SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee
6 November 2014

Better Place to Work Project

Purpose of the report:
The purpose of this report is to share feedback from the Better Place to Work Project which primarily focused on resolving immediate IMT and facilities issues in the workplace. This links to the issues highlighted in the previous report to the Committee of the 11 September on Improving Staff Morale and Wellbeing.

1. Introduction

The aims of the Better place to work project were to

a) Enable individuals to discuss what would improve their working life and take immediate action to address issues raised where possible

b) Change longer term behaviour and instil a collective responsibility for identifying, owning and resolving issues quickly

2. Project methodology

a) Visited 166 buildings where county council staff are based, including those based in partner organisations
b) Facilitate conversations, resolve immediate issues, coordinate and respond to feedback from up to 10,000 people.
c) Core teams of IMT and facilities management staff with HR input
d) Visits started in July and were completed by 30 September 2014
e) Collated over 2000 issues raised by staff across all workplaces into a spreadsheet for further analysis and response where a quick "fix" could not be achieved
f) Each service undertaking responsibility for addressing issues raised, some medium and long term issues may not be easy to resolve e.g. car parking
g) Project Board and small project team to coordinate resourcing and overview of issues, project resourced by re-tasking existing staffing resources – a challenge to achieve within timescale

3. Immediate feedback from the project

a) A significant number of immediate "fixes" achieved particularly for IMT and facilities management

b) People stated that they welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues and be listened to

c) Visibility of support service staff was appreciated

d) Some individuals felt well supported by Property and IMT support teams (fully serviced accommodation and help desks)

e) The ability to work flexibly supports a better work life balance for people

4. Emerging themes for improvement

4.1 Communication
a) Although a lot of guidance and information is on Snet many staff are unaware of support available to them suggesting other forms of communication are needed
b) Reporting issues via helpdesks is patchy – self service approach not widely understood/accepted
c) People do not always take ownership or responsibility for resolving issues locally

4.2 Technology
a) Improvement in IT was recognised in context of needing to invest further to deliver a modern working environment – improve network speed, applications, hardware, Wi-Fi, access to blocked web sites etc
b) Concern about Helpdesk response times and time taken to fix reported issues
c) Impact on quality of outputs and lost working time due to poor performance of printer, scanner and photocopier fleet pending deployment of new equipment

4.3 Office space
a) Many offices experienced poor climate control and some staff felt productivity was affected as a result
b) Some offices are crowded at times, impacting on work area, kitchen facilities, toilets etc
c) Poor quality of office cleaning frequently discussed
d) People do not always respect accommodation or take responsibility for maintaining standards e.g. keeping kitchens/toilets tidy

4.4 Work Pressure & Wellbeing

a) High vacancy levels. Recruitment process is perceived to take too long – social work and educational psychologist roles highlighted as particularly difficult to recruit to

b) An impact of a) above is that some people consider workloads to be high and/or inequitable by people who are asked to cover - felt by many to be directly related to retention rates

c) People are working longer hours to cover vacancies

d) Inconsistent application of parking policy - charging for parking and reimbursement of parking costs

e) Training centred at County Hall and Runnymede Centre – more venues requested

f) Specific intervention/discussion e.g. relationship issues with Health and District and Borough partners

g) Opportunities for managers from black and ethnic minority groups

h) Some managers not visible and not doing appraisals

4.5 Pay and Reward

a) Out of scope for Better Place to Work Project however comments regarding pay progression and non financial reward have been forwarded to the team reviewing Pay & Reward issues

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5. Future Development of the "Better Place to Work"

5.1 The project has been successful in terms of visiting a large number of workplaces in a short period of time and fixing a number of immediate issues. It has given us a rich source of data on how support services are perceived and which issues impact most significantly on employee's experience of working for Surrey. This will help us to continually improve our "offer" to employees.

5.2 The next phase will consist of:

a) IMT, Property, HR and Projects Leads analysing feedback and what it means for their service priorities

b) Following up on issues which can be fixed - ensuring equipment has been mended, ordered or delivered

c) Agreeing a joint approach to communicating back to staff in a "You said, We did, You can" approach to encourage a more empowered, sustainable and responsible culture – a sample of which is attached as Annex A

d) Considering linking the "Better Place to Work" brand to a wider strategy on improving employee engagement, in particular strengthening the role of line managers in terms of communication and addressing workplace issues.

e) Considering whether to repeat the project on a sample or targeted basis given limited resources

f) Focusing on how to boost staff productivity and working smarter e.g. mobile Wi-Fi to stop staff having to park/return to

offices and measuring performance by outcomes not
"presenteeism"

g) Re-invigorating the "Building User Groups" and introducing
"Building Champions" to create forums and leadership for
improving workplace issues

h) Where resolving workplace issues may require significant
investment developing the business case for this or
considering relocation or further rationalisation of workplaces

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6. RECOMMENDATION

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**That the Committee notes the achievements of the Better Place to
Work Project in seeking to address immediate workplace issues.
These link to the issues highlighted in the previous report to the
Committee of the 11 September on Improving Staff Morale and
Wellbeing. Members may wish to contribute suggestions in respect
of the future development of the project.**

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Claire Barrett – Property Services
Paul Brocklehurst – IMT
Emily Boynton – HR&OD
Lucy Mustoe – HR&OD
Lisa Divito - Communications

Annex A: "You said, We did, You can"