



EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE – 2 FEBRUARY 2017

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of Report

1. Following a discussion at the last Employee Committee meeting regarding attendance management/sickness absence, the Committee asked for a report on both further planned work and that which was already underway in relation to improving and enhancing performance management and productivity across the Council.
2. This paper is set in the context of budget reductions, the need to focus on the quality of service provision, and as a result, recognition of the increasing pressures on managers and staff.

Background

3. It is known that the Council has an excellent external reputation for service quality and efficiency, and is seen as being well run, demonstrated by the consistently positive resident feedback.
4. However, when looking more closely from an internal perspective, there are a number of indicators (formal and informal) which lead one to conclude that performance is not managed as robustly as it could be, and as a result, productivity must be suffering.
5. It is worth focusing on a number of examples which provide the evidence and rationale for action:
 - Reluctance from some managers to move into formal management of some types of cases (eg. disciplinary and capability).
 - Current levels of sickness absence.
 - Varied levels of focus across the Council, at an individual management level, on driving performance, holding individuals accountable and being clear about the consequences of not performing.
 - A heavy reliance upon the HR Service on advising on performance issues which managers should be capable and confident in dealing with at their respective management level in the organisation.

- A need to focus on levels and types of skills, capability and confidence that as an organisation will be needed in future.

Areas for Improvement

- Building on good work in departments (e.g. commissioning) and strengthening the Council's corporate and cross-cutting approach.
- A need to put a more direct focus on levels and types of skills, capability and confidence that as an organisation will be needed in future.
- Ensuring that the Council is robust regarding renegotiation of timescales and/or outcomes – particularly in relation to key projects and programmes.
- Creating a culture where there is clear accountability for delivery, and a shared understanding of the consequences for not delivering.
- Improving our practice in areas such as workforce and succession planning.
- Considering the desired and required culture for the organisation as we move forward.
- Ensuring that the employment deal with staff is appropriately balanced between eg. ensuring job satisfaction and wellbeing, and also driving performance and focusing on productivity.
- Considering how to provide appropriate support to managers who are undoubtedly increasingly pressurised. This includes a need to focus on increasing confidence and competence.

Where do we need to get to?

6. It may be helpful to summarise for the Committee what it is intended to achieve through this work:
 - Confident, capable managers who understand and readily embrace all aspects of their management responsibilities, and who also understand and accept accountability.
 - A much clearer focus on performance, with increasing productivity, and generally being more business focused. This will include applying commercial skills to in-house services to evidence that they are value for money.
 - Whilst there will be a clear focus on creating the right environment for success, managers will tackle issues quickly and robustly.
 - The Council to identify the skills across the organisation that will be needed in future, current skills gaps are addressed and clear plans are in place to equip the workforce with new and enhanced skills.

7. Ultimately, this should lead to the County Council being able to reduce its costs, whether it is as a result of reduced sickness absence levels, greater automation and self-service, or through a clear focus on driving performance.

Priority Areas

8. Taking into account the issues and challenges described in this request, it is intended to focus efforts on those areas which will provide the greatest gains.
9. *Values and behaviours* – the County Council needs to ensure that its articulated values and behaviours have sufficiently clear references to expectations around performance and how it is intended to work as a Council to achieve its objectives.
10. *Performance management framework* – In relation to people management, it is arguable that the Council's processes, procedures, tools, support and expectations are not sufficiently joined up. It is therefore proposed that a specific performance management framework is developed. This will include setting of expectations at different levels, describing 'what good looks like', making it clear about accountability, the employment deal, the Council's values and behaviours, the links between service provision and targets to the Single Outcomes Framework, and a commitment to training and re-skilling.
11. *Recruitment and induction* – recruitment processes are under review, but it is clear that this is an important area to focus on, and one where the Council can become more robust and sophisticated. The Council should be recruiting for attitude and aptitude, as well as modernising ways in which it attracts applicants. There will also be a benefit in reviewing its induction processes, and through recruitment and induction, delivering clear messages around expectations.
12. *Performance, development and review* – the current process is bureaucratic, and as well as feeling optional, runs the risk of being a 'tick box' exercise. The Council needs to move to a slicker system which focuses on all year round performance and accountability.
13. *Management development* – in addition to the programmes which are currently run, quick wins should be considered, some of which may be around awareness raising, expectation setting, up-skilling and practical support. These may be short 'bite size' sessions. In addition, it is worth considering how people gain management roles (the quality of our recruitment, clarity of expectations etc) and then how managers are retained and progress in the medium and long term.

Conclusions

14. Work on the priority areas outlined has commenced and future reports will be provided to the Committee on implementation and subsequent impact.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report, and to agree to future updates on the implementation and impact of the various measures outlined in this report to improve performance management and productivity at the Council.

Background Papers

15. None.

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Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

Should there be any new or significantly changed policies as a result of the work, Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessments will be carried out.