

ESTABLISHMENT UPDATE

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Clive Eginton, Cabinet Member for Working Environment and Support Services

Responsible Officer: Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste

Reason for Report: Scrutiny requested as a follow up to the presentation of the Establishment Report in February 2022 to see a copy of the Draft Staff Survey Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is asked to note the information below

Financial Implications: Financial risk will only occur where proposals contained in the action plan are not properly estimated or costed.

Budget and Policy Framework: This report sits within the current budget and policy framework.

Legal Implications: None report for information only.

Risk Assessment: If issues related to our establishment are not appropriately managed and reviewed then service delivery will be put at risk.

Equality Impact Assessment: No equality issues highlighted in this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: This report highlights the priority issues for consideration regarding workforce development that arise from the recently carried out staff survey.

Impact on Climate Change: No climate change issues highlighted in this report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to give an update on both the staff survey carried out in the Autumn of 2021 and the action plan that has been drawn up following discussions with the Union and the all staff consultative group Impact.

1.2 These priority actions focus on mental health and wellbeing, corporate communication (and its roll out), extending the provision of the online PDR Appraisal and reviewing our benefits that make up our employment offer to staff.

2.0 Background and Context

2.1 Mid Devon District Council recently carried out an external survey facilitated by the organisation 'People Insights'. This allowed the Council to have an

online and Independent platform which was crucial to gaining the confidence of the workforce through having increased impartiality. The online platform also allowed the Council to gather benchmarked sector data from comparative organisations. The survey was carried out between the end of September and the middle of October 2021.

2.2 The results of the survey were publicised in summary format and circulated through the Link. The HR Business Partners have shared an online dashboard with Operations Managers and CMT Leads for specific service areas. This is leading to the design of local based actions to benefit service development.

2.3 A Corporate Action plan has been designed simultaneously with the input of the Union, Impact and Management. This action plan has now been circulated to all staff through the Link and will be monitored by both Impact and the Union regarding implementation. All comments and feedback to be given to Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste.

3.0 **Top Corporate Findings**

3.1 A staff survey measures the overall engagement that the workforce has with the purpose of the Council's mission. On this we came out at 70% which whilst we would have liked the score to have been higher was broadly satisfactory.

3.2 The Council came out on a par with the wider sector for scores relating to doing high quality work and satisfaction with the work environment as well as striking the right balance between professional and home life.

3.3 The Council achieved above sector scores on the themes of autonomy and freedom to get on with doing the job in hand, training opportunities as well as career development aspirations being met.

3.4 The below are key areas of concern which have been considered by the Impact staff consultative group and Union;

-Communication between different areas of the business poor (-17 compared to sector average)

-People are not treated fairly (-25 compared to sector average).

-A belief that there will be a lack of action on this survey (-12 compared to sector average)

-Lack of manager feedback/opportunity for development (-6 for both compared to sector average)

-Understand the activity and priorities of MDDC (-5 or -4 compared to the sector average)

-Recommend to MDDC as a place of work (-10 compared to the sector average)

4.0 Context to the Findings/Emerging Trends

The following are summary trends and findings from looking at the survey;

- 4.1 Results are very different according to the area of the business. It is clear that some departments have had to bear the brunt of a difficult pandemic (Waste, Leisure) and this appears reflected in the results.
- 4.2 Workers who have been able to work more remotely and in an increased mobile, hybrid way overall seem to have enjoyed the experience. 62% approve of this way of working.
- 4.3 There are some interesting trends. Women workers are more positive overall than their male counterparts about MDDC. There is also a big differential in terms of the feedback given and length of service eg less than 1 or over 10 years of service very positive. Between 3 and 5 years it is very much less favourable.

5.0 Composing a draft action plan and the way forwards

- 5.1 We circulated an action plan in early January 22 for comment which was ratified by both Impact and the Union in early February of this year. It is intended to repeat the same survey in June 23. This will give the organisation the best part of 18 months to make some necessary improvements in different areas.
- 5.2 In considering the staff survey results we have looked to identify the different themes that arise from the survey and the actions we should consider prioritising. The below are the findings of the discussions held with the Impact staff consultative group and the Union.

6.0 Findings from the Discussions

- 6.1 The COVID-19 pandemic of the last 21 months has greatly shaped the way in which employees perceive Mid Devon District Council. Experiences have been very varied and how staff have been able to experience and work through the pandemic has been greatly shaped by the nature of the responsibilities they carry out. We acknowledge that some parts of the workforce will not have had the scope to work flexibly eg working from home, that others have had.
- 6.2 Despite this the temporary working from home arrangements for some parts of the organisation and how this has evolved to be considered for more permanent mobile, hybrid working in the future has been broadly well received. The workforce is keen to see this work develop and also feels this is a good opportunity to refresh some of our office space and meeting room arrangements.

- 6.3 There has been difficulty experienced with some staff working more remotely. Differentiating between work life and home life can be more difficult when both are in the same environment and it was commented that remote working has inevitably led to an increase in the number of meetings being held. There can be a problem with emails being sent in unsocial hours and whilst greater flexibility is encouraged it was felt that some guidance around this area might be helpful.
- 6.4 Some staff felt that they were feeling isolated at times from reduced colleague contact and interaction. The management of general wellbeing, mental health and other welfare issues therefore needs a greater priority with increased amounts of remote working evident in the workplace. It was also felt that corporate communication at times could have been better and staff would have liked to have known more about what is going on corporately in the organisation.
- 6.5 Finally it was felt that staff benefits could be both better promoted but also needed to be made more accessible so all of the workforce had the same opportunities. This was seen as important given the varied and different ways that parts of the workforce are having to operate. So considering how different elements of the employment contract could be made to work for all staff (eg the taking of annual leave) is an important priority.

7.0 Themes and Proposed Actions

- 7.1 The following table reflects the different themes identified from the staff survey results and subsequent discussions with the Impact staff consultative group and Union. These themes then identify the priority actions and associated timetable for delivery.

Theme Identified	You Said	Our Response	By When	By Whom
Improve Corporate Communication and Briefing to give fair and open access to all staff	Better Understanding of Organisation developments and priorities	Corporate Staff Briefings to be run every quarter by LT	Commence April 2022 and on going	LT/CMT
	Ensure briefings are available for all employees (regardless of remote accessibility)	Corporate briefing to be recorded so staff unable to attend can listen later. LT to offer to attend operational team meetings eg Carlu	April 2022	LT/CMT
Support	Issue and	Promote 8 to	May 2022	MP

Theme Identified	You Said	Our Response	By When	By Whom
wellbeing and mental health of all employees	promote guidance around email use and protocol.	8 protocol of when to send emails (no emergency) during reasonable working hours		
	Line managers to regularly enquire of employees regarding their own mental health and wellbeing	Operational Service Leads to ensure that staff are regularly asked about their mental health and wellbeing	Commence by April 2022 and on going	CMT/Operations Managers
Cement Mobile, Hybrid Working as a more permanent fixture in the future. This to include refresh of office space and meeting space.	Mobile, hybrid working to be allowed where possible both through and post pandemic era	Teams to be encouraged to work in a mobile, hybrid way where it is possible to do so.	Ongoing	CMT
	Move to more permanent mobile, hybrid ways of working to be supported through soft phones and equipment renewal	New soft phones and ICT equipment to be rolled out in Spring 22. Office refresh plans to be published and considered through consultation.	Soft Phones and new laptops available from May 2022 Office refresh plans to be published summer 2022	CMT
	Promote regular, online revisiting of PDR objectives and development plan to compliment annual Appraisal.	Roll out of first 6 month and then quarterly reviews through online portal.	Six month review launched September 2022. Quarterly review launched June 2023	MP/HD
Promote staff	Ensure that	Wellbeing and	All FTE staff	SW

Theme Identified	You Said	Our Response	By When	By Whom
benefits and widen accessibility for staff so fair opportunities can be offered to everyone	staff are recognised for working through the pandemic through official recognition.	Recognition paper sent to Cabinet in November and approved by Full Council in December	to receive a one off payment on the 21 January 2022 (completed) All FTE staff to receive an extra wellbeing day during 22/23 financial year (in place).	

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 7.1 There are a number of priorities which the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste wants to focus on in terms of progressing the action plan but he would like to draw attention to three key priorities.
- 7.2 It is important that the Union and Impact staff consultative group review this plan and the implementation of the different actions detailed in this report. A repeat of exactly the same survey will be carried out in June 2023 so we can review our progress and compare the assessments for 2021 with 2023.
- 7.3 We need to further progress our Learning and Development work to identify talent management and Leadership development strategies to ensure every Mid Devon employee has a clear path of progression and development that is relevant to them.
- 7.4 We will review and update our employment offer to both existing employees and new candidates with regards to benefits and terms and conditions. Potential areas for early consideration include improving our gym membership offer and introducing a permanent wellbeing day for all staff each year.

Contact for more Information: Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste (MPage@middevon.gov.uk)

Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member seen and approved Yes – Cllr Clive Eginton, Leadership Team seen and approved Yes.

List of Background Papers: Establishment Paper submitted to Scrutiny February 2022.