

Business Support Overview and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 February 2024

Update on Response to the Employee Survey 2022

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Summary

An update on actions taken in response to the Employee Survey 2022.

1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee note this report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. This report is for information and is within the remit of this Committee.

3. Background

3.1. The Employee Engagement Survey was undertaken in September 2022. Corporate Management Team reviewed the results and agreed a set of priorities for action. Further analysis and consultation was undertaken following the survey. The Employee Engagement Strategy was agreed by Employment Matters Committee on 6 September 2023 and sets out, within its action plan (appendix one), how the council will address these priorities. The infographic (appendix two) has been communicated to the workforce highlighting these priorities and commitment for action. The action plan is purposefully generic. It has been written to cover corporate actions primarily but is flexible enough to steer and support directorates and divisions to create their own local action plans. On 13 July 2023 the Chief Organisational Culture Officer fed back to the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee actions that had been taken so far and highlighting some projects which were ongoing and work-in-progress. Some larger scale projects, such as the Medpay Review, are still ongoing but considerable progress is being made in all aspects of the action plan. The table in paragraph 4.1 sets out actions and progress made since July 2023.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1. Table to show progress made against the action plan.

Action	Progress made
<p>Our Ways of Working Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis of the 2022 survey results by workstyle has been undertaken – results have been fed back to Phoenix and Corporate Management Team. Overall results showed the most satisfied and motivated employees worked either a Hybrid workstyle or worked from home. • A pulse survey was sent to staff in December 2023 to determine how employees felt about their current ways of working (following the partial closure of Gun Wharf). The survey also sought to obtain a holistic viewpoint from all staff about the way we work and wish to work in the future. Results are currently being analysed.
<p>Improve employee communications and engagement</p>	<p>Internal Communications channels and tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new CEO has increased his visibility and accessibility through visiting departments; more use of video; a quarterly ‘round-up’ communication, and regular appearance in the all-staff newsletter ‘<i>Our Medway</i>’. • Our Medway – a number of changes have been made to the newsletter in response to employee views, these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The newsletter has changed to a weekly update to ensure that the news is kept current and relevant (65% of staff in the last survey said they want to be kept more informed about council plans and progress, a weekly newsletter allows the opportunity to provide more information to staff and keep them up-to-date). - The format has been redesigned to provide opportunity to share case studies and staff news/successes. - A sharing platform enables monitoring of key analytics. • Arrangements are underway for an all staff conference in the Spring. • The introduction of a staff roadshow (an event allowing services to share information and promote what they do to colleagues). • The introduction of dedicated Microsoft Teams channel for Service Managers called ‘Need to Know’. Providing a means of speedily sharing key information and messages with senior management. • Regular updates are provided at the Medway Makers staff engagement forum. • A process has been implemented to enable staff to share their news or request information to be shared with the workforce more easily.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The re-formatting of the <i>HR Monthly</i> newsletter providing a means for analytics to determine the most popular articles giving an insight into what topical issues the workforce are interested. <p>Statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since November the most popular page visited on MedSpace has been the Temporary closure of Gun Wharf. • The <i>Our Medway</i> weekly newsletter receives an average open rate of 15% (<i>One Minute Medway</i> and articles related to GW closure have been the most popular). • The <i>HR monthly</i> newsletter receives an average open rate of 45% (with Care first and MedPay articles being the most popular). <p>Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new conversation toolkit called <i>Let's Talk</i> has been developed to create conversations between managers and teams around specific workplace topics. The first use of the toolkit will be to help socialise the new council Values. • Work will start in January on building the next annual Employee Engagement Survey. The survey is designed, created, and analysed in-house. More information about the 2024 survey can be found in paragraphs 4.2-4.4. • The use of virtual drop-ins are being used more widely. A range of workplace topics have taken place in this format, for example: employee benefit providers; financial/cost-of-living support; engagement for the council Values. • The Medway Maker (volunteer) engagement champions network is continuing to support the organisation acting as a sounding board for new policy, initiatives and processes. The Medway Makers act as a conduit between their colleagues and senior management on various workplace issues.
<p>Pay and career progression</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survey revealed that one of the main areas of discontent from staff was pay. Pay negotiations for 2024 are underway and a proposal will be submitted to Full Council in February. The Medpay review is ongoing; progress is as follows: <p>Phase 1 of the MedPay Review was initiated in October 2022 and focused on Performance, Progression and Pay with the introduction of career progression frameworks that enables staff to progress through the pay band based on the competency levels required within their professional framework.</p>

	<p>11 out of the proposed 13 pilot phase teams implemented between 1 May 2023 and 31 January 2024 with 218 staff brought into the enhanced MedPay scheme. The two teams that did not complete have been moved into Phase 2 of the Review.</p> <p>Whilst it is too early to fully evaluate the impact of phase 1, there has been evidence of positive changes as the scheme improves the council's ability to attract and retain staff and this has warranted the roll out of phase 2.</p> <p>Employment Matters Committee oversees the review and the committee has made recommendations to council resulting in changes to the MedPay payscale in July 2023, including the introduction of a Range 8 pay band and gaps between pay bands, thereby providing further enhancements to MedPay pay and conditions.</p> <p>Phase 2 of the Review was initiated in October 2023 with the first cohort onboarded to the project and the second cohort onboarded on 11 January 2024; there will be five cohorts which will cover the majority of the organisation.</p> <p>Working groups will be established during 2024 to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) consider career progression frameworks for job family groupings in the following areas: Customer Service; Business Support; Finance; Performance and Intelligence; Projects; and Systems; and b) develop career progression frameworks for Service Manager grade and above. <p>Further changes to the pay scale are being requested and presented to the Employment Matters Committee 30th Jan to further enhance the pay framework.</p>
<p>Employee benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continue to promote employee benefits to the workforce maximising the communication tools. A cost-of-living benefits fayre was held in October 2023, inviting staff to attend and meet in person a number of our employee benefits providers. This is supplemented through ad hoc webinars and drop-ins sessions from benefit providers. There are plans to introduce new employee benefits to support the wellbeing agenda from April 2024. We continue to review our existing benefits as these are captured under our employee value proposition, and a key to our attraction strategy.

<p>Recognition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual Make a Difference Awards were held in December 2023 allowing the organisation to recognise high achievement. • Development of a Long-Service awards scheme is in progress. • Moving forward, work is proposed to create a Recognition Strategy for the council. This will steer the culture of the organisation by recognising achievements and behaviours that the council values and wishes to encourage. This will include a review of current recognition practices at both corporate and local level. Early thinking includes, more directorate recognition events, long service, and peer to peer nominations
<p>Career development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Complete Medway Manager</i> programme has launched and is ongoing. Below are updates: <p>Cohorts Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First operational cohort concluded on January 9, 2024. • Second cohort is in progress and four more are planned. • Three strategic cohorts have been scheduled from February 14 to April 2, 2024. • Future cohorts are targeting remaining managers and those at range four are planned for next financial year. <p>Training Suite Highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims for a transformative journey within the first six months tailored for new and recently appointed managers at Medway Council. • Covers core managerial responsibilities, key contacts, and developmental aspects, preparing future leaders with a forward-looking approach to managerial excellence. • Incorporates organisational alignment and the 'golden thread' of leadership. <p>Development and Feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is ongoing commitment to refine the training experience. • Proactive development is made through thorough session evaluations. • There is strong preference for face-to-face sessions based on feedback. • There has been a transition to virtual sessions due to RAAC issues and venue challenges.
<p>Improve mental health and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Healthy Mind and Wellbeing Group meets bi-monthly. This group is formed from colleagues across the organisation and has trade union representation. <p>- January 2024 sees the launch of the Press Pause campaign (see appendix three) – this encourages colleagues to take short breaks during their working</p>

	<p>day to support their health and wellbeing. The final design followed a series of engagement activity with staff groups including the Medway Makers and the Disabled Workers and Carers Network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A line managers resource is near completion and will be launched in February 2024. This seeks to provide managers with additional support whilst managing often difficult and sensitive mental health related situations within their team. This resource will be on MEDSPACE and will provide links to sources of immediate help and advice as well as information on self-care, training, making wellbeing a priority etc. - Two staff craft and chat sessions took place in 2023. Once in summer and one at Christmas for staff across the council to come together and make a greetings card. Each session was organised and facilitated by Public Health. There are plans ahead to do more in 2024. - A ‘coffee roulette’ pilot scheme is ongoing within Public Health and HR to help tackle loneliness and social isolation. Employees who opt to take part are partnered with another employee for a chat either virtual or face-to-face, if positively received more teams will onboard.
<p>Address bullying & harassment concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was approved by Employment Matters Committee in December 2023. This highlights responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. • We will shortly be publishing this on MEDSPACE and finalising the action plan and progressing actions, which include some of the activities below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communications are planned to inform the organisation about the EDI strategy over next couple of months. - Publishing Gender Pay Gap in March and then putting together specific actions to further address the gap. - Producing and reviewing the Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gaps for the first time. - New public sector equality duty training video. - New Access to Work process now live.
<p>Improve understanding of Core Values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new values have been agreed and shared for staff views via a number of virtual drop-in sessions. At the sessions staff were asked to give their thoughts on behaviours that support the values. These can be found in Appendix four.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communication and engagement plan has been produced containing details of how we plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - launch to staff and to the community. - embed and socialise within the workforce at team level using a conversation tool for managers. - integration within HR processes such as performance management, recruitment and learning and development. - reinforce the values going forward. - measure and review.
Employee Value Proposition (EVP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-to-Day work continues to reinforce all aspects of our Employee Value Proposition. The EVP will be updated to include the new council Values once the Council Plan is published.
Measurement and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next annual Employee Engagement Survey will take place in May 2024 (see Paragraphs 4.2-4.4).

- 4.2. As mentioned in the table above, the next all-staff annual Employee Engagement Survey is being undertaken in May 2024.
- 4.3. The 2024 survey will focus primarily on the actions within the Employee Engagement Strategy 2023-28 action plan to measure the effect of changes made.
- 4.4. Results and analysis will be fed back to this committee in good time.
5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Demotivation and devalued workforce leading to poor performance/service delivery, poor wellbeing, sickness absence, blockage of change, and reluctance to engage in future surveys and engagement activity.	Failing to actively listen to our employees and doing something as a result, will result in employees who feel that their point of view is not respected and valued.	The Employee Engagement Strategy 2023-28 clearly sets out the commitment to take action on the priority areas identified by CMT. Work is on-going in all of these areas.	B2

For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very high B High C Significant D Low E Very low F Almost impossible	1 Catastrophic (Showstopper) 2 Critical 3 Marginal 4 Negligible

6. Financial implications

6.1. There are no financial implications.

7. Legal implications

7.1. There are no legal implications.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix one: Employment Engagement Strategy 2023-28 Action Plan

Appendix two: Employee Engagement Strategy 2023 -28 Infographic

Appendix three: Press Pause campaign poster

Appendix four: Council Value workshops – comments from employees