

Introduction

1. Over the next 5 years, HTS want to expand into becoming a leading provider of housing and related services across the East of England. To do this we are proposing a new group structure – adding new companies to the existing ones. These would comprise of a trading company to provide services to third party clients, a construction company, and a training academy. In addition to becoming more competitive, we also wish to improve our social impact and become greener – aiming to achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2040. This people strategy has been developed to support the purpose set out in the HTS Group Business Plan “to sustainably grow our business with our motivated workforce, delivering the best customer experience in our sector. At the core of our ambition is to build an organisation recognised for its consistent, high-quality customer-focused service.”
2. The People Strategy commitments are set out in section 5 below. The intention is to seize opportunities that continue to build a HTS community that is passionate about the difference we can make and how the work we do can help the citizens of Harlow work and live well.

Background

3. HTS is an organisation on the brink of change and this People Strategy focuses on how we build a more connected, aligned organisation, recognising, and celebrating our differences as well as building on our considerable strengths and the sense of family that HTS colleagues value so much. As we grow and develop, we need to improve this further. Although we have started work on the development of our HTS organisational values, we plan to re-engage staff on the values and an associated behavioural framework to embed these in everything we do.
4. While we know that we have work to do on the implementation of our values, feedback from staff suggests that we have more to do ensure that there is meaningful authentic communication across the organisation. We know that staff are frustrated as we continue to develop hybrid working solutions that work for staff in all areas of the business. We know that we have more to do to ensure that staff are better supported to deal with the pressures of increased workload because of staff absences and we recognise that the successful delivery of our business plan needs clear direction and specialist expertise from our Board members.
5. This People Strategy seeks to build of the strengths of HTS, mitigate the identified Weaknesses and position HTS so that it can exploit the Opportunities and navigate the Threats identified in the SWOT analysis in the HTS Business Plan for 2022-2027.

6. The People Strategy is also influenced by wider changes in society on changing employment expectations, as set out in the Good Work Plan in response to the Taylor Review¹ which reinforced the importance of good work - work that is decent and fair, rewarding and enabling people to be healthier and more productive, and where wellbeing is a key strategic enabler. We are well placed to build on the positive progress we have made as an employer in this regard, but evidence and experience highlight that there remain challenges that need to be addressed. For example, across HTS Group we benefit from an experienced and loyal workforce. However, the HTS workforce is ageing which brings its own challenges about future loss of tacit knowledge and skills with impending retirements, further we know that with age brings with it increasing health challenges. Research ²suggests that an ageing workforce can be a less productive workforce because of the effects of age and decreased opportunity for lifelong learning. That is why this strategy includes actions to support an ageing workforce work-well and work-smart with solutions linked to hybrid working and ongoing opportunities for formal and informal development.

7. The two key themes of *Enhancing Capacity and Capability* and *Enabling the best staff experience for the best customer experience* provide the framework for setting out the key elements of the Strategy, covering five core objectives as follows:

- **Growing our capability** (the size and shape we need to be)
- **Developing our people** (investing in skills and career development and supporting our people to lead well)
- **Advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion** (committed to who we should be and embracing difference)
- **Working well** (how we work, where we work, when we work and wellbeing at work)
- **Rewarding right** (righting pay then paying right)

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627671/good-work-taylor-review-modern-working-practices-rg.pdf

² [Does ageing matter when it comes to workforce productivity - ILCUK](#)

ENHANCING CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Growing our capability

What is this about?

- We have an opportunity to develop the right size and shape of workforce to respond to demographic and technological challenges, and to position ourselves to grow, to ensure sustainability and ensure successful launch of the new organisations planned by the group.
- We have an opportunity to develop a training academy so that HTS can support the local community develop the skills and experience of work and progress to employment with HTS Group with a focus on energy efficiency and green technology.
- We need the clear direction and robust oversight from our Board to make sure we are on track to deliver our ambitions for transformation of HTS Group.

Why does this matter?

- Investing in the right staffing model is key to organisational success as well as financial sustainability.
- Thinking differently about how roles are defined and how work is delivered is potentially transformative.
- Developing a highly skilled local workforce will mitigate risks for HTS and will deliver social value across Harlow, improving outcomes for students of the academy and the wider local community.
- Getting the right skill mix at the Board is key to our success.

What will we do?

- Undertake a skill needs analysis (and skills audit) to inform the our future workforce planning.
- Develop an inclusive approach to hybrid and flexible working that enables HTS Group to deliver excellent customer service and support our staff.
- Develop new roles and new career pathways using workforce planning and succession planning toolkits.
- We will work with partner organisations, including the local college, to set up the HTS academy.
- We will work with our Board members to review our skills matrix and consider how we can bolster the Board so that we can deliver this strategy and the Business Plan.

What risk are we mitigating?

- *Lack of Diversity at Board and Senior Team*
- *Difficulties in recruiting senior level staff.*
- *Potential staff costs base that exceeds the agreed ratio against to revenue.*
- *Long term vacancies for priority roles.*
- *A lack of applications from potential recruits who are currently underrepresented in the HTS Group workforce.*
- *Sub optimal delivery of our Business Plan.*

What impact are we expecting?

- Better short-term staffing and long-term workforce planning decisions.
- Positive reduction in staff investment (cost) to revenue ratio.
- Increased awareness of HTS as a 'good employer' and as an 'employer of choice'.
- Improved outcomes for jobseekers in the Harlow area.
- Improved positive destinations for young people transitioning from school to further study and work across the Harlow area.
- Successful delivery of the ambitions set out in our Business Plan.

Developing our people

What is this about?

- We want a workforce that is agile and able to adapt to changes in work and workplace, digitally dextrous and able to develop creative solutions for our customers.
- We need staff to be equipped with the skills and qualifications that will ensure that we offer a quality service to our customers.
- We want to retain our high performers through meaningful development and career opportunities.

Why does this matter?

- Ensuring that staff are prepared and equipped for a rapidly changing world of work so that they can support HTS meet these challenges.
- Investing in staff development is key to unlocking energy, creativity, and confidence.
- Ensuring that our people have the right skills for the current job and are prepared for the changes ahead.

What will we do?

- We will introduce a 'people passport' for our staff with people management responsibilities so that these staff are equipped to lead with empathy and respect, have more confidence in managing absence and driving high performance.
- We will redesign induction to ensure we give staff the best possible start and minimise disengagement and ensure staff understand both their rights and responsibilities at HTS.
- Raise awareness of future changes to the work and skills landscape so that staff can prepare.
- We will provide opportunities for 'back to the floor' and work shadowing opportunities so that staff at all levels have access to informal, but impactful, learning opportunities.
- We will explore opportunities for work shadowing and mentoring with partner organisations and organisations active in green technologies.
- We will ensure that there is a clear connection between the HTS Business Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Team Business Plans and individual work plans so that staff are clear on their contribution to the HTS strategic vision.
- Design and implement a staff competency framework aligned to values and aligning individual PDPs to strategic priorities.
- Explore the concept of 'Day Different'¹ [DN: **working title**] building a commitment to development time and wellbeing as part of the normal working cycle. [DN: **Links to Rewarding Right and Flexible/Hybrid Working**]

What risk are we mitigating?

- *Low staff engagement.*
- *Low awareness of external way of doing things.*
- *Increases in sickness absence and reductions in productivity.*
- *Sub-optimal workload and risk of staff burnout.*

What impact are we expecting?

- A resilient workforce equipped to deal with changes in work and able to meet changing customer expectations (Staff survey and Customer experience improvements).
- More constructive performance discussions between staff and managers and more targeted development.
- Staff making informed decisions about their future at HTS.
- 100% Staff Review (appraisal) completion.
- Clear processes for opportunities to access learning and progression.
- Flexible and blended learning programmes that build confidence and skills.
- Increased productivity.
- Increased understanding of individual contribution to HTS goals.

ENABLING THE BEST STAFF EXPERIENCE FOR THE BEST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion

What is this about?

- To make demonstrable improvements in the representative make-up of the workforce and build on the positive foundations and reputation HTS has as a welcoming place to work.
- Developing an inclusive culture where all staff are supported to thrive.
- Ensuring our activities support social inclusion and benefit the communities where we work.
- Ensuring we foster good relations and promote inclusion by sharing the positive impact of the work we do.

Why does this matter?

- Promoting equality, valuing diversity, and ensuring social inclusion is part of our HTS DNA.
- Policy drivers such as the Equality Act 2010 underpin our approach.
- Providing more transparency around fair and inclusive employment practice is increasingly a concern for HTS and the wider community of Harlow.
- Demonstrating the impact of the HTS approach to inclusion is key to employee engagement and building a strong employer brand.

What will we do?

- Maintain staff knowledge of equality and diversity so that behaviours promote dignity and respect. We will do this by ensuring that our recruitment activity values knowledge and impact with regard to EDI as a core skill, all staff will be briefed at induction, and all staff and people managers will be expected to demonstrate equality and diversity knowledge appropriate to their role and will be accountable for putting learning into practice.
- Implement evidence-based actions related to supporting specific protected characteristics and consider social inclusion as part of our commitment to advance equality, value diversity and make HTS an inclusive place to work.
- Collect and publish and pay 'gap' causes and remedies through auditing our policies, practices, and data. In the case of pay gaps, undertake an annual review of equal pay and the gender pay gap.
- Ensure our activities to 'grow our own' are mindful of the need to create inclusive learning and working spaces so that our pipeline of new talent is naturally diverse and socially inclusive. **[DN: Link to Development of Training Academy in Growing our Capability]**
- Capture the stories that demonstrate our impact on people's lives so that HTS is recognised as an 'employer of choice'.

What risk are we mitigating?

- *Legal, reputational, and business risks.*
- *Low staff engagement.*
- *Ability to recruit staff at all levels with the right skills for current work and future opportunities.*

What impact are we expecting?

- Positive improvements in staff representation.
- Improved staff satisfaction across all protected characteristics.
- Positive conversations and increased confidence in allyship behaviour.
- Lower vacancy rates.
- High calibre appointments.
- Recognition as an employer that supports, and values disabled colleagues and continued accreditation as a Disability Confident employer.

Working well

What is this about?

- Creating a culture and climate that facilitates flexible working and promotes staff physical and mental wellbeing.
- Smart and safer working so that we can maximise flexibility.
- Developing an agile approach that ensures an evidence-based approach that blends the best of hybrid that retains the best of the pandemic working experience and moves forward rather than going 'back'.
- Developing and implementing actions to improve awareness of mental health at work, and that support staff to support customers.

Why does this matter?

- Getting the workplace 'deal' right is key to improving wellbeing and productivity.
- Mental wellbeing of staff is a key employer responsibility.

What will we do?

- Develop a clear Agile/Hybrid working plan that works for all roles across HTS.
- Role model good work/life balance practices at Senior Management levels.
- Create opportunities to enhance employee voice so that staff have a say in decisions that affect the effective working of HTS. Explore real time data capture to speed responsiveness to staff concerns, as well as ideas.

What risk are we mitigating?

- *Reported high levels of workload.*
- *Legal, reputational, and business risks.*
- *Inability to manage customer demand.*
- *Attrition of staff (particularly those new to HTS)*

What impact are we expecting?

- Positive impact on sickness absence rates.
- Increased customer satisfaction.
- Increased productivity.

- Reduced recruitment costs because the right staff stay with HTS.

Rewarding right

What is this about?

- Rewarding our people for great work and developing systems that are fair, transparent, and affordable.
- Exploring how we might refocus current reward arrangements so that we have a system that attracts and retains the best talent.

Why does this matter?

- We have the compounded challenges of competing with private sector and the close proximity of London that impacts on pay rates.
- We have legacy pay arrangements from the merger which are not serving the organisation effectively.

What will we do?

- Review and resolve historical pay anomalies.
- Maintain accredited Living Wage employer status.
- We will seek feedback from staff about how they would like to be recognised for their contribution (Non-pay elements).
- We will celebrate success in a meaningful way that is accessible and valued for all staff.

What risks are we mitigating?

- Potential equal pay liability.
- Flight risk of staff
- Low staff engagement.

What impact are we expecting?

- Positive impact on recruitment and retention.
- Reduction in pay gaps.
- Increased productivity.
- Increased staff engagement.

Conclusion and next steps

Once the People Strategy has been approved, annual plans will be developed and aligned to the overarching business plan to ensure we can target resource and corporate focus to deliver for maximum impact. Alongside the development and implementation of the first annual plan will be a specific focus on the refresh of our HTS organisational values and the development of an associated behavioural framework, to reinforce what we stand for, and what we will not stand for; this will permeate all our work.

We have included an outline supporting action plan at Annex 1. A full action plan with assigned resources and accountable officers will be finalised once the people strategy has been approved.

June 2022

ⁱ There is emerging evidence from organisations that have rethought the working week, given staff the freedom to focus a proportion of time on development and wellbeing with overall improvements in productivity rather than the reverse, which may appear counterintuitive.

ANNEX 1

Theme	Enhancing Capacity and Capability – Growing our capability				
Outcome	Key Deliverable	Actions	Responsibility	Measure	Timescale
Our workforce is the right size and shape	HTS Group has the workforce with the skills required for each area of its business.	Skills Audit- Access current records to map current skill profile of workforce		Clear map of skills in place.	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
	HTS Group staff can work flexibly to support work life balance and deliver objectives	Develop hybrid working proposals		Discussion paper setting out hybrid working principles and options is developed	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		Involve staff in development of hybrid working policy for HTS		Hybrid Policy in place that reflects input from staff	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		Implement Hybrid Working Policy		Reduced short term sickness absence. Improved employee engagement	Timescale for implementation 1-6 months – evaluation ongoing.
HTS has a Training Academy grounded in the local community	HTS Group is delivering training and experience of work to young people and job seekers from the Harlow community.	Establish key partners (College, Kickstart, Schools, pre-employment)		Memorandum of Understanding entered into with strategic partners	Action within 6 months
		Develop implementation plan (comms, funding, resourcing)		Comms plan links with broader Attraction Strategies.	Action within 6 months

				Sustainability is built into the academy model	
		Appoint/Fund staff		HTS has the right staff to lead and deliver the academy	Long-term (12 months +)
		Welcome students			Long-term (12 months +)
Our board has the skills and diversity of thought required to effectively steer our work	New members are appointed to the Board by March 2022.	Update articles of association to ensure gender bias language is removed.	HTS SMT	Documentation is updated.	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		Establish current skills mix of Board		Skills matrix is up-to-date	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		Establish skill and experience gap		Skills required are identified	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		Develop new role profiles		Roles are defined	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		Develop attraction strategy to attract successful applications from diverse range of applicants.		Pro-active approach to appointment	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		Implement Attraction Strategy & Appoint additional Board members.			Action within 6-12 months

Theme	Enhancing Capacity and Capability- Developing our People				
Outcome	Key Deliverable	Actions	Responsibility	Measure	Timescale
Our workforce has the skills required to deliver HTS Group objectives safely and effectively	HTS Group has a skills development plan - HTS Group understands current skills of workforce and future skill needs and has a plan to ensure HTS Group workforce has required skills	Workforce Planning Day	Osborne Thomas	Session Delivered Staff report confidence in undertaking future scenario planning to inform future skills needs. High priority HTS Group roles are identified.	Quick Win (1-3months)
		Access Skills Audit	Osborne Thomas		
		Research future skills and conduct Gap analysis (informed by future skills discussion at Workforce Planning Day)	Osborne Thomas	Clear understanding across HTS of skills required for growth	Quick win (1-3months)
		Develop Skills Development Plan	Osborne Thomas	Clear plan showing pipeline for future skills(current workforce/academy/recruitment)	Quick win (1-3months)
HTS Group attracts and retains high caliber staff	HTS Group has an open and transparent succession plan in place.	Succession and development core aspects of performance review		Broad range of staff moving into promoted roles. Broad range of staff identified for leadership development.	High (3-6 months)
		Staff understand the HTS approach to succession		Staff survey metric show that HTS staff think that the promotion and appointment process is fair.	Implementation High(3-6 months) Evaluation Medium/Low (6-18 months)
	HTS Group has a positive employer brand	Develop attraction strategy		Clear plan in place that is understood across HTS	Priority level 1 Action within 6 months

					Ongoing activity
		Review of HTS Ads, media presence, Job Descriptions, Application methods.		Changes made so that HTS Advert, JD's, Application process is fair, welcoming and encourages high caliber applications.	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
		HTS conducts focused open days to generate future contacts			Ongoing as part of strategy
Our staff are led by effective people managers	HTS Managers have the skills and aptitude to discharge their people management responsibilities in a way that uphold the values of HTS Group and supports staff to achieve their potential.	Ongoing Leadership Development			
		Development of 'people passport' programme – focus: Good Appraisal Performance Review Development and support Managing Sickness Absence Managing Diversity		Consistency in employee experience across HTS Group (Staff Survey Measure) Increased confidence of Managers. Increased engagement with succession planning. Improved management of short-term sickness absence. Improved productivity.	Priority Level 1 Action started within 6 months, delivery in 6-12 months.
Our staff understand their rights and responsibilities	Induction at HTS ensures that new staff understand their rights and their responsibilities.	Review Induction & Implement Changes		Induction sets out the values of HTS Induction sets out the responsibilities of staff and knowledge and awareness of the HTS HR Self service Programme	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months

		Approach could include short videos etc.		Staff understand the difference between annual leave, planned leave and sickness absence. Short term sickness absence reduces.	
There is good communication across HTS Group.	Senior managers are visible to staff and staff are able to communicate directly with Senior Managers	Design and implement opportunities for Senior Managers to 'get back to the floor'	HR & SMT	Staff report high levels of trust in senior management (Staff survey measure)	Quick win(1-3months)
	Staff have the opportunity to shadow or work in different areas as part of their development and or to enhance their understanding of HTS Group	Design and implement opportunities for work shadowing.		Staff report that their development needs are met (staff survey) Staff are willing to move across HTS for new roles.	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
HTS Values are at the heart of the we work	The values are embedded in the way in which HTS Group staff work.	Involve staff in developing the behavioral framework appropriate to their areas of work Focus groups in each work area to explore how values are demonstrated in that work area.		Staff can articulate how they demonstrate the HTS Group values at work. Staff develop a pledge for their way of working that aligns to the values.	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months
Individual job plans, team plans are linked to HTS Business Plan	Every individual and every team understand how they contribute to the success of HTS	Develop robust, codified, approaches to job planning and team business planning		HTS has increased oversight of the delivery of the business plan because it is clear how each team is delivering their work.	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months

		Produce pro-forma and ensure the people passport programme enables line managers to do this work well		HTS staff are better able to focus on core and important work. HTS are able to identify core and non-core requests and manage resource accordingly.	
HTS has a competency framework	There is clear understanding of the requirements for each role across HTS	Develop a competency framework for HTS		Competency framework is in place and is used to support appraisal, job planning and future skills identification	High (3-6 months)

THEME					
ENABLING THE BEST STAFF EXPERIENCE FOR THE BEST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE Advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion					
Outcome	Key Deliverable	Action	Responsibility	Measure	Timescale
HTS is an inclusive workplace.	Ongoing reductions in pay gaps	Activity on succession planning and hybrid working contribute to more opportunities.		Required reports published to meet compliance requirements.	Medium (6-12 months)
	Increased workforce diversity	Activity on employer brand will attract a broader range of applicants to HTS. Training in place to ensure staff are able to identify and address bias.		Increased disclosure in applicant and workforce data. Analysis of application and appointment information does not show any negative difference for people	Ongoing (1+ months) Medium (6-12 months)

		<p>Equality and inclusion is woven into all core training so that staff can demonstrate appropriate awareness of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in their roles.</p> <p>Staff encouraged to update their staff record with their protected characteristic information</p>		<p>from marginalized groups.</p> <p>Staff survey results show that HTS is an inclusive workplace.</p>	<p>Ongoing (1+ months)</p> <p>Priority Level 1 within 6 months and ongoing.</p>
	Recognised exemplar for disability inclusion	<p>Succession planning, hybrid working, and development opportunities targeted at disabled employees.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments pursued.</p> <p>Training in place to ensure staff are disability confident.</p>			<p>Ongoing – see other actions.</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>High (3-6 months)</p>

THEME	ENABLING THE BEST STAFF EXPERIENCE FOR THE BEST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE Working well & Rewarding Right				
Outcome	Key Deliverable	Action	Responsibility	Measure	Timescale
<p>HTS is an employer of choice, our employees are motivated, rewarded fairly and supported to work safely</p>	<p>Our employee benefits offer helps to attract and recruit high calibre candidates, retain our best employees, improves employee wellbeing and engagement, and promotes HTS as an employer of choice</p>	<p>Review and refresh our approach to employee recognition.</p> <p>In consultation with employees, develop a proposal for a future employee benefits offer</p> <p>Take action to address, and prevent, pay anomalies.</p>		<p>Revised approach to employee recognition in place. HTS has a growing resource of workplace success stories to aid its employer brand.</p> <p>Revised employee benefits offer in place</p> <p>Responses from staff surveys</p> <p>Take up of benefits and rewards</p> <p>Recruitment and retention data</p> <p>Reduction in pay gaps</p> <p>Living wage employer accreditation</p>	<p>High (3-6 months)</p>

				Equal pay risks mitigated	
	Our staff know what is going on and know how to contribute to the success of HTS	Develop a clear staff engagement and communications plan that enables staff dialogue with SMT Implement pulse surveys for real time feedback from staff.		Staff survey results. Pulse survey results. Feedback from staff.	Priority Level 1 Action within 6 months (linked to earlier actions)

Delivery of this action plan will be supported by:

Strategy / Plan	How this supports delivery of this strategy:
Digital HR plan	Ensure we have the systems in place that provide our people with the tools to do their job efficiently and effectively.