albeit with room for improvement identified.<sup>24</sup> Further, one analysis rated it the fourth most productive council in England.<sup>25</sup>

To tell us more about what kinds of practices (which influence organisational performance) are employed by the leadership at Calderdale Council, we interviewed the Chief Executive (CEO) Robin Tuddenham, Council Leader Jane Scullion, and Julie Jenkins, Director of Children and Young People's Services.

### The key tenets of Calderdale's success as a council

#### Good relations between the council leader and CEO and open communication across the organisation

Both Tuddenham and Scullion agreed that a key factor in the good functioning of Calderdale Council is the productive balance in their relationship, which sits at the apex of the council:

*"Mutual respect, respect for the very different roles that the politicians and the managers have....we have a degree of openness, of disagreeing well, and working through the difficult issues".*

The centrality of the relationship between a council leader and the CEO of the authority to local government success, was a recurring theme in the expert roundtable. Positive relationships are not limited to leadership at Calderdale but can be found across all levels of the organisation, with open dialogue the operating norm according to Tuddenham. The latter described a recent example, which he felt was illustrative of the openness at the council:

*"Recently, our staff were raising [questions about] the pension funds, and whether or not they have enough commitment to corporate social responsibility... I think there's something about the fact they have that ability to have those conversations with the chief exec, it's really important that we instil that sense of involvement".*

#### A clear sense of mission and shared values that all staff buy into has been central to Calderdale's success

The CEO noted that among the council staff, there was a high degree of unity around a sense of mission. This was reflected in a strong sense of identity and strategic direction for the council:



*“There is a shared understanding, a sense of purpose and clarity about what we're trying to achieve...a recognition of the first principles of what the council should do, how should we run and how it should work...”.*

Scullion also highlighted that a strong sense of place and long-term thinking from council members helped with commitment to Calderdale's success:

*“We've got a strong sense of place...and a strong sense of stewardship, of not only dealing with the day to day issues... but also having a more strategic sense of where we need to be in two years, five years, ten years' time”.*

It was suggested by both Tuddenham and Scullion that, in-part at least, the sense of place comes from employing large proportion of people who live locally:<sup>viii</sup>

*“There's something about the pride of local government and the distinctiveness of local government being the overarching purpose to make your place better...that's keenly felt here because 71% of our workforce live and work in area”.*

Extensive efforts to embed and reinforce Calderdale's mission and values across the workforce are undertaken:

*“We have annual awards...an employee representative team that we use constantly to develop our policies and consult with them, early....we have staff networks...we really do focus on engaging with our staff, ”.*

### **A cohesive leadership team with a strong commitment to the Calderdale Council mission**

Effective leadership teams i.e. cohesive teams that coalesce around the same goals, are a well-known component of successful organisations. When interviewed, Tuddenham described such a situation at Calderdale:

*“There is...a strong value base to leadership and a real clarity to the way that we do things around here”.*

Scullion and Tuddenham told how the current administrative leadership team came together, with Calderdale's clear mission a key attraction for recruits to senior positions:

*“It has taken some time to get the leadership team to exactly the right place...most of them made a conscious choice to come here...it was something about our ability to describe our vision for place, our values, distinctiveness...”.*

<sup>viii</sup> The existing research on leadership shows that there is a moderately positive link between the extent to which the workforce of a local administration reflects the local community and the efficacy of that organisation. Source: Richard Hyde, “Managing It Better” (Social Market Foundation, 2023).

### **Use of a balanced approach in leadership styles that is appropriate to circumstances**

There is considerable use of the distributed approach to leadership at Calderdale, which decentralises initiative to teams and individuals in order for them to deliver on their objectives. Jenkins noted that this came from the top:

*“Leadership style correlates to outcomes...[the leader]...here, respects boundaries and treads a very good line...”.*

Jenkins described that this sets the tone, and she can manage in her preferred way:

*“I’ll set things off, but let people run with it, you have to trust people...I’m more like a counsellor...more collegiate...having an adult to adult conversation...rather than telling people like children, what to do”.*

However, as Jenkins also pointed out, where necessary, other styles need to be deployed from time-to-time to ensure good performance levels are maintained. A flexibility which has also been demonstrated from the top:

*“Your style needs to change sometimes...when you’re not delivering good services, command and control is needed, and there’s the odd occasion when you need to step in”.*

### **Managing performance is a key focus for the CEO at Calderdale**

Managing performance is also a key part of ensuring Calderdale achieves its stated mission and that in-turn, the actions of staff are aligned with it:

*“There are strong performance management arrangements, there is a clarity and transparency about how [we’re] performing, including when we’re not performing so well. And I think the weekly that goes to cabinet, it’s very public, very visible”.*

Performance management efforts are informed by the benchmarking of performance in a number of ways, as Tuddenham and Scullion explained:

*“We’re constantly looking at our own data, of course...we’ve got our own data observatory. We compare ourselves to other councils...on some of the things to do with governance, in particular, we will look at the LGA...also feedback from the public and now, elections are our feedback in terms of your performance”.*

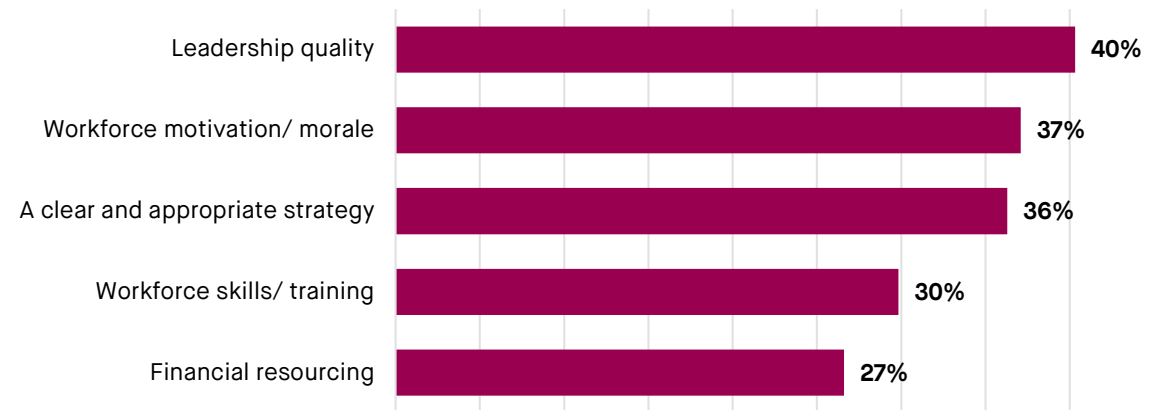
## CHAPTER TWO – THE STATE OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE UK

Our survey of public sector leaders and managers across the UK included a local government sub-sample. It provides a picture of the state of leadership and management practices employed across the country’s local authorities. This chapter describes some of the most notable findings.

### Leadership quality is considered a key driver of organisational success

Congruent with its importance in the wider research evidence about the drivers of organisational success,<sup>26</sup> Figure 1 shows that leaders and managers in local government understand the salience of leadership as a key determinant of organisational performance, with 40% citing it as a key factor. Further, the second, third and fourth most frequently cited drivers behind well performing organisations were factors closely linked to leadership and management practices; workforce motivation and morale (37%), a clear and appropriate strategy (36%) and workforce skills and training (30%).

**Figure 1: Top five factors most important for organisational success in the public sector**

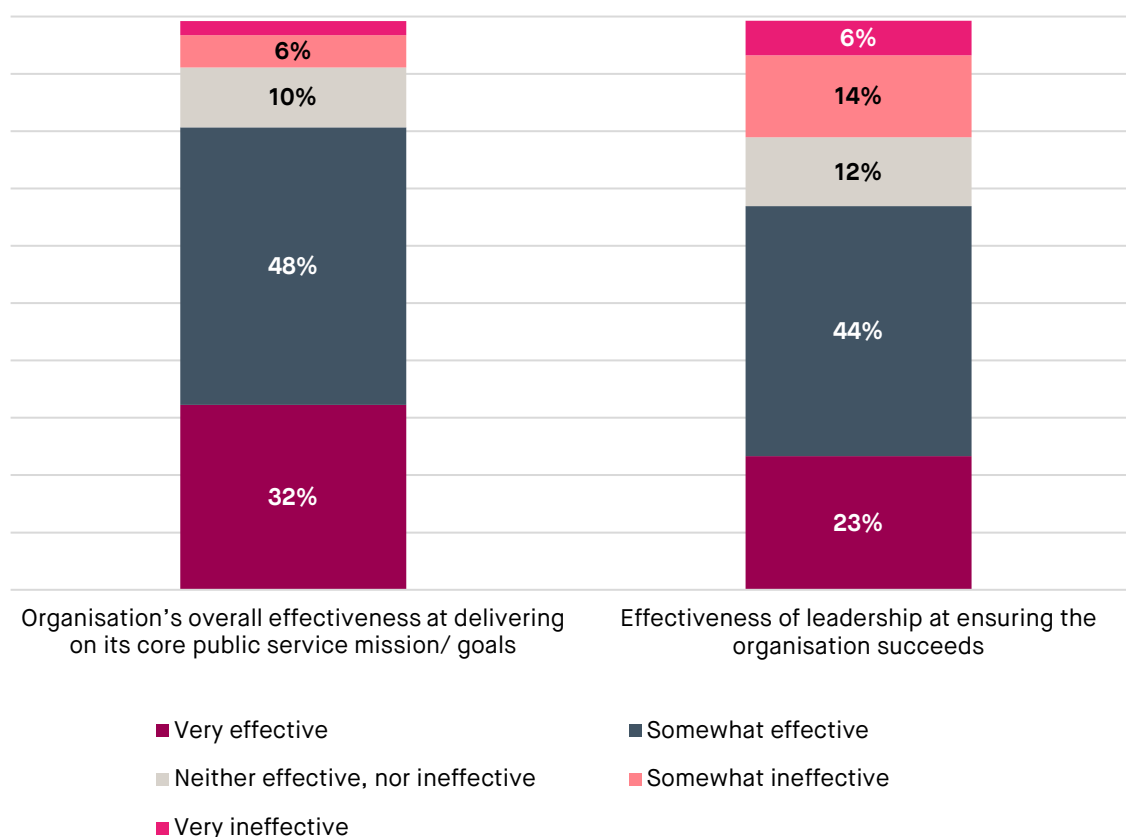


Source: SMF Opinion Survey March–April 2023

### Overall effectiveness of local authorities and their leaders

While 81% of local government respondents felt their organisation was doing well at delivering on its core public service mission, leadership was not looked upon quite as favourably (Figure 2). Although 67% of local government leaders and managers agreed that the leadership of their local authority is effective at ensuring the organisation succeeds, 20% do not describe their leader as effective (Figure 2), while a further 12% see their leadership as neither effective nor ineffective. A fifth of councils with ineffective leadership equates to 66 councils across England and Wales where the leadership is explicitly failing.<sup>ix</sup>

<sup>ix</sup> The base for this calculation is based upon the LGA membership figure of 329 English and Welsh councils. Parish councils and the administrations associated with combined authorities for example are not included in this total.

**Figure 2: leader and managers perspectives on senior leadership effectiveness**

Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

The dissatisfaction with leadership efficacy in local government is broadly comparable to other areas of the public sector that we have examined in our previous reports “A picture of health?” and “Top of the class?”. It is slightly more favourable than in healthcare where 65% reported that leadership was effective at ensuring the organisation succeeds while 27% felt it was ineffective.<sup>27</sup> However it is slightly less favourable than education where 70% described their leadership as effective at ensuring organisational success, but 20% reported that it was ineffective.<sup>28</sup>

### Strategic planning is a strength of much of UK local government

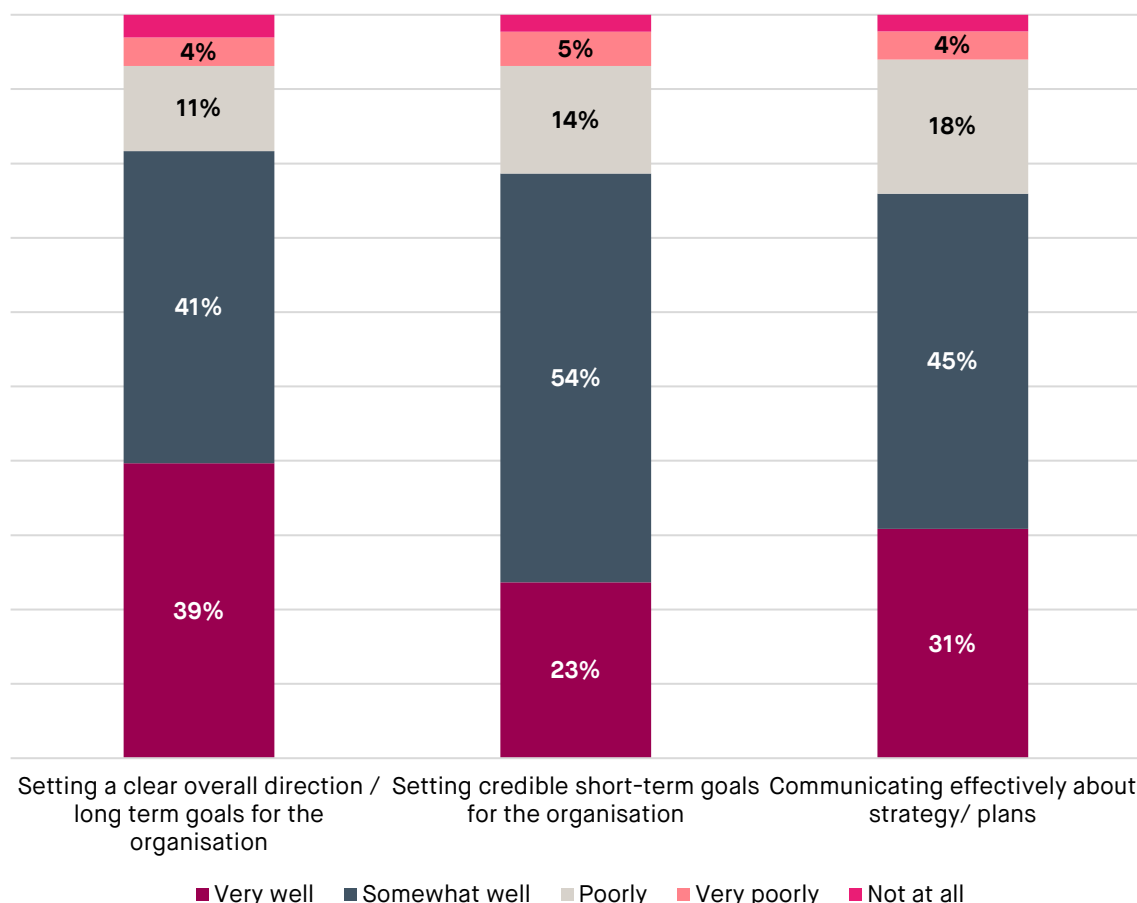
Our survey results (see Figure 3) indicate that having a clear strategy is a widely applied practice across local government in the UK. Eight in ten respondents considered that the leadership in their authority set long-term goals well. With 18% failing to do this well or at all. Marginally fewer (77%) agreed that the leaders in their council set shorter-term goals well, too, while 22% reported that their local authority did not perform well on this metric.

*“Skilful leadership through mission development and...goal setting in relation to the mission, contribute significantly to agency effectiveness...”*

Rainey, H G and Steinbauer, P. (1999). **Galloping Elephants: Developing Elements of a Theory of Effective Government Organisation**

More than a fifth (22%) of respondents agreed that their authority's senior leadership failed to communicate effectively about their strategy. Communicating the strategy so that everyone understands and is bought into achieving it is as important as having one in the first place, if an organisation wants to succeed. This is especially true in the public sector where relational-orientated and visionary leadership approaches are typically the most successful, with factors such as values alignment, public service motivation and workforce participation key to a high performing organisation.<sup>29 30</sup>

**Figure 3: Effectiveness of senior leadership at setting and communicating strategy**

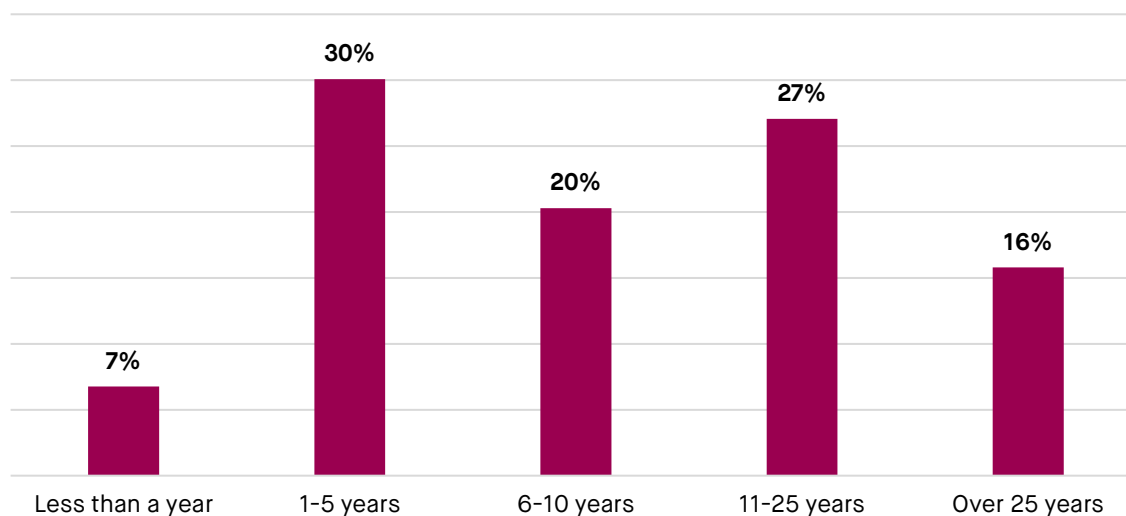


Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

## There are substantial workforce problems in local government

### Local government managers have a wealth of experience, but recruitment is a challenge

More than two-fifths of leaders and managers in local government have worked in leadership and management positions in their current organisation for more than 10 years. This indicates there is a wealth of experience and institutional knowledge. Further, this can be a valuable learning resource for the pipeline of future leaders. However, the existing research evidence suggests the strength of the generally positive relationship between tenure and performance does lessen somewhat over time.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 4: Length of time worked in leadership and management at current organisation**

Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

*“When a well-trained employee leaves...he/she creates a vacuum, so that it loses indispensable skills, knowledge...High rates of voluntary turnover...are often harmful or disruptive to the organisation’s performance....Existing literature highlights the causes of employee turnover, such as hiring practices, managerial style, lack of competitive compensation, lack of recognition and venomous workplace. Others include lack of job security, lack of interesting work, lack of promotion and inadequate training and advancement opportunities”.*

**Fahim, M G A. (2018). Strategic human resource management and public employee retention**

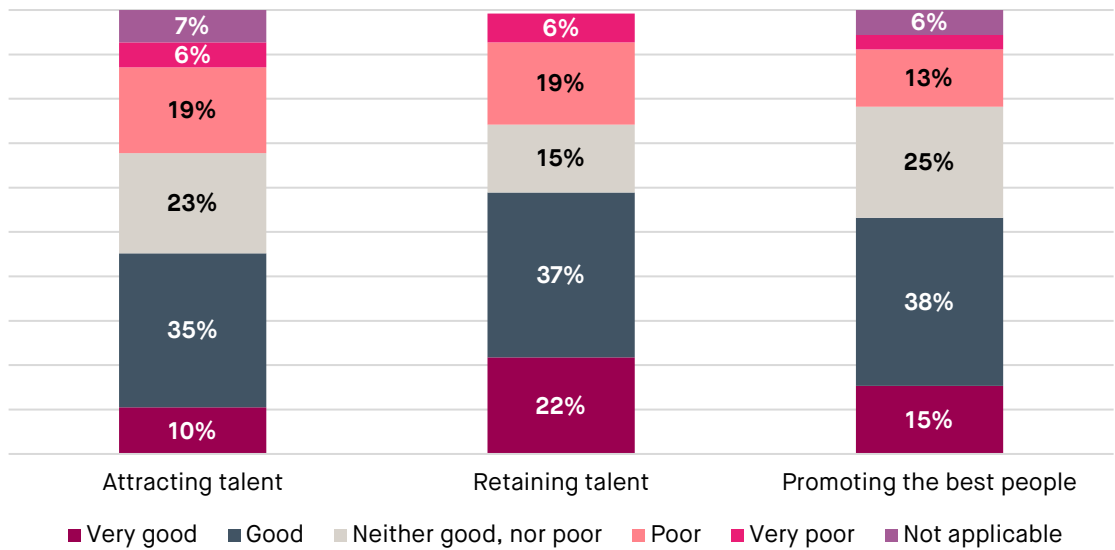
The population of leaders and managers is also ageing, with approximately 35% of respondents aged over 50. Roundtable attendees spoke of an upturn in early retirements among leaders and managers post the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps somewhat reflective of this trend is the fact that in our survey less than six in ten (59%) participants felt able to agree that their local authority was good at retaining talent (Figure 5), with almost a third (30%) explicitly saying that in 2022 their talent retention was worse than in previous years (Figure 6). Poor retention often leaves capacity and capability gaps in an organisation,

especially when recruitment is also challenging.<sup>x</sup> For example, a 2023 paper by the LGA highlighted that nearly three-quarters (74%) of single tier and county councils reported disruption to adult care services, seven in ten said school services suffered disruption and more than half of children’s services (58%) were disrupted, due to workforce capacity and capability gaps.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>x</sup> Low retention rates also mean regularly incurring cost outlays in order to find replacements. Analysis by Oxford Economics suggested that the typical cost of losing a member of staff of an organisation’s workforce and replacing them is over £30,000. Source: Oxford Economics, “The Cost of Brain Drain: Understanding the Financial Impact of Staff Turnover,” 2014, <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/cost-brain-drain-report.pdf>.

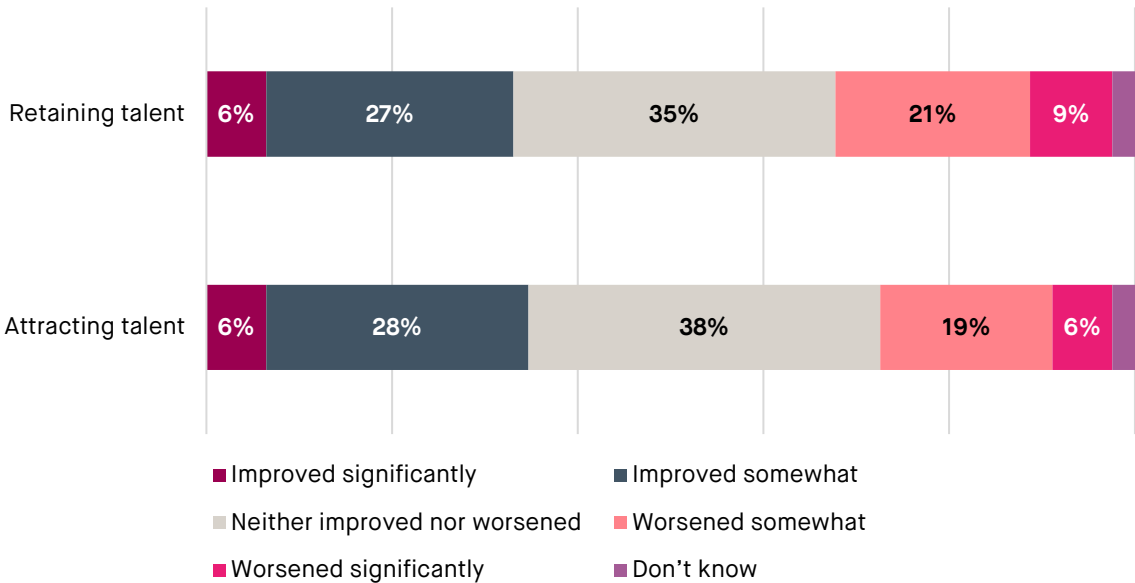
The increase in early retirement also coincides with a minority (45%) of respondents agreeing that their local authority is good at recruiting new talent (Figure 5). Less than half of the respondents reporting their local authority as doing well at recruiting is reflective of evidence from other sources showing local government is facing a significant recruitment problem. The LGA for example, reported that 90% of their member councils experienced recruitment difficulties in 2021-22 (see more on recruitment and retention in Chapter Three).<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 5: Performance of UK local authorities in attracting and retaining talent and promoting the best people**



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

**Figure 6: How well organisation performed in 2022 compared to previous years**



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

### Some local authorities are struggling with the motivation and the morale of staff

*“Motivating personnel to perform at high levels requires opportunities for career progression, as well as other monetary incentives...and non-monetary incentives, such as job enrichment, diversified work assignments, and job mobility...Developing staff to perform at high levels requires structured programs, incentives, and resources for staff to improve their competencies...for example, through training and on-the-job coaching. Managers can enable higher staff performance by creating a work environment that facilitates opportunities for staff to put their skills to their organisation’s best use”.*

**Schnell, S et al, (2021). Performance Management in the Public Sector – Seven Success Factors.**

As Figure 1 shows, just over a third (37%) of leaders and managers in local government are aware of the importance of morale and motivation to organisational success. This relatively low figure perhaps reflects the decidedly mixed morale and motivation picture amongst those working in UK local councils.

Two-fifths (40%) of leaders and managers see their senior leadership as performing poorly at motivating or doing nothing at all to motivate staff (Figure 7). There is a striking difference between the proportion of respondents agreeing that their senior leadership is effective (67% – see Figure 2) but poor at motivating staff. Together with just over a third citing motivation and morale as important for organisational success, it suggests large proportions of local

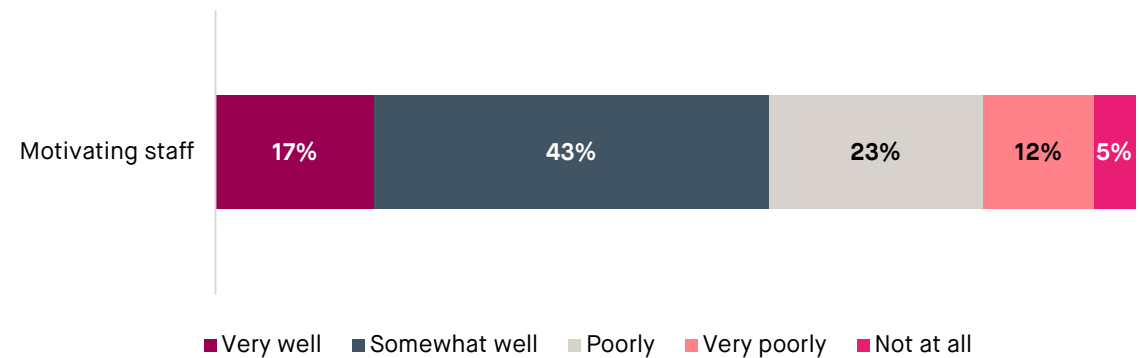
government leadership could be doing more to help bolster the motivation and morale of their colleagues.

Just under seven in ten respondents reported that their organisation performed well on motivation levels. Albeit only 24% said their council performed very well. At the same time, a fifth of respondents reported that their local authority was not good, but neither did it perform poorly, while just over one in ten (11%) said that the council they worked in did not perform well on staff motivation levels (Figure 8). This indicates that in at least 100 local authorities across England and Wales motivation levels among staff are not where they need to be if they are to be high performing organisations.

Low morale and little motivation are leading causes of people leaving organisations and moving elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> In the context of the current recruitment and retention difficulties, these factors should perhaps have an additional salience among local government leaders and managers as levers that can be pulled to help reduce some of the workforce capacity and capability problems. It is notable that in the four case studies, motivation and morale issues – reflected in efforts to increase employee voice and focus on staff well-being – had been a priority for the senior leaders we interviewed. However, other constraints such as finance, tie the hands of leaders and managers around their ability to offer more material incentives to also help boost morale and motivation.

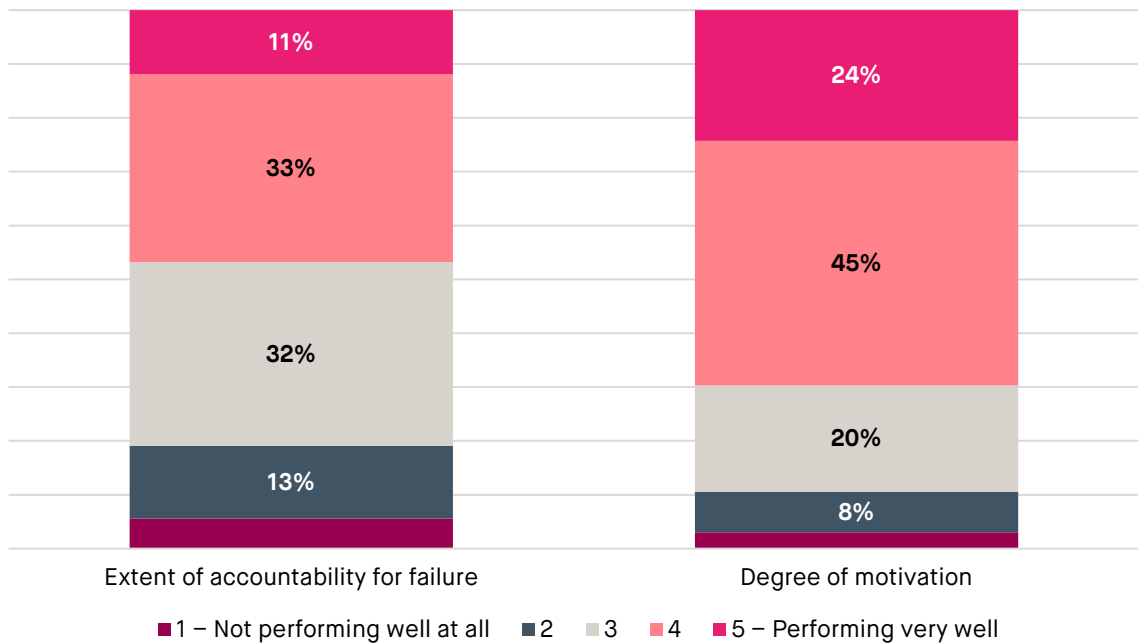


Figure 7: Effectiveness of senior leadership at motivating staff



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

Figure 8: Extent to which local authorities perform well on accountability for failure and workforce motivation



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

Performance management is an area of weakness for local government

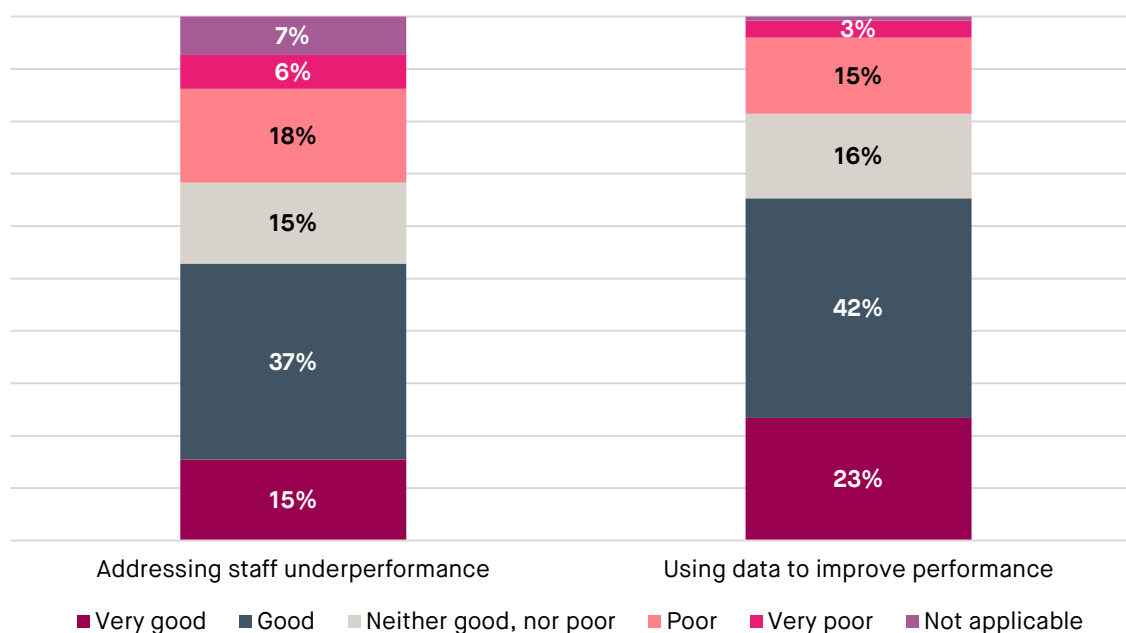
Another area of concern is performance management. Less than half (44%) of leaders

*“Performance management systems can improve individual and organisational productivity by steering, motivating, and developing employees to achieve organisational, team, and individual goals...”*

**Schnell, S et al, (2021). Performance Management in the Public Sector – Seven Success Factors.**

and managers regard their organisation as performing well when it comes to ensuring accountability for failure (Figure 8). In their immediate areas of responsibility, 65% rated the use of data to improve performance as good and only 52% considered they were good at addressing underperformance. This implies significant minorities of councils across the UK are falling short on these key management practices associated with effective performing organisations.

**Figure 9: Efficacy of dealing with underperformance and utilising data to manage performance**



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

For addressing the underperformance of managers specifically, the most utilised actions were the informal encouragement of improvement (39%), providing additional relevant training (36%) and formally placing someone under a performance management review (29%).

### **Training for leaders and managers in local government is common, although frequently unaccredited**

Training came up in our roundtable as an area that local government frequently fails to get right (see Chapter Three for more on what was said at the roundtable about this). Figure 1 suggests that only a minority (24%) of local government leaders and managers recognise that skills levels and training can play a vitally important role in creating and sustaining high performing organisations.

Local government is an area where the professional and the political must work hand in hand to deliver good outcomes. A number of experts at the roundtable indicated that training for navigating this mix of the professional and the political was needed. Further, this training needed to go right the way down the management chain, so that when promoted to positions with more interactions with political officers, local government officials can manage the associated challenges (see more in Chapter Three and the Calderdale case study).

*“When evaluating the performance of public managers, many...consider not only their performance in meeting individual objectives, but...contributions to achieving their organisations’ strategic goals and their managerial and leadership competencies, including those pertaining to staff performance management...”.*

**Schnell, S et al, (2021). Performance Management in the Public Sector – Seven Success Factors.**

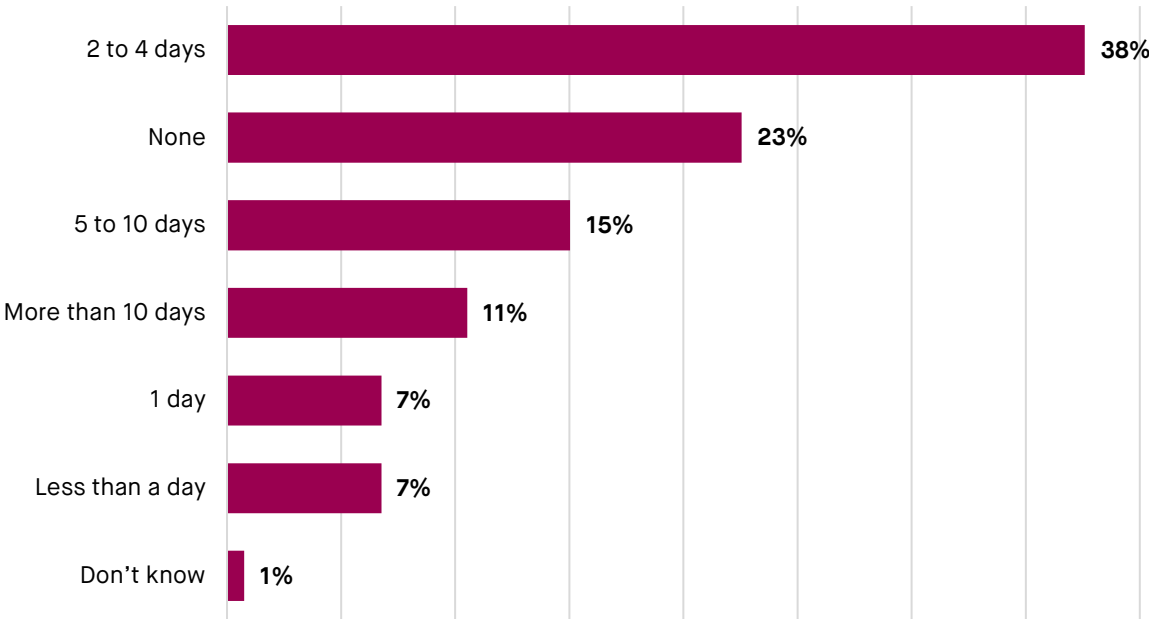
*“A combination of coaching, classroom instruction, feedback, and experiential training has a significant impact on leader performance. In addition, organisational effectiveness improves for organisations whose leaders received the intervention...”.*

**Seidle, B. et al. (2016). Do Leadership Training and Development Make a Difference in the Public Sector? A Panel Study.**

Training is common among local authority leaders and managers according to those we surveyed, although it is thinly spread. A little over three-quarters (77%) said they had undertaken training in 2022. A plurality of leaders and managers had between two and four days training (Figure 10). This is two days less per year than the UK average of six, in 2019.<sup>35</sup> Roundtable attendees noted that while training for chief executives of councils was

common, those in more junior managerial roles were less likely to get formal training. They highlighted that many of those promoted into management were insufficiently prepared, through formal management training for example, for their responsibilities (see Chapter Three).<sup>xi</sup>

**Figure 10: Length of time leaders and managers spent on training in 2022**

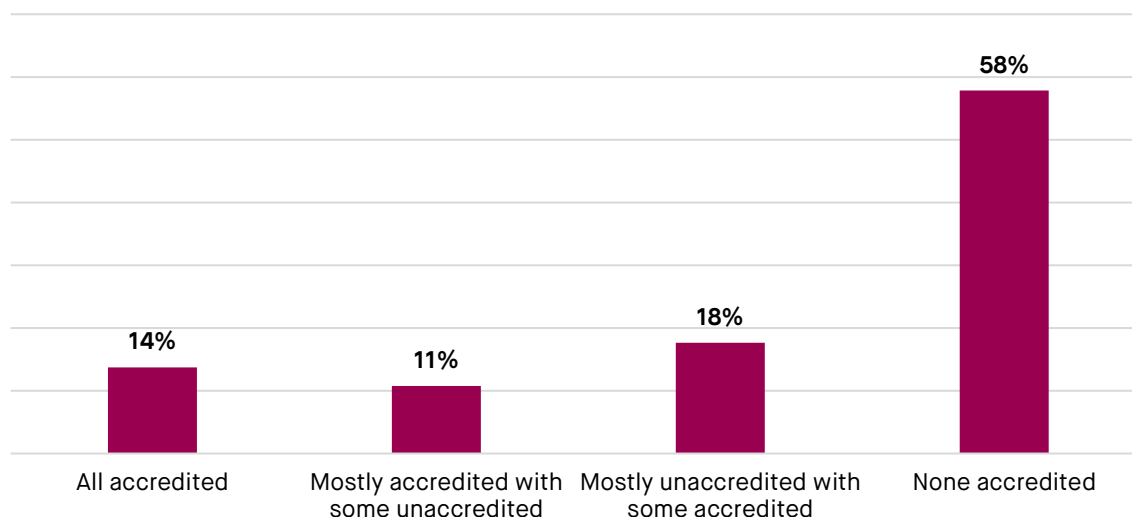


Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

<sup>xi</sup> Owing to sub-sample constraints, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the survey data, regarding training across different levels of leadership and management seniority. However, the broad pattern in the data is reflective of the points made at the expert roundtable e.g. junior managers were the least likely to have had training with only 57% having undertaken any training.

As Figure 11 illustrates, the training that is undertaken is largely unaccredited (75%). By contrast, in 2019, 43% of employers providing training opportunities in the UK were doing so on the basis of it leading to nationally recognised qualifications.<sup>36</sup> It should be noted however, amongst those leaders and managers that had done training, 79% did report it as making a difference (Figure 12) to their ability to be better at their jobs.

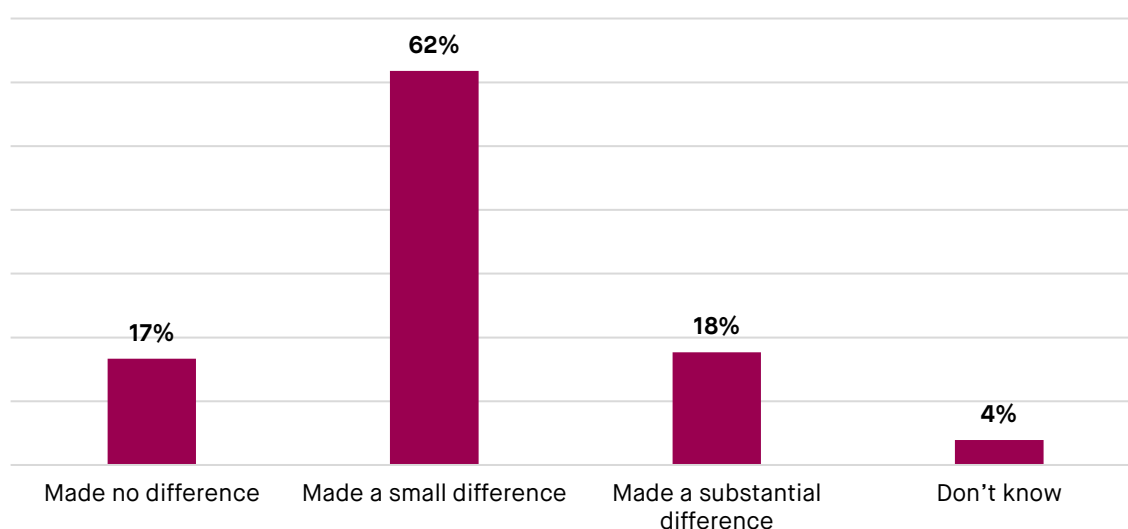
**Figure 11: Extent to which training for leaders and managers was accredited**



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

As large organisations, local authorities may design and provide bespoke internal training programmes, which might be one reason why so much of the training is unaccredited. Bespoke training can help councils to tailor leader and manager development to the circumstances of the local authority and wider locality. However, while there are upsides to such training, there are also downsides. For example, quality assurance can be a challenge for such training, so too can the transferability of the knowledge gained into different contexts.

**Figure 12: The extent to which training helped to become a better leader/manager**



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

Most leaders and managers in local authorities have good internal and external relationships

Most local government leaders develop good relationships across their organisations

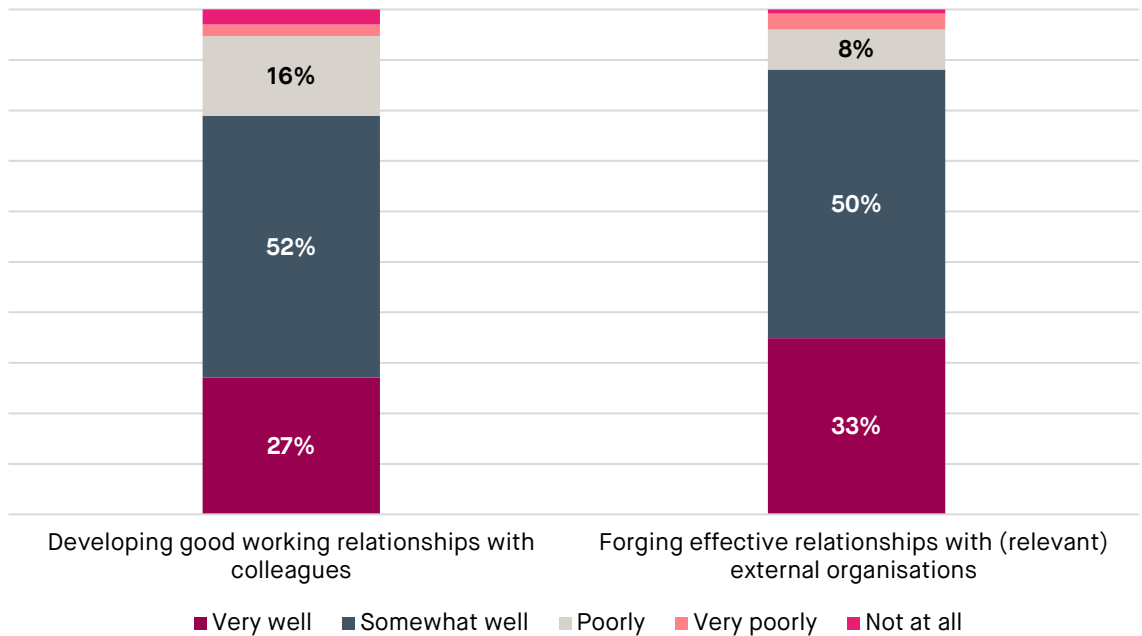
*“The quality of the relationship between a manager and an employee is the crux of leadership...leadership is comprised of trust, respect and mutual obligation...”.*

**Hassan S and Hatmaker, D M. (2014). Leadership and Performance of Public Employees: Effects and the Quality and Characteristics of Manager – Employee Relationships.**

Central to effective leadership and management is relationships. Both within teams and organisations and in many instances external ones, too. This is particularly true of local government where, as a result of a number of the functions that local authorities carry out, they have to work closely with other parts of the public sector as well as firms in the private sector, e.g. the NHS over the delivery of social care and the police to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Figure 13 shows that more than three-quarters (79%) of leaders and managers think that their senior leadership performs well at developing good working relationships within their organisation. Although only 27% do this very well. Conversely, 22% of respondents said senior leaders at their council were either poor at developing internal relationships or failed to do it at all.

Figure 13: Extent to which senior local authority leadership effectively develop good internal relationships with colleagues and external relationships with other organisations



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

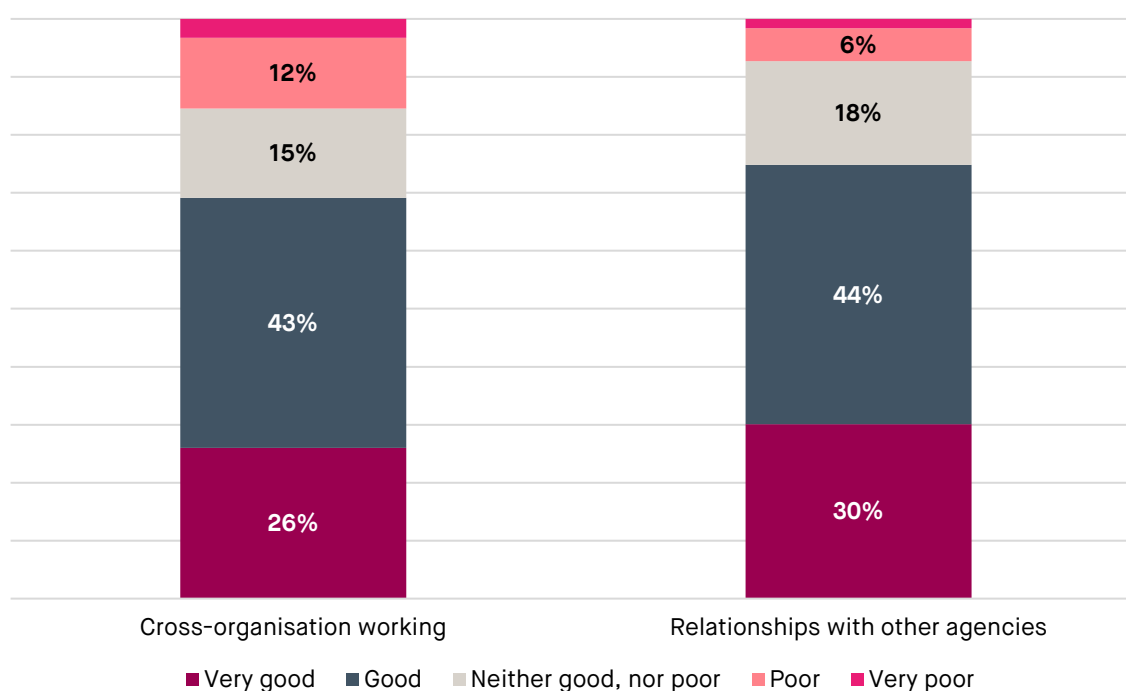
### Many local government leaders are good at developing relationships with external organisations

The proportion of survey participants saying that senior leaders in their local authority performed well or very well at forging relationships with relevant external organisations was 83% (Figure 13). More specifically, a third (33%) said that leaders in their organisation did this very well, i.e. are at the frontier of good practice in this area of leadership responsibility. The data also reveal that there is a small (but non-trivial) tail of underperforming senior leaders (12%).<sup>xii</sup>

### A minority of leaders and managers reported that the quality of the cross-organisational working in their council and relationships with other agencies are very good

Good relationships are not just important at the most senior levels. They are crucial throughout all the layers of leadership and management. When thinking about their own areas of responsibility within the local authority in which they were employed, Figure 14 shows that 74% of all leaders and managers described their particular relationships with other agencies as good or very good, with 30% reporting very good quality relationships with outside agencies. A small tail of respondents suggested that such relationships were poor or very poor quality.

**Figure 14: The quality of the cross organisational working among local government leaders and managers and relationships with external agencies**



Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

<sup>xii</sup> Senior leaders were identified as either poor or failing to develop relationships at all.

However, good cross-organisational working was less widespread, with 69% rating it as good or very good in the part of their organisation where they had responsibilities. More specifically, only just over a quarter (26%) rated the quality of cross-organisational working as very good. Further, a sizeable 15% described it as poor or very poor.

## CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT – PROGRESSIVELY IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AT NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

### Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council (NCC) serves a population of 916,000 people and an area of 2,074 square miles.<sup>37</sup> Its population is split evenly between urban and rural areas. Norfolk County Council is currently in the process of agreeing a devolution deal with the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Local Government.<sup>38</sup> Notably, in recent years, it has turned around its Children's Services department, which had been failing for many years.<sup>39</sup>

To tell us more about how Norfolk County Council was changing and the steps being taken in order to bring about organisational improvements, we spoke with Chief Executive (CEO) of Norfolk County Council Tom McCabe.<sup>xiii</sup> McCabe described how he was deliberately trying to build upon those improvements that had been made previously, while jettisoning what hadn't worked.

### Putting in place effective leadership

#### Recruiting a high quality and stable leadership team and cadre of senior managers

McCabe argued that stability in the leadership at Norfolk County Council had been a vital foundational factor in the steady improvement in many Norfolk County Council services in recent years, such as its Children's Services department. As McCabe described, there:

*"...wasn't [stability] when I arrived 10 years ago, I came initially on a three month contract as an interim director...[most]...of us were either acting up or interim. So Norfolk was in an interesting place 10 years ago..."*

Equally important, McCabe noted, was stability all the way down the leadership and management positions at the council. Norfolk County Council had seen considerable churn in leaders and managers across all departments and at all levels, which had been detrimental to its performance over a long period:

*"...You can't just simply have your dream team, your five people don't run an organisation. It's leadership at every level...so, we went from that leadership level to the next thing then...the next year, the next layer, then the next layer down..."*

To get settled and competent leaders however, he added, the terms and conditions have to be right to attract and retain the best people:

*"You've got to get the recipe... you as the employer, the conditions are going have to be right where you'll keep someone who's got the capability, has got the aspirations..."*

<sup>xiii</sup> McCabe joined Norfolk County Council in 2013, became Head of Paid Service in 2018 and was appointed CEO in 2023.



McCabe described what had been achieved with Children's Services in Norfolk as an example of what is achieved where there is the combination of good senior recruitment and retention of that leader.

*"We've gone from where we were...Children's Services spent years in special measures...now, we've maintained a good level of stability...so it is about that, we have been able to think longer term..."*

### **Leadership visibility**

As has been found in our past case studies, good leadership requires visibility.<sup>40</sup> That visibility is part of communicating effectively with staff, which in-turn helps build trust and to motivate staff. McCabe outlined some of the ways he remains visible and communicates with his Norfolk colleagues:

*"Visibility is important, so I do a weekly blog...I'll do various staff events...people have to be aware as to who I am and there needs to be consistency in what I'm saying..."*

However, McCabe explained that there had to be a balance between the CEO's visibility and those of others in the senior team. For example, the Directors are also highly visible, as McCabe pointed out:

*"Importantly, each of the directors does an element of that as well because your staffing is completely different to that in other parts, and so it's trying to pitch it at the right level".*

## **Building a positive culture**

### **Culture is a central factor in organisational success**

McCabe highlighted the vital importance of culture to an effective organisation. He suggested that:

*"Culture is really what will make the biggest difference...if your culture is toxic, then factors like qualifications will make little difference..."*

McCabe added:

*"The biggest thing is your culture and the behaviour...the leader can do all of whatever, but if the organisation is pulling people down...then forget it".*

He pointed out that it was important for the good functioning of the organisation to have well trained middle and senior managers that help cement a positive culture:

*"We expect an awful lot of our managers ...we prepare managers...with training and support for that... setting them up so they'll manage as a strong leader".*

The CEO described some of the measures that were used at Norfolk County Council to help ensure that there was a positive culture. These included:

*"We have a helpline that staff can call...we do things like wellbeing surveys, teams can invite the well-being team to help them understand what its culture is, and to support the manager in moving it forward".*

**Creating a single organisational culture**

Central to further improving the organisational culture at Norfolk County Council McCabe said, was the need to build a strong sense of staff being a single team across the whole authority. He indicated that this had been lacking and it had held performance back, but that he was in the process of changing it:

*“We have very strong departments with a strong departmental focus but some staff wouldn't even recognise that they work for the same organisation. So there has been an element of refocusing...so that that movement more towards a single organisation rather than a federated one... we talk about systems leadership and systems thinking. In the past systems have been detached from the internal system within the county council...so we're looking to tweak the dial”.*

## CHAPTER THREE – OBSTACLES TO HIGH QUALITY LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### The wide range of barriers hindering local government leaders and managers

The complicated context within which public sector leaders operate has been long recognised.<sup>41</sup> Our expert roundtable identified a range of constraints that hinder leaders and managers in local government:

*“What makes local government leadership particularly unique is that it is a very intermediate position...you’ve got...operational management of a very complex service provision system, which is inherently unstable because of elections every few years. And beyond,...you have to try and explain, to the public what you’re doing and why ... [to] national government that regulate you ... [to] a lot of service delivery partners. And so you’ve also got to try and manage all that”.*

*“Public sector leaders arguably face a unique set of challenges. They are required to respond to the demands of numerous stakeholders – policymakers, funders, service users and others – and their success is defined with reference to multiple and sometimes contradictory performance indicators”.*

**Lindsey, C. (2020). Leadership in public sector organisations, in Organisational Leadership, ed,**

### The types of constraints reported by local government leaders and managers

In our leadership and management survey, more than two-thirds (69%) of local government leaders and managers identified at least one barrier that stifles their ability to lead or manage to the best of their ability.<sup>xiv</sup> Table 2 lists the most salient obstacles to local government leaders and managers doing their jobs as well as they believe they can, reported by survey respondents.

<sup>xiv</sup> Most factors have been grouped together in categories, as shown in Table 2

**Table 2: Obstacles to leaders and managers in local government performing their roles effectively**

Obstacle theme	% of total respondents	% of respondents who described obstacles
Workforce constraints	26%	38%
Internal processes	23%	33%
Budgets/funding	23%	32%
Staff workload/time	19%	27%
Organisational culture	18%	26%
Senior leadership	16%	23%
Inadequate/insufficient tools	15%	22%
External factors	8%	12%
Organisational structure issues	6%	9%

Source: SMF Opinion Survey March-April 2023

## Workforce constraints are impeding leaders and managers in local government

As Table 2 illustrates, challenges with the local government workforce are the most commonly experienced obstacles amongst leaders and managers in local authorities. Specific workforce challenges impacting local government leaders and managers include performance management and recruitment and retention of staff.<sup>xv</sup> The LGA has found that recruitment has become particularly difficult. For example, the local government vacancy rate has nearly doubled between 2009-10 and 2021-22.<sup>42</sup> A 2022 survey of local authorities corroborates the size of the recruitment and retention problem recorded by the LGA. It found that more than half of councils (55%) were suffering “large” or “very large” workforce shortages.<sup>43</sup>

**14%**

*Median vacancy rate in English local authorities in 2021-22. Up from 8% in 2009-10*

**Local Government Association (2022). Workforce Survey.**

<sup>xv</sup> This is consistent with the picture from the survey, highlighted in Chapter Two, which show that in 45% reported their local authority to have done well at attracting talent in 2022, and 59% saying they had done well at retaining people, with 28% in the latter case agreeing that their organisation had done worse in 2022, compared to previous years.

### Having too few leaders and managers is having a detrimental impact on local government efficacy

One of the most salient recruitment and retention problems facing local government is finding and holding onto leaders and managers. A survey found that 26% of councils were suffering shortages of junior managers, 21% reported having too few middle managers and 15% not enough senior managers.<sup>44</sup> Further, alongside too few managers with change management skills, there are insufficient managers with expertise in people management in many local authorities across the country.<sup>xvi</sup>

Participants at the roundtable identified a trend of eliminating management layers in recent decades as a factor behind the leadership and management capacity deficit. In addition to the capacity constraints that having too few managers creates, the negative impact of the shortage on the ability of the remaining managers to do their jobs can also be significant, as one roundtable contributor argued:

*“The de-layering of management means people inevitably pick up extra responsibilities that will have been previously the responsibility of a layer that is no longer there, which leads to issues of them struggling to find the capacity”.*

### There is no systematic approach to developing leaders and managers in local government

The capacity deficit i.e. the shortfall in the number of leaders and managers, is closely connected to a capability deficit. The latter is evident in the fact that some leaders and managers are in positions without having had sufficient training for their role while others are mismatched to the position they are in, as was observed at the SMF’s expert roundtable:

*“We see a lot of accidental managers and leaders...people that have been promoted through their technical expertise, or because they’ve had to step in and fill resourcing gaps, expected to then thrive as people managers...which they find incredibly difficult”.*

The pipeline for new and for upskilling existing leaders and managers across local government was widely considered to be inadequate by a number of contributors to the roundtable. Basic elements for ensuring training delivers a useful return for individuals and the organisation, e.g. that it should meet organisational needs, is lacking in some instances:

*“A lot of skill sets have been lost in local governments and the approach over the past 10 years is very ad hoc and disjointed in relation to how we develop leaders...often it isn’t aligned to the priorities and goals of the organisation”.*

<sup>xvi</sup> Two of the three the most frequently reported management capacity gaps were in the areas of managing change (58%) and people management (58%). The two most often highlighted management capability gaps reported by local government respondents were for people management (57%) and managing change (56%) skills. Source: “Local Government Workforce Summary Data” (Local Government Association, May 2023), <https://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-workforce-summary-data-may-2023>.

**85%**

*Proportion of respondents in chief executive/ organisational leadership roles in local government that reported being concerned about the pipeline for future local government leaders*

**Calkin, S (2022). Widespread Workforce Shortages Revealed.**

A key reason for the capability deficit links straight back to the capacity deficit. Too few managers for example, makes it difficult to undertake appropriate training, as a roundtable participant noted:

*“It's hard for local authorities to protect the time of their managers to go on programmes...”.*

The size and pervasiveness of the leadership and management capacity and capability deficits across large numbers of local authorities suggest there is a need for a more strategic approach to the local government workforce. Not only to deal with the shortages across many specific areas of local government service delivery<sup>45</sup> but crucially, to tackle the specific leadership and management problems.<sup>46</sup> The latter would need to include explicit measures to improve the pipeline for bringing-in and training-up new leaders and managers and ensuring their long-term retention once recruited (see more on this below).<sup>47</sup>

### **Internal bureaucracy and concern over budgets are stymying leaders and managers in local authorities**

As Table 2 shows that some leaders and managers are limited in their ability to lead and manage as they see best by internal processes (i.e. poorly designed policies and systems and red tape). When asked in our survey, some respondents described the rules in their local authority as outdated, or too broad in their application resulting in them being inappropriate and inefficient. The presence of such constraints impact job satisfaction, motivation, morale and retention.<sup>48 49</sup>

*“Since 2010–11 successive governments have reduced funding to English local authorities as part of their efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit. By 2017–18 government funding to authorities had fallen by 49.1% in real terms. Over the same period, local authorities have faced growing demand for key services such as adult and children’s social care, and housing services”.*

**Public Accounts Committee (2018). Financial sustainability of local authorities.**

The third most common obstacle for leaders and management were budgetary issues. Local government in England is funded through a mixture of government grants, council tax, business rates and some user charges. Local government has limited powers to raise revenues.<sup>50</sup> While the demands on local government have not diminished, at the same time, the funding for councils has been cut. From 2010 onwards there were significant reductions in central government funding.<sup>51</sup> In more recent years, local authority budgets have remained under pressure with a further 14% real terms cut

between 2017–18 and 2021–22, according to the LGA.

The impacts of these years of underfunding are becoming more visible than ever before, through the spate of local council bankruptcies. Further, many more local authorities feel they may soon have to as well.<sup>52</sup> While some bankruptcies could be attributed to mismanagement of funds, the sheer scale of the financial difficulties does indicate that the operating environment itself has become too challenging.

Numerous survey respondents reflected that budget issues meant that they could not afford to send staff on training courses, helping further compound the difficulties of adequately training leaders and managers, which were touched upon earlier. In some instances, this was because the training was unaffordable with current budgets. In others, because they were under-staffed and couldn't afford to lose a team member for a period.

## The relationship between the political leadership of a council and senior council officers

### The relationship between senior administrators and elected councillors is a key ingredient in success and can be a cause of failure

A key challenge for local government leadership raised at the expert roundtable with significant implications for the effectiveness of local authorities was that of the relationship between the elected councillors and those of the permanent officers of the council administration (see the Calderdale case study for an example of this relationship working well):

*"We need to emphasise the need for good relationships...it sounds so obvious and basic, but often it's one of the missing elements...it's [the] breakdown in relationships that can really get a place going off track".*

*"External political actors can have important consequences for organisations and their employees. Such forces influence not only organisational goal ambiguity directly but also organisational structure and employee role ambiguity indirectly..."*

**Pandey, S K and Wright, B E. (2006). Connecting the Dots in Public Management: Political Environment, Organisational Goal Ambiguity and the Public Manager's Role Ambiguity.**

It was argued by one contributor that it was essential that those in the senior political and administrative positions prioritised their working relationship:

*"An authority can move mountains when they work well with each other. But if they're not...then things go wrong, and it doesn't take long. And I think it's the responsibility of the leadership of the political side, and the leadership of the managerial side..."*

**The regular turnover of political leadership can create uncertainty in the relationships between councillors and the permanent administration**

An unavoidable but often disruptive element to the development of good working relationships between councillors and administrators is the regularity of the election cycle. Frequent elections can result in a regular inflow and outflow of councillors. For those councils where changes in political control are regular in particular, this creates frequent turnover in those at the top of the council. It was argued by a roundtable participant that, in order to manage this challenge, good local government leaders cultivate political awareness and sensitivity skills as central ingredients to running a successful local government organisation:

*“Political awareness for officers, particularly those moving into leadership positions helps to establish a clear understanding of what each role is, and clear lines of accountability”,*



## CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT – TRANSFORMING SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Surrey Heath Borough Council

Surrey Heath is a borough council within the county of Surrey. The county has a two tier local government arrangement: a county council along with multiple borough councils within the county's boundaries. The council serves more than 90,000 residents and 36,000 households.<sup>53</sup> In 2023, Surrey Heath received a positive judgment from the LGA, through its peer review process, noting how it has made a good start to changing the organisation for the better after a challenging period of churn.<sup>54</sup>

To help inform this case study we interviewed the Chief Executive (CEO) of Surrey Heath Borough Council Damian Roberts and his colleagues Sally Kipping (Head of HR, Performance and Communications) and Sarah Bainbridge (Organisational Development Manager – Policy, Strategy and Performance).

### The need for change

When CEO Damian Roberts was appointed at Surrey Heath Borough Council in early 2021, the authority was lacking confidence and direction:

*“Staff were doing their best in difficult circumstances such as managing the Council’s response to the pandemic and operating without a permanent Chief Executive, but were being held back by a...structure...that was not serving the organisation well”.*

### How Surrey Heath transformed

#### **Structural reforms were a necessary but were insufficient by themselves for improving organisational performance**

Roberts came into an organisation where there was an appetite for long-overdue structural changes. These were carried out quickly and with a high level of engagement with the staff at the council:

*“When I arrived, ...there was a strong consensus from both Members and staff about the need for change. ...But for me, the restructure was only the starting point”.*

#### **The changes that made the biggest difference were people-focused**

The main focus for transforming the performance of the council was the developing and setting of a clear vision, allied to culture change throughout the organisation. Boosting staff moral and motivation was particularly important to improving the performance of Surrey Heath. For Roberts, delivering on these factors has been the most crucial, for organisational success:

*“Our ability to be successful depends on our people...our performance is dependent on the actions of individuals at every level...and their ability to*

*make good decisions every single day. That comes from everyone having a clear sense of direction...and from the culture of empowerment and collaboration”.*

Focussing on forging a set of common values was essential for generating a better and unified team culture and early change that needed to be made, according to Roberts:

*“In local government, you have so many different functions and specialisms each with their own professional norms and standards...while this brings many benefits, the predominance of different professional groups can also too easily lead to organisational silos...One thing that can create a greater sense of connection, unity and belonging across a complex organisation is a set of shared values. They help to establish the foundations necessary for a high-performing organisation”.*

However, it was important that a set of values was not imposed, Roberts noted. Rather, they needed to be developed collaboratively with the staff so that everyone would buy into them:

*“We started with...taking the time to understand...the characteristics that our staff most appreciated seeing in each other, what they would like to see more of...We very much wanted a set of values that resonated with staff...That is why we undertook a council wide engagement and asked our staff to develop our values with us”.*

Roberts’ senior team made efforts to embed the values across the Council. It started with the leadership team leading by example. The efficacy of this was evident in the most recent staff survey, where 94% of respondents reported that the senior management “are contributing positively to the success of the Council”.<sup>xvii</sup> Roberts described how:

*“Our values have gone from what could have been a tick box exercise to being something that everybody sees as fundamental...And we built them into everything we could...every opportunity we have, from our staff engagement platform and appraisal process to our staff awards, we reinforce...[them]”.*

Internal staff feedback data suggests that much has been achieved and a culture of good performance now pervades much of the authority, with 93% of staff reporting this was the case in their teams in a recent consultation exercise.

### **Staff engagement proved vital for boosting morale and motivation**

Kipping and Bainbridge noted that high quality staff engagement has been and remains vital for a motivated workforce with high morale. To these ends, efforts to embed ‘staff voice’ across the organisation were made. These included working with staff representatives and holding open all-staff meetings where staff could be confident that any question they asked would be responded to, as well as cultivating direct relationships between staff and leaders. Bainbridge highlighted that:

<sup>xvii</sup> Internal 2023 staff survey data was shared with the authors for this case study. Further, the 2023 survey had a 72% response rate. A 12 percentage points higher response rate than the same survey three years earlier.

*“We take the employee voice very seriously...for example, staff survey results are discussed at the highest levels and utilised to drive further improvement, workforce empowerment is frequently on the agenda at CMT [Corporate Management Team] and we have a quarterly action plan for improving things for the staff”.*

The improvements in staff morale have become visible in recent staff surveys. For example, more than nine in ten (96%) of Surrey Heath staff reported that they were “proud” to work at the Council. The high-levels of motivation achieved are also visible in same staff survey data, which found that 92% of those working at Surrey Heath feel “empowered” to do their jobs.

## **Sustaining success into the future**

### **Training up leaders through mentoring and coaching are vital to ongoing improvement**

Surrey Heath’s leadership development efforts recognise the importance of the more relational aspects of leadership and management that are harder to teach formally.<sup>55</sup> To expose managers and prospective leaders to the full gamut of skills needed as Kipping pointed out, Surrey Heath ensures that managers and prospective leaders benefit from:

*“A holistic approach to training, both formal and informal. There is a mentoring scheme – role models are vitally important to learning all the skills of good leadership”.*

Bainbridge provided an example of their approach to helping upskill managers by describing how middle managers are exposed to the work of those at the next level, to help them learn what the jobs they may one day hold involve:

*“When budget planning is taking place, it’s not just the senior leaders who take the lead...the wider management team work collaboratively. This enables less senior colleagues to gain a much better understanding of financial decision making and the process...We see this type of approach as essential to empowering our workforce and part of our commitment to learning and development”.*

## CHAPTER FOUR – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

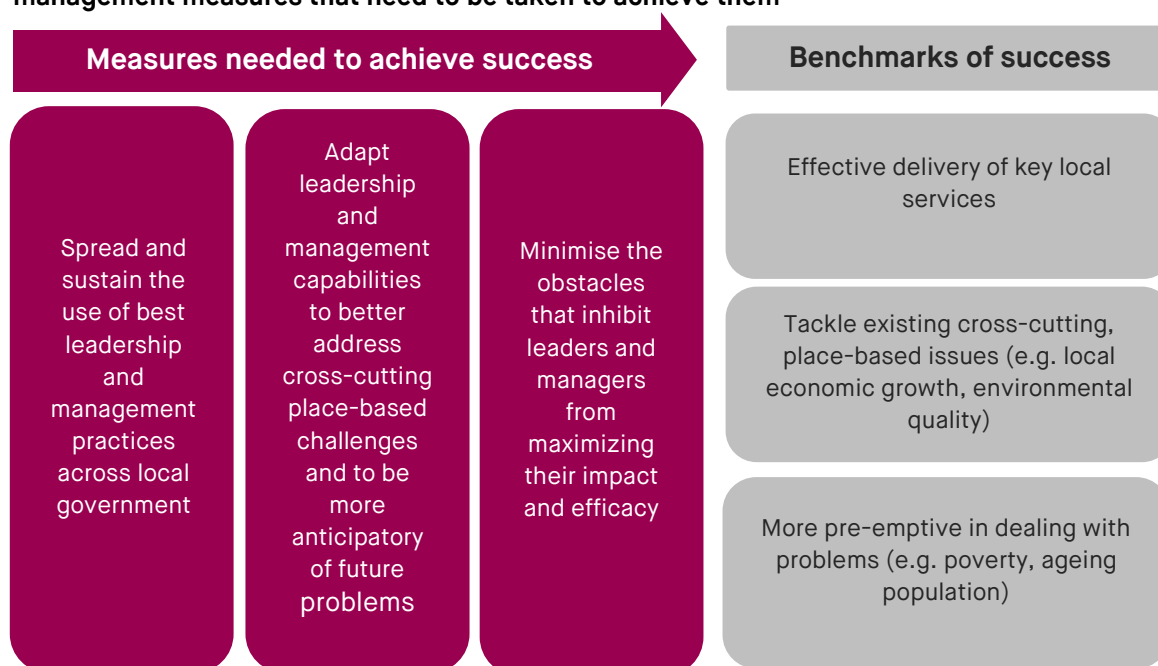
### The challenges facing local government and what its leaders and managers should look to achieve

As Chapter One described, local government not only has its traditional function of delivering key services to local residents, but it also has a central role to play in place making, i.e. developing places through improving local economies and boosting community life, as well as becoming more anticipatory in its approach to problems. Consequently, success in local government encompasses a number of factors. These are described as “benchmarks for success” in Diagram 2.

Chapter One also described the vital influence on the performance of a local authority that the leadership and management have. Especially if decentralisation is to have the kinds of positive impacts on local economies that the evidence highlighted in Chapter One indicates is possible. However, as the evidence presented in Chapter Two showed, best leadership and management practices are not ubiquitous across UK local government. There is a “long tail” not valuing and/or not implementing what are widely considered the best approaches to leadership and management. Consequently, there is considerable scope for the quality of the leadership and management in local government in the UK to improve through wider and sustained adoption of best practice.

Perhaps the most salient implication of the findings in this report are that doing so would boost service delivery in general and more particularly drive greater success in place making. To those ends, Diagram 2 lists the leadership and management focused measures necessary to deliver the kinds of changes that would ultimately enhance local governments positive impact on their constituents and areas.

**Diagram 2: The three benchmarks of local government success and the leadership and management measures that need to be taken to achieve them**



Source: SMF analysis

## Putting in place the foundations to improve leadership and management across local government

Below, we make a series of specific proposals for policymakers that will help deliver better leadership and management more consistently across all of local government, on a sustainable basis, and therefore help deliver the three measures outlined in Diagram 2. The proposals are envisaged as a package which will be reinforcing of one another.

### **Recommendation One – establish benchmarks for the implementation of best leadership and management practices in local government and ensure Oflog includes assessments of leadership and management quality in its work**

Across much of the public sector there are mechanisms in place that set standards for how those public services should operate. However, in local government, this is absent.

There is an existing framework for auditing the finances of local government.<sup>56</sup> More recently Oflog's DataExplorer allows users to examine local government performance across a handful of service areas. It falls short of a comprehensive regime for evaluating performance, including leadership and management quality.

However, given the importance of leadership and management to service delivery and dealing with the broader cross-cutting place-based challenges, DLUHC should expand Oflog's assessment activity from various services and finance to also include leadership and management quality.

To support this, Oflog, together with key stakeholders such as the LGA, relevant academics and expert bodies in leadership and management, should work together to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing good leadership and management in local government. The performance of leaders and managers should be scrutinised against a set of benchmarks that allow comparative evaluations between councils.

**Recommendation Two – the Department for Levelling-Up should bring forward, in conjunction with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders, a comprehensive 10 year workforce strategy for local government**

As Damian Roberts, CEO of Surrey Heath Borough Council indicated, effective local government is about people and in particular having enough capable people delivering for their localities. Further, as the evidence in Box 1 showed, local government with the tools it needs and the ability to operate them effectively is linked to better outcomes, on metrics such as economic development.

However, workforce related challenges are major obstacles to better local government performance, as highlighted in Chapter Three. One of those workforce constraints on local government efficacy is a deficit in personnel. More particularly, there is a shortage of leaders and managers in key areas (e.g. managing people and change). The leadership and management capacity problems are having negative knock-on effects on the ability to get appropriate people in the right positions and properly train-up potential managers or indeed, many of those that are in place.

In order to deliver on the three leadership and management measures set out in Diagram 2, and ultimately meet the three benchmarks of success, local government's workforce problems (at all levels) need to be tackled. This is especially true of the leadership and management capacity deficit and the closely related capability deficit, given the importance of these functions to organisational success. Therefore, a strategy which identifies the full set of workforce problems in detail and proposes a plan for dealing with them is needed to turnaround the situation.

This strategy should ultimately aim to help ensure that the local government workforce can deliver on its obligations to the highest standards. It should also ensure there is a local government workforce prepared to the challenges of place making (including local economic development and building and sustaining communities). To realise this, there will no doubt be a need to include a wide set of tools that could help local authorities' build-up and hold onto the workforces they need. In that vein, politicians and policymakers should not shy away from further devolution of powers to local authorities where appropriate, in order to achieve the desired ends.

Below we set out a number of elements that we consider the proposed workforce strategy should include. If carried forward, these suggestions should:

- Reduce the overall local government workforce gap.
- Help councils to fill the leadership and management capacity and capability deficits, including enabling leaders and managers in local administrations to acquire the kinds of skills appropriate to dealing with place-based challenges and taking a more anticipatory approach to problems facing localities.

- Further ensure adoption of best leadership and management practices is widespread across local authorities.

**Recommendation Three – boost funding to councils to improve the recruitment and retention of staff at all levels and for leadership and management roles in particular**

A key focus of the workforce strategy must be improving recruitment and retention in local government at all levels, with a particular focus on closing the leadership and management capacity and capability gaps.

This will take funding, as increasing recruitment and retention requires the deployment of both material incentives such as adequate pay, benefits and training opportunities alongside efforts to improve organisational culture through a focus on values, employee engagement and workplace relations, staff well-being, the appropriate organisation of work (e.g. increasing factors such as task autonomy), creating career pathways and other aspects associated with fulfilling employment.

The workforce strategy should aim to quantify the likely resourcing needed to resolve the recruitment and retention problems that bedevil local government on a long-term basis.<sup>xviii</sup> This is likely to involve reversing – at least partially – the 37% decline in the local government workforce that occurred between Q4 2012 and Q4 2022.

We understand that rebalanced or additional funding could be difficult in the current environment. Therefore, to deliver it, the strategy should explore funding options. One, is general taxation with appropriate amounts passed through to local governments by direct grants. Another is to boost the current trend towards greater devolution with more autonomy for local authorities to supplement Council Tax, Business Rates revenues or levy new local taxes to raise the money to invest in their own capabilities and capacities. With the current emphasis on devolution, this may be the most desirable approach.

In addition, to find efficiencies that will leave more resources for investing in the workforce, where there are combined authorities or coalitions of the willing, local authorities should be encouraged to pool their budgets for recruitment and retention and associated workforce related activities, akin to the trend for sharing service delivery.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>xviii</sup> In 2019-20, the total cost of paying local government employees was £24 billion. Source: Local Government Association, “Local Government Earnings and Demography Survey 2019/20,” 2020, <https://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-earnings-and-demography-survey-201920>.



#### **Recommendation Four – establish a leadership academy for local government**

Ensuring consistently high standards of leadership and management across local government requires a system for ensuring that all current and future leaders and managers are trained to a minimum standard. Such a standard needs to reflect best leadership and management practices. This will require a more systematic approach to leadership and management training to be established rather than relying upon the ad-hoc arrangements that currently exist, whereby some local authorities are more attentive to such matters than others. Instances of people being promoted into leadership or management roles without adequate accredited training that is widely recognised as high quality, should come to an end.

To ensure that all leaders and managers receive equal access to good training and are fully prepared for the complexities of their role, DLUHC should establish a local government leadership academy, similar to the ones that have been set up for the NHS and the Civil Service. The academy could offer shorter “bitesize” courses in leadership and management alongside lengthier ones, and could provide training on general leadership and management skills, as well as programmes specifically tailored to leadership and management in local government. The leadership academy should work with existing training providers to accredit them as approved delivery partners, underpinned by a robust oversight and a regular re-accreditation process to ensure quality.

The academy’s suite of training should be aligned with the kinds of leadership and management practices that Oflog benchmark their evaluations of best practice against as part of their expanded oversight work (see Recommendation One).

With the leadership academy established, support should initially focus on building up the leadership and management skills of those in lower and middle management. While the training of all levels is important, this will help to minimise the training gap that seems to exist between management levels, and noted in Chapter Two. Our survey results showed that senior leaders and managers are more likely to benefit from training, while more junior colleagues miss out. Over time, as the academy becomes established, the participation should extend up leadership and management hierarchies to the most senior levels.



**Recommendation Five – create new routes into local government leadership and management especially for experienced people, such as a direct entry for career changers**

Early retirement is a contributor to the ongoing leadership and management capacity deficit in local government. An older than typical cohort of leaders and managers in local government therefore indicates a worsening gap over the coming years. Consequently, recruitment needs to be wider than just bringing in younger people at the start of the leadership and management pipeline but also look to recruit older and experienced people too, especially into middle and senior positions.

In the spirit of the “returnerships” announced in Budget 2023, working with relevant partners, the government should create a direct entry style system for older career changers, who may already have leadership and management experience in other industries and who may be interested in embarking on a new role in serving their community through local government.

An equivalent of the LGA’s National Graduate Development Scheme (NGDS) might be an appropriate channel. While the NGDS is open to anyone and does not have an upper age limit, a specific programme for those who already have leadership and management experience could be valuable. The scheme would largely focus on the necessary training to induct career changers into unique aspects of local government roles (e.g. working with elected councillors) as the candidates would already have considerable leadership and management experience, from previous roles.

## CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT – BUILDING ON EXISTING SUCCESS AT RUTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Rutland County Council (RCC) serves a population of 41,000 people and covers 147 square miles. More than two-thirds (69%) of its population is rural.<sup>58</sup> In 2019, one analysis suggested that Rutland County Council was the sixth most productive local authority in England, an improvement of three places on the previous year.<sup>59</sup>

To tell us about how Rutland County Council was going to build upon its previous success, we interviewed Chief Executive (CEO) of Rutland County Council Mark Andrews.<sup>xix</sup> As Andrews noted in our interview, about building on Rutland's existing successes:

*"You have to be cognisant of the things that are important to the people of an organisation when you take on a leadership role...when resetting it is about being constructively critical to identify what you're changing and what you're leaving...so that you can plot a journey of improvement that builds on the strengths of the organisation".*

### **Distributed leadership allows different teams within the council to flourish**

#### **Empowering leaders and managers through devolving responsibility**

Andrews described his approach to leadership as one based upon empowering his staff through creating the conditions for them to flourish (i.e. a distributed leadership model) and as part of that encouraging mechanisms such as self-reflection as a route to improving performance over time:

*"The most important thing is to be very self-reflective and have strong emotional intelligence to understand behaviours that affect your culture...giving freedom for people to flourish, and still provide clarity of direction ...".*

Andrews was critical of overly systemised approaches to leadership and management:

*"If you try to design a perfect operational system you're likely to find it doesn't work... we need to focus much more on what's driving the wrong behaviours in a system, both in leadership tiers and lower down, than the structure and processes we deliver in".*

Andrews went on to describe how he was introducing his decentralised approach, so that it will work as it is intended to:

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<sup>xix</sup> Andrews became interim CEO in June 2020 - amidst the Covid-19 pandemic – and was appointed permanently to the role in 2021. Source: Chris Cromar, "Rutland County Council Appoint Chief Executive," Public Sector Executive, June 10, 2021, <https://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/articles/rutland-county-council-appoint-chief-executive>.

*“...[at first you go] slowly,...it's challenging. You need to start small and don't have to set the widest freedom to all, instead focus on achieving a critical mass by building the approach through teams and services. It's quite a daunting responsibility for some people but for others you can widen their freedom quite quickly and easily...”.*

He provided an example of his approach in action, and it delivering results:

*“Recently, the therapy service set up a program around falls in care homes, with no central direction...They looked at the data themselves, thought it was going the wrong way, so with their autonomy they set up a project that's been nationally recognized. I think it cut falls by 50%. I only saw it at the end...after they'd designed it and spent their money on it (within budget)...and, I think that's how it should be”.*

## **Relationships with peers in other organisations are important for spreading good practices**

### **Understanding the experiences of others and applying lessons is essential to good leadership**

Andrews described how his relationships with other CEOs in local government have become a vital learning tool for him. Interactions with such people help him learn to be a better CEO. To facilitate this peer-to-peer learning he described how:

*“There are regular meetings with East Midlands chief execs, ...I have relationships with Chief Execs of the councils that surround us...it's also important to have contacts not in our region...I have a good relationship with the Chief Executive in St. Helens...she's been at it for years, and has experienced many of the same problems...”.*

### **Peer-to-peer arrangements have proven to be beneficial mechanisms for transmitting learning between senior people in local authorities**

Andrews reported that both ad-hoc one-to-one relationships with peers and organised training that utilised peer-to-peer learning were invaluable for leaders like him, who were in their first Chief Executive roles:

*“I like the one to one relationships...they are better for leadership relationships because you can get the understanding of how people are approaching issues, there's usually more honesty to it”.*

*“There's also some training programmes I've been to on that bring a number of peers together. Currently I'm with a group of Chief Execs on one of these programmes, and we've built some trust so are honest about the challenges that we're facing. I think that honesty is really important to help us develop”.*

## Learning to make the best of factors outside of a council's control

### Embracing an approach which accepts turnover and looks to mitigate this inevitability by emphasising culture

Andrews is aware that the size of Rutland County Council meant that he does not have as much resource at his disposal. This means in-turn that Rutland is at a disadvantage when it comes to being able to offer inducements to new recruits and to help retain the best talent. In that context Andrews took a pragmatic view of staff turnover, seeing it as an opportunity as much as a problem:

*"I don't see turnover necessarily as a negative, it just depends on the reasons for it....our turnover is no different to any other local authority at the moment. But for local government it's still higher than we'd seen before COVID...my feeling is that we need to be careful as a sector to try and chase the nirvana of stability...we should allow new people to come in...it adds value, new views...Therefore, our strategy has got to be one around how we manage a more fluid workforce yet maintain the culture and approach, we have to focus upon consistency of service [and the] cohesion of teams..."*

## ANNEX ONE: THE SCOPE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

### Local government is responsible for providing many services that the public rely upon

Local government in the UK is central to the lives of citizens. It administers a wide range of services and as such, provides the context for much of daily life in Britain.

*“Local authorities in England are subject to ‘1,300 different statutory duties and responsibilities’, such as social care for the elderly, education, maintenance of green spaces, and road repair...councils provide ‘over 800 services to their communities’...”*

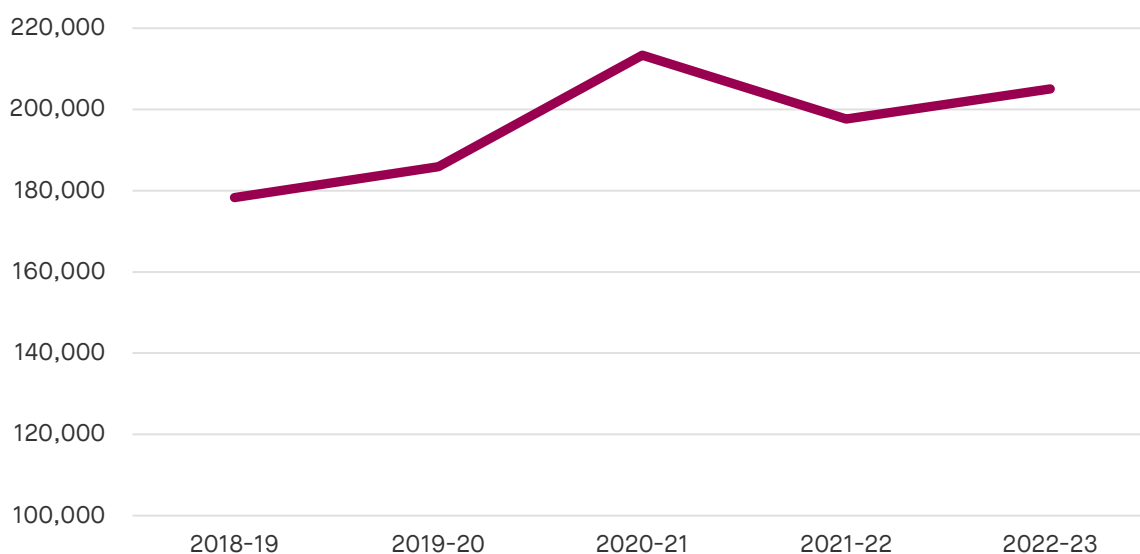
**Goddard, J (2019). Local Authority provision of essential services: House of Lords Library Briefing.**

Local government’s importance is reflected in the amount of money it is responsible for spending each year.

Figure 15 provides the latest data on total local government expenditure across the UK between 2018–19 and 2022–23.<sup>60</sup> Employment in English local government in Q4 2022 stood at 1.2 million people. This was a decline of around 37% from Q4 2012, when 1.9 million people were employed in local

government in England.<sup>61</sup> <sup>xx</sup> One estimate suggested that between 2010 and 2020, around 900,000 people left the local government workforce.<sup>62</sup>

**Figure 15: Total local government expenditure (£ millions) across the UK, 2018-19 to 2022-23**



Source: Office for National Statistics

<sup>xx</sup> As an illustration of the shifting balance between national and local government, employment numbers in local government were greater than that in central government between 1961 to 2011. Source:

## ANNEX TWO: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

It was highlighted at our expert roundtable that place-based challenges such as economic development, that cut across the traditional boundaries between local government services and often transcending different local entities (e.g. health bodies, educational organisations, policing, other nearby councils or cultural spaces) are becoming more salient.<sup>63</sup> One consequence of this has been somewhat of a shift towards more anticipatory and preventative activity amongst local authorities. Such changes are widely expected to continue. As a result, local government leaders and managers are having to adapt their outlooks and skills sets:

*“Place-based policies have a focus on specific cities, localities or region but they represent more than just a label for already established programmes of government activity, or the concentration of public sector resource in specific locations. Place-based policies embody and ethos about, and an approach to, the development of economies and society that acknowledges that the context of each and every city, region and rural district offers opportunities for advancing wellbeing. It advocates for a development approach tailored to the needs of each. Importantly, place-based policy explicitly seeks the development of all parts of the landscape...”*

**Beer, A et al., (2020). What is Place-Based Policy?.**

*“Reaching out and understanding residents and their circumstances and...more preventative work, which requires a more direct relationship with residents”.*

These trends it was argued, are having notable implications for leadership and in local government:

*“What constitutes good leadership performance now is...harder to measure and...more difficult and requires a different set of leadership skills, which are...more outward focused both in terms of partners and how you make stuff happen in a place”.*

As noted in Chapter One, emblematic of the salience of place-based cross-cutting challenges is that of the levelling-up agenda. In that context, one roundtable attendee posited that, local government needed to focus more on:

*“...place and partnerships and how you can change your place..[in terms of]...economic growth, housing, jobs, skills...”.*

## ANNEX THREE: WAYS THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN BOOST PLACE-BASED PROSPERITY

### Box 4: The routes through which local government influences economic prosperity

Local authorities have a range of direct and indirect levers which can have notable impact on local economies. Their democratic legitimacy, statutory powers and functions, experience of service delivery, local spending power and links with central government mean they are uniquely placed to operate these levers to their maximum effect. More specifically, local government can:<sup>64</sup>

- Offer leadership and draw up and bring forward frameworks for development and regeneration and coordinate and galvanise local institutions and economic actors into action.
- Provide clarity and for local businesses and potential inward investors over land supply and opportunities to build.
- Use local authority assets and statutory powers and win funding from national government to “crowd in” private investment.
- Invest in local infrastructure (such as transport networks) and other elements that affect factors such as the quality of life and security that in-turn influence individual business decision-making.
- Enhance human capital by promoting the health of the local population through public health interventions and ensuring education and skills<sup>65</sup> (where still under the control of the local authority or where the authority has influence over local providers) are of good quality.
- Boost local employment levels and demand conditions through the employment of local people.
- Promote fair, safe and efficient local trading through the effective (i.e. proportionate and consistent) implementation of trading standards, environmental health and other rules.

## ANNEX FOUR: THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Box 3: The differences between leadership and management

Leaders are figureheads, typically the most senior people in an organisation. They are usually in charge of strategising and endowed with ultimate authority over the people in and the operations of the organisation they lead. Some have suggested that leadership is not necessarily tied to a specific function in a hierarchy but is rather a set of skills and behaviours. These include being an effective communicator, motivating people and being able to identify a vision (and goals) underpinned by effective strategy development.<sup>66</sup>

Leadership is widely seen as a distinct function to management.<sup>67</sup> Management is a more regular and technical exercise, focused upon organising resources towards achieving intermediate objectives and the ultimate ends that those leading an organisation have identified. Consequently, a manager is typically a technician, an administrator and problem solver.<sup>68</sup>

In most organisations leaders often have some management responsibilities and many managers have to display some leadership qualities. Managing a team is not just a technical exercise but requires, among other factors, communication skills and the ability to motivate staff.

In the most successful organisations, leaders and managers recognise the co-dependence of their roles and the links between leadership and management.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, leaders and managers, and leadership and management, are best seen as complementary to one another.



## ANNEX FIVE: THE COMPLEXITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND

### English local government structures

Table 3 provides a brief overview of the structure of English local government and helps illustrate the complexity of the landscape.

**Table 3: The constituent parts of local government in England**

Type of local government	Number of such authorities	Responsibilities
<b>Combined authorities</b>	10	A combined authority (CA) is a body of two or more councils. The CA framework enables the member councils to collaborate across boundaries. The exact powers of the CA vary depending on the individual CA. Most (but not all) have an elected mayor that runs the CA.
<b>County councils</b>	21	Education, transport, planning, fire and public safety, social care and social services, libraries, waste management, trading standards.
<b>District, borough or city councils</b>	164	Refuse collection, recycling, Council Tax collections, housing, planning applications, leisure/ entertainment environmental health, anti-social behaviour.
<b>Unitary authorities in shire areas</b>	63	Education, transport, planning and planning applications, fire and public safety, social care and social services, libraries, waste management, trading standards, refuse collection, recycling, Council Tax collections, housing, leisure/ entertainment environmental health, anti-social behaviour.
<b>London boroughs</b>	33	In London some services, e.g. fire, policing and public transport are delivered through the Greater London Authority. Education, transport, planning and planning applications, fire and public safety, social care and social services, libraries, waste management, trading standards, refuse collection, recycling, Council Tax collections, housing, leisure/ entertainment environmental health, anti-social behaviour.
<b>Metropolitan boroughs</b>	36	In metropolitan areas some services, e.g. fire, police and public transport, are provided

		through “joint authorities”, e.g. in Manchester, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Education, transport, planning and planning applications, fire and public safety, social care and social services, libraries, waste management, trading standards, refuse collection, recycling, Council Tax collections, housing, leisure/ entertainment environmental health, anti-social behaviour.
<b>Parish, community and town councils</b>	10,480	Allotments, public clocks, bus shelters, community centres, play areas and play equipment, grants to help local organisations, consultation on neighbourhood planning, fixed penalty notice issuance for littering, graffiti, fly posting and dog offences.

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023)

**Table 4: The combined authorities in England**

Region	Combined authorities
<b>North</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater Manchester Combined Authority</li> <li>• Liverpool City Region</li> <li>• North East Combined Authority</li> <li>• North of Tyne Combined Authority</li> <li>• Tees Valley Combined Authority</li> <li>• South Yorkshire Combined Authority</li> <li>• West Yorkshire Combined Authority</li> </ul>
<b>Midlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Midlands Combined Authority</li> </ul>
<b>East</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority</li> </ul>
<b>South</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West of England Combined Authority</li> </ul>

## ENDNOTES

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