

Julie Towers:

Hertfordshire County Council, an interview with Owen Mapley, Chief Executive. Hi, I'm Julie Towers from Penna, and I'm really delighted to be working on a great assignment to recruit a new Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire County Council. And here today, I've got Owen Mapley, the Chief Executive to answer a few questions to hopefully give you, as a prospective candidate, some insight into this role.

Julie Towers:

Owen, you've been Chief Executive at Hertfordshire for over two years now, obviously a great place to work, but tell us why you chose Hertfordshire and what you feel its attractions are for prospective candidates in general, and in particular for this role?

Owen Mapley:

I think Hertfordshire is a great place because we've got the benefits of scale so that gives us plenty of opportunities to address things on a large canvas. There's both opportunities and challenges that we need to address. I think we've got the benefits of location. We are close to a world-class city, but we've got a distinct identity all of our own that combines both urban and rural. I think we've got a great culture. The relationship with counselors is strong and collaborative and players across the system, be it our district council colleagues, health, schools, police, all of those partners, we've got mature and collaborative relationships. And we've got a good history of innovation and continuous improvement. Just one example, the Family Safeguarding Model that we're really proud to have helped to develop. That's now being implemented in other places as well. So lots going on and it's just a great authority to be part of.

Julie Towers:

Absolutely. And it's got a really ambitious corporate plan and members with real ambition too. How will that impact on this corporate directors work?

Owen Mapley:

So Strategically we're very proud to be rated 'Good' by Ofsted's, but with a culture of continuous improvements, there's scope there to continue improving. And also like with all authorities, we are still dealing with the impacts of COVID, but we're also looking to the future and we know that of all the groups who've been impacted, children and young people in particular, massive impacts from the pandemic. And so we've got real ambition for putting children and young people at the heart of how we come out of the pandemic and build for the future.

One other thing I think to mention is we work really closely with our partners across the health and care system. And quite rightly, there's a lot of emphasis there on adult social care, but I think there's a big opportunity for us to work with partners across health, to put children and young people at the heart of the prevention and population health agenda from early years, all the way through to transition to adulthood as well. So I think the Director of Children's Services will have a key role to play in that broader system to be ambitious for all children and young people and families in the county.

Julie Towers:

Excellent. And what kind of values and strengths do you want to see in your new Director of Children's Services and what kind of senior leadership team are they joining?

Owen Mapley:

If you spoke to the current top team, I'm sure they'll tell you that one of my favorite phrases is, and both. I'll be looking to work with somebody who's a really confident, strong leader of children's services and somebody who is a senior officer for the council as a whole. So that sense of common collective purpose for the top team will be important taking interest in the big strategic issues and opportunities across the council and indeed across the wider county and with partners, not just in the children's services area.

The top team, I'm really pleased with the work that Jenny has done over recent years to attract and retain some really capable officers. So it's a strong, tight knit, cohesive top team, and we're really looking to work closely with them to bring to life many of our ambitions. Some of which I've talked about, but also we've got some real talent coming through the ranks at middle management tier as well. Particularly, we've got strong female leaders, we've got strong officers with Black Asian Minority Ethnic heritage and central to our diversity ambitions is to see greater opportunities for progression for all officers, but particularly for female colleagues and for BAME colleagues as well.

Julie Towers:

That's excellent. And in the advertising messaging you've been very open and clear about your interest in candidates from diverse backgrounds and with diversity within themselves. Why is this important to Hertfordshire?

Owen Mapley:

I think for some people, their perception of Hertfordshire is a homogenous county. And of course it is correct that many of our indicators are above the national average, but we are a place of great diversity in terms of both urban and rural. But also at the last census, we had 20% of residents didn't record white British as their main heritage. And in our schools, 23% of students have a Black Asian Minority Ethnic heritage as well. And whilst we are above average, in some indicators, we've also got areas of real deprivation and children, young people and families who need additional support and to work with us to fulfill potential. So the county is diverse and therefore the County Council needs to be diverse to represent that.

We have got the majority of our staff are female and we've got growing numbers of colleagues from Black Asian Minority Ethnic backgrounds. And so it's really important to us that both as a large employer and as a large provider of services that we have inclusion just as part of our DNA and to achieve that inclusion, we've obviously got to live and breathe those diversity principles in all that we do. It's really important to us and whoever we appoint we want to see it demonstrated that they absolutely get that agenda and they're going to promote it. Whatever their personal experiences are, we want to draw on those and be alive to improvement across the council. It's just embedded in all that we're doing at the moment.

Julie Towers:

Lovely. Thanks ever so much, Owen. That's been a really great insight into the real Hertfordshire. I think outside-in people often look and make assumptions, and it's really great that this micro-site and this introduction gives candidates so much more insight into the true values and strengths that you're looking for. I hope candidates will take a good read of the information and watch the video and apply.

Owen Mapley:

This transcript was exported on Apr 29, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Thanks very much, Julie. Look forward to seeing anybody who's interested in coming to Hertfordshire.

Julie Towers:

Thanks, Owen.

Owen Mapley:

Thank you.