

EMPLOYMENT PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 4 MAY 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Phillip Bicknell (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Paul Brimacombe, David Burbage, Dr Lilly Evans, David Hilton, Lynne Jones and Lisa Targowska

Officers: Alison Alexander, Terry Baldwin and Karen Shepherd

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Dudley and Saunders.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Targowska declared a general interest as her husband was employed by the council as Cabinet Policy Manager.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2016 be approved.

2016 STAFF SURVEY

Members considered the results of the 2016 staff survey. It was noted that the response rate of 50.6% was slightly higher than the previous survey undertaken in April 2013, although it was recognised that more could be done to improve engagement.. A different set of questions had been used this time, based on the Times Best Employer format. Members noted that the positive aspects from the survey were that the workforce was highly engaged, particularly in terms of teamwork, managers and service delivery. The less positive aspects related to staff view of leadership and stress levels. These issues had helped form a draft Action Plan, which was circulated for consideration. Where comparison of questions was possible between 2013 and 2016, results were in general less positive. Members noted that the survey had been issued at a time of major change for the organisation between January-February 2016 including the move from four to three directorates. This uncertainty was borne out in many of the verbatim comments.

Members noted that survey was undertaken anonymously but the data could be split by directorate or service area and therefore further analysis was possible. Information on why 49.4% of the workforce did not respond was not available. The question would be raised with the Transformation Champions to see if any anecdotal evidence could be gathered.

The Managing Director commented that senior management was aware of areas of the workforce that were under particular pressure which related to the level of complaints. Councillor Brimacombe requested something in the action plan to address the issue of increasing workloads in some areas. Councillor Jones commented that in the long term staff being under pressure had a negative impact on retention.

Councillor Dr. Evans commented that the two key issues were leadership and stress. She could see actions in relation to leadership but nothing to address the issue of stress. Members had spent a long time addressing the issue when it was raised in the temperature check survey of 2015; not enough had been done since. Councillor Hilton commented that the sources of stress needed to be identified. Councillor Jones highlighted that the council had undergone a long period of change and uncertainty therefore this was not just a factor in early 2016. She had heard comments about difficulties arising as teams were not able to always sit together under Smarter Working.

Councillor Burbage commented that the comparison between 2013 and 2016 was difficult as a number of questions were similar but not identical. Statistically there was not much difference in a number of areas.

The Head of HR explained that some of the actions in the Action Plan were to put in measures to ensure an impact before the 2017 survey. The Action Plan was split to show high level activities and those that would take longer to implement. The Managing Director highlighted the honoraria scheme that was targeted at lower level employees and for work undertaken over and above expectations. The previous lengthy process for award had recently been shortened. Councillor Targowska suggested such successes should be celebrated, perhaps publishing names on the intranet.

Councillor Brimacombe commented that the Transformation Strategy allowed staff to engage in shaping change. As this had only recently been launched its impact may be seen next time. He suggested three actions:

- To ensure the Transformation Strategy percolated down to all levels
- The development and investment in management skills
- Provision of opportunities to engage with and shape change

Members suggested that comparative data from the Times Best Employer survey could be used to further develop the Action Plan.

It was noted that the Leader met with groups of staff for the 'Leader's lunch' but there was no formal meeting between staff and members. Transformation Champions had also raised the need for informal meetings with senior officers. It was agreed this should be added to the Action Plan.

The Managing Director confirmed that the Corporate Director had been working closely with Planning to understand the systems and teams, to identify improvements and address their concerns. Councillor Jones requested this specific review area be included in the Action Plan. It was noted that a report would come to the Panel in future on hard-to-fill posts.

Councillor Dr. Evans commented that satisfaction with the place of work was lower compared to, for example Frimley Park Hospital where satisfaction was 97%. It was well known that there was a relationship between satisfaction and efficiency; in hospitals this related to the death rate.

Councillor Brimacombe suggested all Directors should be encouraged to allocate time to move around the building and speak to staff directly. The 'back to the floor' references in the Action Plan were in his opinion too formal and artificial.

Members agreed additional recommendations to reflect the suggestions made during the discussions.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Employment Panel:

- i) Note the 2016 Staff Survey results and analysis.**
- ii) Note the draft Action Plan and request it be amended in light of the discussions by the Panel.**
- iii) Request a report back on delivery, with evidence.**

APPRAISAL UPDATE 2015/16

Members noted that this item would be discussed in Part II.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on items 7-9 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act

The meeting, which began at 5.00 pm, finished at 6.51 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....