

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Policy and Resources Select Committee
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Report From:	Chief Executive

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1. Executive summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the integrated framework for employee engagement across the County Council, which was launched in April 2012. This will be supported by a presentation to the Committee, on the emerging key themes to-date and related responses.

1.2. The framework was agreed by CMT in April in response to gaps in the communication and performance systems. Proposals also address recommendations from this Committee, to develop a mechanism for capturing staff suggestions on service improvements.

1.3. There are four key elements to the framework, which have been modelled on best practice in the private and public sector:

- **Departmental Employee Voice:** An email based communication channel, enabling staff to share ideas with senior managers, at any time.
- **Leadership and line management:** A framework for supporting managers in embedding regular and effective staff engagement within Individual Performance Plan (IPP)/review processes.
- **Targeted surveys on specific themes:** A mechanism for seeking feedback or ideas from staff on certain topics and/or areas for improvement.
- **Annual employee attitude survey:** An annual survey, based on a set of structured questions, providing an organisational view of employees' attitudes and year-on-year comparison of results.

1.4. Successful implementation of employee engagement will enable:

- A whole organisation view of employee attitudes, providing insight into levels of trust, morale and understanding of important issues. Also acts as an 'early warning system' for areas requiring urgent attention.
- Transparent dialogue with staff at all levels, building increased levels of trust and organisational integrity.

- Innovation in service design and delivery, promoting a culture of continuous improvement.
- A greater sense of belonging and increased commitment to shared priorities amongst staff.

2. Background

2.1. The Work Foundation (an independent research provider) defines employee engagement as:

'employees' emotional and intellectual commitment to their organisation and its success. Engaged employees experience a compelling purpose and meaning in their work and give of their discrete effort to advance the organisation's objectives.'

3. Employee engagement in Hampshire County Council

3.1. Capturing and utilising 'employee voice' in the County Council has been identified as a significant gap in the communication and performance frameworks, which has been strongly evidenced through departments' self assessments. Although staff engagement is undertaken by some departments, practice is inconsistent and it is often difficult to see where feedback has informed service planning and/or delivery. Furthermore, the lack of a coherent framework means that opportunities for staff to engage vary considerably; and there is no way of obtaining a single view of employees' perceptions across the organisation.

3.2. Therefore, a new integrated programme of staff engagement is being rolled out, consisting of four key elements.

- departmental *Employee Voice*;
- leadership and line management;
- targeted surveys on specific themes;
- annual employee attitude survey.

3.3. Each of these are detailed in the following section.

Key elements of the employee engagement model

4. **Departmental *Employee Voice*:** an open communication channel, based within departments, that enables employees to feedback on any issues, at any time. It provides a simple mechanism for two-way communication between senior managers and staff. The main aspects are outlined below:

Process:

- Employees are able to ‘have their say’ on any issue, at any time, by emailing a shared inbox. This includes ideas for improving departmental and/or organisational performance.
- Each department has their own inbox.
- The scheme is promoted through existing internal communication channels within departments (e.g. Director’s update, Hantsnet pages, online newsletters).
- Submissions are sent to the relevant Senior Management Team (SMT) member to draft responses, which are discussed and agreed at Department Management Team (DMT) meetings.
- All submissions are recorded on a spreadsheet, which captures the suggestion, response and actions taken as a result – providing a robust audit trail for *Employee Voice*.

Results:

- Department Management Teams (DMTs) receive a monthly summary, which can be used to inform service improvements, reported through quarterly performance progress updates to CMT.
- Staff are notified of actions taken, through Directors’ updates and a dedicated [Hantsnet](#) page.
- Information will be reported to Members through the quarterly performance updates to Cabinet and regular updates from their DMTs.
- All comments, suggestions and responses are available to view on [Hantsnet](#) and a link to *Employee Voice* has been added to the Members’ Portal.

Responsibilities:

- Email accounts are managed by the Service Leads, within the central Communications Team, who collate responses and forward to DMTs.
- Process is strongly supported by senior managers.

Benefits:

- Provides an ongoing two-way channel of communication between DMTs and staff, for sharing views and ideas.
- Improves levels of trust and integrity, as staff see the action taken as a result of feedback.
- Promotes dialogue with different levels of staff.
- Encourages innovation and culture of continuous improvement.

- 5. Leadership and line management:** managers play a critical role in enhancing employee engagement, by facilitating and empowering staff to 'have their say' on issues important to them. Expected behaviours and attitudes of managers will need to be clearly articulated, as recognised through current workforce development work streams e.g. *Priority Leadership Skills*. In future, capturing the 'employee voice' will be an essential element of the IPP/regular review process, as outlined below:

Process:

- Managers will support and enable employees to:
 - feel involved in decision-making;
 - have the freedom to voice ideas, to which managers listen;
 - feel enabled to perform well;
 - have opportunities to develop their role;
 - feel the organisation is concerned for employees' health and well-being.

Results:

- Staff ideas and comments to be captured through the IPP/regular review meetings; and fed upwards by line managers.
- Staff to be notified of actions taken, through subsequent IPP/review sessions, or other established communication channels (e.g. Director's update).
- Information will be reported to Members through the quarterly performance updates to Cabinet and regular updates from DMTs.

Responsibilities:

- Managers to capture and encourage staff engagement through the IPP process and team meetings, through modelling the following types of behaviour:
 - truthfulness/candidness in their decision making and dealings with staff and stakeholders;
 - willingness to admit mistakes;
 - sharing information openly/supporting transparency;
 - encouraging creativity and innovation;
 - protecting whistleblowers.

Benefits:

- Embeds effective staff engagement within 'routine' management practice.
- Increases staff trust in managers; and confidence that their views are important and listened to.
- Improves motivation and performance, as employees feel valued by their manager.
- Develops staff understanding of how their work contributes to departmental and *Open for Business* priorities.

6. **Targeted surveys on specific themes:** to be utilised to obtain staff ideas on specific areas for improvement and/or development.

Process:

- Targeted surveys delivered, as required, on specific themes linked to the *Open for Business* Plan.
- Topics identified by CMT, through quarterly performance progress updates (corporate or departmental issues).
- Groups of staff have the opportunity to suggest ideas for improving performance and/or for development.
- Established internal communications channels to be used to promote participation.

Results:

- Findings to be reported to CMT/DMTs, as relevant.
- Staff to be notified of actions taken, through Chief Executive or Director's updates (as relevant).
- Information will be reported to Members through the quarterly performance updates to Cabinet and regular updates from DMTs.

Responsibilities:

- The in-house Communications and Market Research functions to oversee the delivery of the survey design, execution and analysis.
- Process to be strongly supported by senior managers.

Benefits:

- Encourages innovation and culture of continuous improvement.
- Enables focused activity on particular themes, making best use of available staff skills and knowledge.
- Supports a more engaged workforce, raising awareness of key issues and priorities.

- 7. Annual employee attitude survey:** an annual survey will measure attitudes on a range of topics, providing a single view of employees' perceptions across the organisation.

Process:

- All staff to be able to participate in the survey, providing equal access.
- Survey to be undertaken in October each year, to inform departmental self-assessments and annual performance report.
- Survey to be open for a month.
- Suggested topics for questions to include:
 - feeling valued;
 - performance management;
 - the job itself and work environment;
 - managers and the impact of how they manage;
 - personal motivation.
- Survey to be promoted through existing internal communications channels.

Results:

- Post-survey analysis to have focus on:
 - key factors for driving staff motivation and engagement;
 - areas for improvement;
 - comparison of results with previous years.
- Staff to be notified of results and action taken through Chief Executive/Director's updates and performance reports.
- Results will be reported to Members through the annual performance report Cabinet and updates from DMTs.

Responsibilities:

- The in-house Communications and Market Research functions to oversee the delivery of the survey design, execution and analysis, working with an external research agency.
- Process to be strongly supported by senior managers.

Benefits:

- Provides all staff with the opportunity to express their views.
- Provides a single view of employees' attitudes and perspectives.
- Promotes openness and organisational integrity, through seeking views and sharing the resulting actions.

7.1. Appropriate consultation will be carried out with relevant staff to shape the final survey questions. Examples of best practice in the public and private sector have already been used to form early drafts. Consideration will also be given to the staff surveys currently undertaken by Fire and Police, to ensure appropriate synergy for potential shared services in the future.

8. Financial implications

8.1. The financial implications for the employee engagement framework include the data collection, analysis and production of reports by an external research agency for the employee attitude survey. Three external research agencies have been invited to submit bids for the work and it is estimated the cost will be in the region of £15-£20k.

9. Conclusion

9.1. This report outlines the integrated framework for employee engagement across the County Council, based on four key elements:

- departmental *Employee Voice*;
- leadership and line management;
- targeted surveys on specific themes;
- annual employee attitude survey.

9.2. Results of engagement activities will be utilised to support and improve overall performance across the organisation, in line with the *Open for Business Plan*.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	No
<i>Open for Business Plan links (if appropriate):</i> N/A	
Maximising well-being:	Yes
<p><i>Open for Business Plan links:</i></p> <p>Priority 5: Develop new models of service provision, meeting the challenges of reduced resource and evolving national policies, whilst improving the quality of services for customers.</p> <p>Priority 7: Deliver efficiencies and expenditure reductions, supported by effective management of resources.</p> <p>Priority 8: Rebuild training, leadership and competence frameworks to enhance the effectiveness, capacity and flexibility of staff and managers.</p>	
Enhancing our quality of place:	No
<i>Open for Business Plan links (if appropriate):</i>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. All staff are able to participate in the annual employee attitude survey, providing equal access.

2. Impact on crime and disorder:

- 2.1. None.

3. Climate change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint/energy consumption?

No impact.

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No impact.