

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

30 NOVEMBER 2021

MEDWAY MAKERS

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Summary

This paper sets out the background to the Medway Makers engagement champions network and its purpose, as requested at the last meeting of the Committee.

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1 Whilst there is no specific decision to be made based on the report, it is important that the Committee is apprised of the latest developments through the Medway Makers.

2. Background

2.1 The Medway Maker engagement champions are volunteer employees committed to supporting both the organisation and their colleagues by undertaking a number of key roles:

- feedback key information to their colleagues about organisational change and updates and seek their views to be fed back to senior management
- provide a useful 'sounding board' for proposed changes/policy/services
- support organisational events and raise awareness

2.2 The Medway Makers network was originally set up in 2013 with a similar focus to the above, and at its peak had approximately 50 council-wide engagement champions. However, over time the network lost its impetus for a number of reasons - its role became somewhat ambiguous and network members ceased to be involved as they changed job roles and/or left the council.

2.3 In April 2021 the Medway Makers saw a refresh – led by Sam Beck-Farley, Head of HR Services - with a clear focus to involve the workforce in two main areas of forthcoming organisational change:

- the introduction of hybrid working, and
- the Medpay review.

3. Advice and analysis

- 3.1 The most effective way to enable change to happen relatively speedily, especially within an organisation, is to seek to eliminate blockers and resistance from the workforce. Involving employees in decisions affecting their work at the early stages of change (including decision-making) reduces opposition and encourages employees to take ownership of the change.
- 3.2 Failure to involve the workforce in large-scale changes could well lead to a culture of mistrust and confusion amongst employees resulting in lower productivity, demotivation and potentially see people voting with their feet. This highlights the importance of having processes in place to keep staff informed and involved.
- 3.3 The Council is embarking on large-scale change that will inevitably impact on all staff. As mentioned, these changes involve the workforce moving to a hybrid model of flexible working and also a review of the pay progression and performance management schemes.
- 3.4 These two major changes may be welcomed by many but there may also be a period of unrest, uncertainty and fear among others. It's important to support employees with up to date information about plans and progress, and two-way communication channels for them to ask questions, provide suggestions and have their voice heard.
- 3.5 The existing internal communications channels such as MEDSPACE, line management chain, team meetings etc are an effective way to communicate change. However, with the Head of HR Services, who is also a member of the Corporate Management Team leading the Medway Makers, we have a great opportunity for staff to have their voices heard at senior management level.
- 3.6 As the group is relatively new, volunteer members are being sought. There are currently 25 Medway Makers spanning all directorates. However, for the group to become embedded in the organization as key change enablers, there's a need to get a wider spread across all services and this is work-in-progress.
- 3.7 Since April the group have met on a monthly basis, have received regular updates and given their views on a number of diverse topics. Where relevant the Medway Makers have raised useful points/concerns and these have been taken back for consideration by the relevant project group/officers.
- 3.8 These topics include:
 - Regular updates on hybrid working and the pay review by the Head of HR Services
 - Regular monthly update from the Head of Business Change on the changes and adaptations to Gun Wharf
 - Our Employee Value Proposition (our offer to employees/new employees)

- The new Core Values
- The Our Ways Of Working (OWOW) Policy (new)
- The Interpreting Service
- Climate Change
- Annual employee survey vs. regular small surveys – opinion sought
- Time to Change mental health campaign
- Make a Difference Awards
- Speak- Up Policy (new)
- Medway Pride
- Picnic tables at Gun Wharf – suggested locations
- Active Offices presentation

4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of proper engagement results in resistance to change/lack of 'buy-in'	The council undertakes major change without seeking staff views or 'keeping them in the dark'.	Ensure there are a number of two-way communication channels within the organisation to update them on latest information and give them a voice which is heard.	C2

5. Consultation

5.1 Not appropriate.

6. Climate change implications

6.1 The Medway Makers have started working with the Climate Change team to support awareness-raising within the workforce. On Thursday, 4 November the Climate Change Team and the Medway Makers jointly held a virtual lunchtime drop-in session with staff. This work will be on-going.

7 Financial and Legal implications

7.1 There are no direct financial or legal implications.

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None