

## EMPLOYMENT AND MEMBER STANDARDS PANEL

TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Lisa Targowska (Chairman), Stuart Carroll, Christine Bateson, Simon Dudley, Edward Wilson and Lynne Jones

Officers: Karen Shepherd, Nikki Craig and Duncan Sharkey

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bicknell, Dr L Evans, Quick and Saunders.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nikki Craig and Karen Shepherd declared interests in the item 'Pay Reward Payment 2019' as officers of the council eligible for the Pay Reward scheme.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2019 be approved.**

### 2018 STAFF SURVEY

Members considered the results of the 2018 staff survey. The survey had been undertaken in July 2018 and had been completed by 327 employees (52.53%). The survey had covered seven areas, as detailed in paragraph 2.3 of the report. Members noted that the last staff survey was undertaken in 2016 and since then the number of staff directly employed had reduced from over 1200 to 600, due to the transfer to partner organisations. The questions were based on those used in previous years to allow for a direct comparison.

The Head of HR and Corporate Projects explained that overall the majority of questions scored higher than in 2016; details were included in Appendix A. The covering report provided detail on the key areas for focus including leadership, the council, and employee stress. Members also noted areas to celebrate were teamwork, managers and the service being delivered.

The results had been reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the staff champions group to create an initial action plan. These were discussed further at CLT with focus being given to nine priority activities as detailed in Appendix C. The top three were also discussed at the staff events held in early March 20-19 and would be further considered by CLT and the champions group in the coming week.

Councillor Dudley commented that there did not appear to be an action plan item relating to engagement with Members. Following the local elections there could be a large number of new councillors. The current cohort of councillors were experienced, yet did not necessarily engage with officers or the CREATE values, therefore there needed to be an action plan for both new and returning councillors. He was concerned

that the new cohort would not be able to demonstrate the types of leadership or characteristics that staff were not seeing enough of at the moment.

The Managing Director commented that there was work needed over the next two years on the culture of the organisation in terms of how everyone worked together and the issue of visible leadership. More work was also needed to understand the results of the survey given the majority of staff would not have day to day contact with Members. The Service Lead – Governance confirmed that the Member-Officer protocol would be covered as part of the Member Induction programme, beginning the week after the local elections.

Councillor Dudley commented that he had seen numerous examples of engagement by Members that he felt was inappropriate or disrespectful. There was also a lack of Members giving basic thanks or recognition of support by officers. The Chairman highlighted that instant recognition awards provided an opportunity for Members to nominate staff for good work.

Councillor Carroll stated that he agreed with the comments by Councillor Dudley. The reality was that Members usually only contacted officers when there was a problem. It was important for Members to offer thanks to individual officers and also highlight this to their line manager.

It was noted that the owner for action plan point 7 (Stress and Wellbeing) was listed as 'TBC'. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects confirmed that ultimately CLT would be responsible. Mental Health First Aid training had been rolled out and would continue online. A checklist would be used to ensure any new policies or initiatives were considered in the context of mental health.

The Chairman suggested that the Panel in the next municipal year may wish to see a more in-depth report to monitor progress.

Councillor Bateson commented that the response rate was disappointing. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects confirmed that the response rate was actually higher than in 2016. The majority of staff had online access to the survey but paper copies had also been made available and the survey had been promoted through the Borough Bulletin and staff events.

The Chairman suggested that responding to the survey should be mandatory. Councillor Carroll commented that he felt this was not the right approach as it could lead to people filling the survey in quickly with little thought. It would be preferable for there to be an environment in which people felt willing and comfortable to provide feedback. Councillor Dudley also felt that a mandatory response could lead to skewed results. The Managing Director commented that response rates increased when people felt that action would be taken as a result of feedback. This needed to be seen as a management issue not just a function of the HR department.

The Chairman felt that the action plan could be more ambitious and address those areas rated amber, rather than just red, from the survey results. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects explained that CLT and the champions group had developed a longer list of actions; Appendix C highlighted areas of focus.

Councillor Dudley commented that the council had experienced some severe IT issues earlier in the year. He felt that such situations would inevitably make an

individual stressed if they were unable to access the IT system for lengthy period of time when they had work to undertake. The council was investing in improved IT but it would take time to roll out. The Managing Director confirmed that an IT pilot was underway which sought to identify the appropriate tools for different officer groups within the council. Satisfaction rates would be improved by giving people the tools to do their work efficiently.

Councillor Jones commented that question 2 in appendix B related back to wellbeing; this needed to be looked at in more details. Question 6 demonstrated that 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the direction in which the council was going. She wondered if this was to do with taking part in decision making and feeling involved. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects confirmed that one of the key actions was for each service to hold a whole service planning meeting to look at how the council's key priorities linked to the work of the service area.

Councillor Dudley commented that the survey was undertaken at a difficult time for staff as issues and pressures that had been bubbling had materialized. The Chairman commented that the council had been through a period of significant change for the last two years which was just coming to a close. There would be a further temperature check survey later in the year.

The Managing Director commented that a two-way flow of information was important therefore CLT would be pledging to ensure that every officer would get protected time with their manager. A later Panel meeting would receive a report on the structure which would consider the right number of layers within the organisation and appropriate spans of control for managers.

It was confirmed that AfC had recently undertaken a similar survey however only anecdotal evidence had been received so far in terms of results. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects would seek to gain further details and share with Members. As far as she was aware Optalis had not done anything in the last financial year but she would check and confirm. Research had shown that the average satisfaction rates for both the public and private sectors on a national level was 52%.

The Chairman highlighted the need to commend line managers who had come out favourably in the survey results.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Employment Panel Note the 2018 Staff Survey results and analysis and the draft priority engagement activities plan.**

#### 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 6-8 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 6.30 pm, finished at 7.10 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....