

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 19 March, 2018

Report of the Leader

Staff Charter - Update from Employee Survey

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members of the Cabinet on the results from the recent 2017 employee survey and related activity as part of the Council's Staff Charter.

Recommendations

1. That the results from the 2017 employee survey as set out in [Appendix 1](#) be noted alongside related activity as part of the Council's Staff Charter.
2. That the updated action plan as attached in [Appendix 2](#) be noted and endorsed.
3. That the report be referred to Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Performance & Resources) for consideration.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. To update Members of the Cabinet on current levels of employee engagement and as a baseline to measure the success of future 'Staff Charter' development work.
2. To ensure that Members are content with the ongoing staff engagement work and its congruence with the objectives of the Staff Charter.
3. To enable the Scrutiny Committee to maintain a continued focus on this key area of workforce planning activity.

Background

2. Members will be aware that the Council's first Staff Charter was launched on the 19th September 2016.
3. The Charter was launched as an important part of the Council's Reshaping Services Programme and designed in partnership with staff from across all service areas and following a year-long engagement process.
4. The aim of the Charter was to provide clarity about the expectations of our employees in a reshaped world (in terms of flexibility, performance and contribution) but also to be clear about those things that employees can (and should) expect from their managers in terms of trust, support, clarity of expectation and respect.

5. A copy of the updated action plan to support the implementation of the Staff Charter is set out in [Appendix 2](#). This sets out current progress in relation to the main areas of activity including communications, staff development, leadership and engagement.
6. The first employee survey was carried out in the autumn of 2016 in order to set a benchmark for levels of staff engagement and as a basis against which future progress could be measured. The results of that survey were reported to Cabinet on 23rd January 2017.
7. The 2017 employee survey has been the second such survey and the first real opportunity to measure progress against the 20 employee expectations in the first full year since the launch of the Staff Charter in 2016.
8. The employee survey ran, once again, for a six week period between the 16th October and 24th November 2017 and was sent to some 2461 employees across the Council's four directorates. 71% of the surveys were sent out electronically via e-mail and the remaining 29% were sent via hard copy to home addresses.
9. As part of the survey employees were again asked to score each of the 20 expectations within the Charter using the following scale: 1 (Strongly Agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 4 (Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Disagree).

A summary of the 2017 Employee Survey Results

10. A detailed analysis of the results from the employee survey is set out in the document at [Appendix 1](#) to this report. This includes an analysis of engagement levels by directorate, service area, length of service and grade.
11. As can be seen, there were 1415 responses to the survey equating to an overall return rate of 57%. This was an encouraging rate of return, exceeding industry standards for such engagement exercises and representing an improvement on the return rates in 2016 of 48%.
12. The Council received a 33% return rate from those employees who received 'hard copy' surveys and 71% from those who accessed the survey through email.
13. Return rates were relatively even across the four directorates ranging from 42% (Social Services) to 73% (Resources Directorate).
14. A selection of the key outcomes from the employee survey are set out below:-
 - The average 'positive' response rate to the 20 expectations within the Staff Charter was 72% i.e. those employees either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the assertions made. This was again an encouragingly high score and an improvement on last year's positive rating of 71%.
 - The level of positive responses was again high across all Directorates ranging from 67% in the Environment and Housing Directorates to 76% in the Social Services Directorate.
 - The level of positive responses from within the 22 service areas was slightly more diverse ranging from 59% in the ALN Division in Learning and Skills to 97% in the Director's Office within the same Directorate.
 - A particularly pleasing outcome from the survey was that positive response ratings were higher in 15 out of the 20 of the Staff Charter expectations than they were in 2016. This was encouraging considering the volume of change across the Council during 2016/17 and the ongoing response to budgetary and service demands.

- The highest overall positive response rate related to the assertion "I am trusted to get on with my job". Some 92.5% of employees responded positively to this statement compared with 91.5% in 2016. It is particularly interesting to note that this statement attracted the highest score in all Directorates and in 12 out of the 22 service areas.
- The above statement also attracted the highest positive response rates in each of the length of service and salary grade categories.
- The next two highest responses were in relation to "I am clear what is expected of me" (83.2%) and "I am treated with respect" (82.5%). These were 78.4% and 80.6% in the previous year.
- The expectations which had shown the overall biggest improvement over the preceding 12 month period are as set out below:

	2016	2017	difference
I am clear about what is expected of me	78.4%	83.2%	+4.8%
I am listened to and my view considered	74.3%	77.5%	+3.2%
I receive strong and supportive leadership	70.9%	73.7%	+2.8%

- Again this is pleasing and reflects the increasing emphasis on both management development and performance management over the last year.
 - It is interesting to note that the improvement in 'clarity about what is expected of me' was not only the expectation with the best level of improvement but also that the improvement was consistent across all but 4 of the 22 service areas.
 - The lowest level of positive responses was in relation to the assertions "I have the opportunity to test out new ideas" (63.2%), "I am kept informed about the wider work of the Council" (58.6%) and "I am helped to understand my contribution to the wider Council" (50.5%). The above assertions were also the least improving areas for the Council with reductions in overall positive ratings of -1.2%, -1.9% and -0.7% respectively.
 - The above outcome is a little disappointing given the improvements in employee communications during 2017 as set out in paragraph 17 below. To an extent, however, it also reflects the increasing and understandable expectations in this area and the absolute need to retain and improve this focus during 2018.
 - The responses relating to the opportunity for employees to 'test out new ideas' has also been identified as a specific 'staff charter' related workstream for 2018 (see paragraph 20 below).
15. As indicated a more detailed analysis of the employee survey results is set out in the report at [Appendix 1](#).

A summary of Staff Charter related progress in 2017

16. The staff engagement work over the last year has built on the outcomes from the initial employee survey results in 2016 and to a large extent has contributed to the improvements in engagement levels and positive outcomes in 2017.
17. Nine out of fifteen of the Staff Charter related actions have been progressed over the last year with the support and leadership of our employee representatives and Staff Charter Champions. A summary of progress is set out below:-
 - The new appraisal programme (#itsaboutme) has seen over 95% participation rates in the first and second year of its operation (Staff Charter commitment 2).
 - The Council's new Management Development Framework has now been launched and is complemented by the half-yearly management development sessions as the main delivery mechanism (Staff Charter commitment 3).
 - The Council's Leadership Café is now in its third year of operation and has been strengthened by the appointment of the Council's new Organisational Development & Training Manager. Members will be aware that the Leadership Café co-ordinating group won the Local Government Chronicle 'Team of the Year' Award in 2017 (Staff Charter commitment 5).
 - Progress has been made to improve the effectiveness of staff communication and particularly through the bi-monthly NEWSNET vehicle including 'Questions to the MD'. Efforts to improve communication with non-office based staff are a continuing focus of the communications working group (Staff Charter commitment 6).
 - The new CMT/Staff Engagement Group has now met on a regular quarterly basis in order to review the progress of the Staff Charter and ensure that its aims are being reflected across all service areas (Staff Charter commitment 8)
 - A bi-monthly employee recognition scheme (The GEM Scheme) is now up and running to promote the work and achievements of employees and teams (Staff Charter commitment 11).
 - Preparations are in place for the first Annual Employee Awards Evening on the 8th June 2018 in the Jenner Park Function Room. The event is an example of the work relating to staff recognition (Staff Charter commitment 11).
 - The employee induction programme has seen a significant overhaul with a focus now on how employees fit within the wider organisation and the benefits and opportunities of working in the 'best performing authority in Wales'. New starter satisfaction rates have increased from 79% to 95% as a result of this initiative.
 - The Council's new Employee Assistance Programme continues to see steady growth (Staff Charter commitment 12).
18. A more detailed progress update in relation to delivering the 15 Staff Charter commitments is set out in [Appendix 2](#). This will continue to serve as a Staff Charter action plan going forward.
19. It is clearly important to continue to invest in the staff engagement process as the Council continues to reshape its services and the contribution, innovation and flexibility of our employees becomes ever more important.

Staff Charter priorities for 2018

20. The priorities for the current year are as set out below and will be progressed through the five relevant Staff Charter workstream groups:-
- The delivery of the Annual Employee Awards event in 2018 and its establishment as a sustainable feature of a wider approach to employee recognition.
 - The refinement of the employee communications strategy with a particular focus on digital communications and engagement with non-office based staff.
 - The implementation of the new Learning and Development strategy to improve the accessibility, reach and effectiveness of learning opportunities for all employees and with a greater emphasis on informal (as well as formal) learning opportunities.
 - The continuation of the management development 'community of learning' events to ensure the focus on the Staff Charter and to support and promote the related elements of the new Management Competency Framework.
 - The development of an organisational approach to creativity and innovation and in order to encourage the generation of ideas from all employees.
 - The continued review and streamlining of HR policies to reflect the principles of the Staff Charter and reinforce the necessary discretion and responsibility of managers.
21. The progression of the six actions, as above will help respond to the learning from the 2017 employee survey both in terms of the assertions which attracted the lowest level of positive responses from employees and also those elements where the positive response rate went down in 2017.
22. In addition to the above, it is planned to run a number of wider organisational staff engagement sessions/events in 2017 in order to provide an update on the ongoing reshaping programme, the continuing implications for our employees and to begin to prepare for the next phase/iteration of the Staff Charter.
23. The employee survey will be repeated in the autumn of 2018 and then annually thereafter.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

24. The need to continue to maintain high levels of engagement, contribution and attendance will be important as the Council responds to ongoing financial pressures and seeks to implement the Reshaping Services Programme.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

25. There are no sustainability or climate change implications directly arising from the content of this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

26. There are no legal implications directly arising from this content of this report.

Crime and Disorder Implications

27. There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from the content of this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

28. In progressing the Staff Engagement Strategy the Council will remain compliant with its obligations under the Equality Act.

Corporate/Service Objectives

29. The Staff Engagement Strategy and implementation of the Staff Charter are congruent with the values as set out in the Corporate Plan.

Policy Framework and Budget

30. This is a matter for Executive decision by the Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

31. Progress and activity relating to the Staff Charter is a regular item for consideration at the monthly trade union Change Forum and at scheduled meetings of the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

32. Corporate Performance & Resources

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

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Officers Consulted

Corporate Management Team

Responsible Officer

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