Summary Sheet

Council Report
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Meeting – 17th February 2017

Title
Employee Pulse Survey and other Employee Feedback

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?
No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected
N/A

Executive Summary

This report summarises the findings from last year's Pulse survey and focus groups and subsequent staff briefing sessions and the management action taken so far to address the themes, ideas and suggestions raised.

Recommendations

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board note:
- The key improvement themes emerging from employee feedback
- The action taken so far in response to employee's views
- The forthcoming full Employee Opinion Survey and need to ensure a structured approach to responding to the findings.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix1: Employee You Said We Did Action Plan

Background Papers
N/A

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Title: Employee Pulse Survey and other Employee Feedback

1.   Recommendations

1.1   That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board note:
   • The key improvement themes emerging from employee feedback
   • The action taken so far in response to employee's views
   • The forthcoming full Employee Opinion Survey and need to ensure a structured approach to responding to the findings.

2.   Background

2.1   Giving employees the opportunity to regularly provide feedback and ideas is vital in ensuring that they remain positive about working for the Council. This is particularly important during change and improvement programmes. Equally, it is important that employees feel listened to and are informed of the outcome of any involvement/consultation exercises.

2.2   Whilst managers should be ensuring continual dialogue with their teams, for an organisation of the size of the Council it is important that it is able to gain an overall measure of employee's views so that improvement can focus on those areas where employees feel less positive and so that progress can be monitored.

2.3   During 2015 and 2016 employee's views have been heard corporately through both the more formal survey and focus group process and the less formal employee briefing sessions.

2.4   A Pulse survey (on-line only) and supporting focus groups took place prior to the commencement of intervention in 2015 and focused around the key areas where employees felt that the Council needed to improve. A further survey and round of focus groups took place in May 2016 (survey) and June 2016 (focus groups) with questions focused on whether employees had seen improvements in the key areas previously identified and contained within Improvement Plans. Additional questions regarding safeguarding were also included to assess employee understanding in this area and to gauge whether further training was required. Questions relating to a range of health and wellbeing matters were included to aid assessment against the Workforce Wellbeing Charter.

2.5   The response to the survey equated to a 36% response rate (1,444 of those with online access) and 98 people attended one of the 13 focus groups. Given the style of the previous survey (open dialogue) it was not possible to make direct comparisons in all areas, however an overall rated question in both surveys measured how positive people felt about the future of working for the Council.

2.6 The findings from the survey and focus groups were considered by SLT and an action plan developed in response. A communications pack was used to cascade the findings and actions to employees including any Directorate–specific issues identified in their reports. The action plan has been published on the intranet.

2.7 The two rounds of Chief Executive and Leader briefing sessions during 2016 have also provided a platform by which employees have raised ideas and concerns. The initial 14 sessions (January to March 2016) had 844 attendees. A further 249 employees attended the 8 sessions in October 2016 to January 2017. The latter sessions invited thoughts and ideas around three questions:

- What three things can we do to improve staff engagement?
- What three things can we do to improve customer satisfaction?
- What makes you feel proud to work for the Council?

3. Key Issues

3.1 <u>Findings</u>

Appendix 1 is the action plan developed as a result of the themes, issues and ideas coming from employee feedback. The findings and themes from the latest round of staff briefings have been added to this, although in some cases activity in response has yet to be considered. The plan has also been updated to note the linkages to the workforce drivers included within the Workforce Strategy, i.e.:

- Knowing our communities
- Being brilliant at the basics
- Smashing the silos
- Doing the best work of our lives.

3.2 The survey indicated some improvement in employee perception, although there is still some way to go. In both 2015 and 2016 employees were asked how positive they would rate working for the Council on a 0-10 scale (with 0 being lowest and 10 being highest). The results show:
2015 – 68% of employees rated this between 0 to 5
2016 - 62% of employees rated this between 0 to 5

3.3 Key themes identified for improvement were:
- Job security and making the best use of skills when reshaping the council
- Stability and visibility of the whole senior team
- Communication to more remote workers and during change
- Recognition for ideas and hard work
- The quality of PDRs
- Training and development availability to support succession planning and career development
- Cross-directorate working

- Health and wellbeing and work-life balance (particularly M3 managers)
- Customer service (a theme added following the latest round of staff briefings).

Members will be interested to note that those who have regular contact perceived an improvement in officer member-working. Employees generally felt that community trust has improved and felt that publicity around prosecutions had contributed to this.

3.4 **Actions and Progress**

Actions completed since publication of the action plan include:

- Employees have been asked for their views on terms and conditions and budget proposals
- All strategic leadership team posts have been recruited to and Directorate briefings involving Strategic Directors and Cabinet Members have commenced
- SLT photos have been included in structure charts, in the telephone directory and in their emails
- Cascade packs have been used to help managers share information on key topics, such as Corporate Plan, budget, survey findings.
- An intranet development working group has been established
- A review of the year has been developed to share with staff
- Regular features have been included in Take 5 for those receiving customer compliments
- The first Annual Big Hearts Big Changes Employee Awards Event took place in November
- An audit of PDRs has taken place to identify potential improvements to the process and manager understanding going forwards
- Refreshed manager training, "Brilliant at the Basics" has commenced
- The Roll Of Honour has celebrated employees gaining qualifications
- M3 and M2 manager working groups have been formed on a number of topics, such as customer responses, standard of reports and all M3 managers have been asked to take part in sessions in February and March around using the workforce drivers
- A sickness working group has been established
- Actions in response to the Workplace Wellbeing Charter assessment have been developed.
- The Employee Assistance programme has been re-commissioned and re-launched.

The staff briefings have reinforced that further attention needs to be given to the following themes:

- Clarifying manager expectations around communications
- Further ICT development and use of technology to support service improvement (in line with the Digital Strategy)
- Ensuring cross-directorate working, building relationships across services and sharing expertise
- Reviewing the operation of WorkSmart (flexible working) and consistency
- Customer service and how to ensure we provide excellent customer services.

3.5 **Employee Engagement with Sessions**

Attendance at the latest round of staff briefings has been lower than the first round when employees will naturally have been interested to meet the new Leader and Chief Executive.

3.6 There is a pattern of similar points and themes being raised by employees, even where action has taken place or is in progress, which indicates a need to engage employees more proactively in progress updating. It would be beneficial to involve more managers in the improvement activity, which would result in more messages getting back to employees.

3.7 Improvements to the intranet and how information can be set out and displayed will also assist with communicating progress to employees.

3.8 **Full Employee Opinion Survey**

The Council has not carried out a full Employee Opinion Survey (sent out in online and paper format) since 2012 and there is a commitment in the Improvement Plan to do this in April 2017. This will enable a fuller assessment of employee perception and benchmarking with other public sector bodies and Councils.

3.9 It is recommended that following the full survey, the findings are combined with the existing themed plan to enable a simple and easily understood plan of action. Assignment of lead managers to each theme would increase accountability, similar to the Improvement Plan, and progress updates could then be provided alongside Corporate Plan reporting.

4. **Options considered and recommended proposal**

4.1 The updated action plan, incorporating the latest employee briefing findings, will be considered by Strategic Leadership Team to agree how the key themes identified can be addressed in a structured and visible way.

5. Consultation

5.1 The report sets out the ways in which employees have been consulted during the last year, in terms of their perception, motivation and morale. The findings from the Pulse Survey and focus groups have been shared with employees, alongside the action plan.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 The findings of the recent staff briefing sessions have been combined with those from last year's Pulse survey and focus group and will be considered by SLT to inform future actions and management of progress.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications from the activity and findings set out in this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications relating to the activity and findings set out in this report.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that its employees have a voice in shaping continuous improvement. The findings set out in this report represent the latest views and perception of employees and actions taken in response.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 No direct implications

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 No direct implications

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 The findings contained within this report represent perceptions of employees from all Directorates in the Council.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 If employees are not informed and updated of the response to their ideas and views there is a risk that they will become reticent and less likely to participate in consultation activity. The actions set out in this report to share the findings

and actions with employees, and suggested refinement of how action planning is managed should ensure continued engagement of employees.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive.

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- not applicable

Director of Legal Services:- not applicable

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- not applicable

Tracey Parkin, HR Manager OD

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