

Staffing Committee

Date of Meeting: 21 January 2021

Report Title: Brighter Future Transformation (Culture) Programme Update

Senior Officer: Head of Human Resources

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the work undertaken on the Brighter Future Transformation (Culture) Programme and the work planned for 2021.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Staffing Committee note the report and monitor progress of the future action plans.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. To ensure that Staffing Committee are informed.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable.

5. Background

- 5.1. Following the LGA culture review, the Council accepted the twelve recommendations that were made. All their recommendations have been addressed through the Brighter Future Culture Programme and work since has continued to embed the vision for workplace culture, values, behaviours and employee deal across the Council.
- 5.2. The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) carried out in January 2020 recognised the progress that has been made by the council in addressing historic issues and improving the culture of the organisation. The team also stated that they were impressed that whilst these improvements were delivered, the council had continued to deliver effective services. The report

produced by the team that carried out the CPC stated that ‘the culture change programme has made a profound difference to the way the organisation functions and the experience of staff’.

6. Briefing Information

- 6.1 There has been a slight shift in emphasis for the Brighter Future Culture Programme during 2020 to continue working towards the agreed vision for the Council’s culture, whilst paying a particular focus on supporting staff and promoting their wellbeing throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 6.2 The BFT community has continued to meet virtually throughout the year on a monthly basis and been used to ‘sense check’ issues and initiatives and as a valuable source of feedback from staff on how services are working under difficult circumstances. These sessions are attended by Lorraine O’Donnell.
- 6.3 The Member Forum met virtually for the first time on 14th May 2020 and has continued to meet regularly since. Discussions are ongoing around the possibility of merging the current Member Forum with the Member Technology & Development Panel and the Member Enquiry Service Panel. Members are broadly in agreement with the caveat that the culture work would not be diluted as a result of any change.
- 6.4 A survey was carried out by Democratic Services during the Summer to seek Member views on what is working well and what could be even better if with regards to technology, working practices and culture. The results have been shared with Group Leaders and the Member Forum and included in the Members Briefing for all Members to access.
- 6.5 To further inform future working plans, a short ‘pulse staff survey’ was launched on July 6th 2020 for a two week period and achieved a response rate of 55%. The feedback from the survey was positive with 83% of respondents agreeing that communication from the council and from line managers has been effective during the COVID-19 response and 75% of staff agreeing that effective support in relation to wellbeing has been provided. The survey did highlight that some staff still had concerns around returning to their usual workplace and this has been taken into account in the work undertaken to ensure buildings are COVID secure.
- 6.6 An action plan to address the ‘pulse survey’ was developed and put into place with actions aimed at the welfare and wellbeing of staff outlined over the following paragraphs. A further ‘pulse survey’ is planned for early in 2021.

- 6.7 Time to Listen and Chat ‘TLC’ calls were set up in April 2020 to provide wellbeing support to all staff. The numbers of staff joining these weekly calls varies from week to week from 15 – 6 people, but it has been noted that people tend to dip in and out of these calls depending on how they are feeling. There is a theme for these calls to start the conversation, ranging from confidence with ICT following the upgrade, wellbeing support via Learning Lounge and the national lockdown.
- 6.8 More recently, a Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) support group has also been established.
- 6.9 An additional Workplace Wellbeing Conversation Toolkit was developed in July 2020 and added to those that already exist to support managers in having conversations with their staff around managing their resilience and wellbeing.
- 6.10 Manager Support Sessions were established in August 2020 as a response to the organisation managing the resilience and wellbeing of all its people managers. The sessions are held twice weekly and remain well attended with 60 – 70 over the 2 sessions. A variety of managers from across all three Directorates attend. The feedback they provide is that they feel these sessions provide a safe space to come together and share their experience and good practice. The themes vary each week, but have included personal resilience, team dynamics, managing remote performance and mental health awareness. These sessions will continue to run to support all people managers across the organization manage their staff and provide an opportunity to share best practice.
- 6.11 Wellbeing articles continue to be shared in the weekly Covid brief. In addition to this, a virtual winter wellbeing month was held during October with a different activity held each day. In total 250 people took part during the month. Following positive feedback from staff, a number of these activities will continue to run regularly to provide ongoing wellbeing support. Additional wellbeing pages have been added to CEntranet.
- 6.12 A new remote induction has been put into place for all new starters to the organization with induction handbooks for all staff and managers. This is supported by the development and launch of an e-learning induction module available to all. The Organisational Development Team is also running virtual drop-in induction sessions on a monthly basis.

- 6.13 To address concerns raised in the Pulse survey from staff that reported that they had occasionally or regularly worked more hours than usual during the COVID-19 pandemic, a set of 'Golden Practices' were developed and launched in September 2020 in conjunction with the Brighter Future Champions. These 'Golden Practices' are designed to help staff achieve the right balance between being productive and maintaining a positive approach to health and wellbeing at work each day. To offer further support on prioritization and themes that continue to emerge from the Manager Support Sessions and TLC Calls, a second 'Golden Practices' is in development, with a planned launch in January 2021.
- 6.14 A bespoke e-learning catalogue targeted at the issues around working through a pandemic has also been put into place. This has been rolled out on a phased approach. Modules have included resilience, wellbeing and managing staff remotely. Scheduled virtual resilience training for all staff and separate sessions for managers on managing resilience in their staff/teams have also been put into place.
- 6.15 A One Team Cheshire East Council Video was developed and launched to staff in mid December 2020 as a replacement for the annual Making a Difference Awards. This has been a virtual vehicle for thanking all staff for their hard work and commitment through an exceptional year.
- 6.16 In addition, all Cheshire East Council employees have been offered a 'Christmas Wellbeing Break' of three working days, without using their annual leave. This is to recognise that it is vital for staff's overall health, wellbeing and resilience to take time out from work, to rest and recharge.
- 6.17 Work has begun on refreshing the Brighter Future (Culture) Embedding Plan, which was shared with Staffing Committee in October 2019) to ensure it aligns with the council's vision for new ways of working. This will include the development of an updated 'Starting the Conversation', to be rolled out through the Brighter Future Champion network.

7. Implications of the Recommendations

7.1. Legal Implications

- 7.1.1. There are no identified legal implications for the Council associated with this report.

7.2. Finance Implications

7.2.1. Costs associated with some of the initiatives set out above have been met within existing budgets.

7.3. Policy Implications

7.3.1. There are no policy implications associated with this report.

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. There are no equality implications associated with this report.

7.5. Human Resources Implications

7.5.1. The Human Resources service and the organisational development team in particular will be required to support the directors, managers and Brighter Future Community Champions in facilitating the conversations. The team will have responsibility for collating the actions and providing updates on progress through the Brighter Future Community.

7.6. Risk Management Implications

7.6.1. There are no identified risk management implications associated with this report.

7.7. Rural Communities Implications

7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

7.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

7.9. Public Health Implications

7.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7.10. Climate Change Implications

7.10.1. The report packs have not been printed but will be available to report owners electronically along with the toolkit and action plans. This will save paper, associated printing costs, and will contribute to the Council's environmental aspirations.

8. Ward Members Affected

8.1. There are no direct implications to ward members associated with this report.

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.

10. Contact Information

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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