

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	06 July 2021
<b>Report Title:</b>	Organisational Culture Change Programme
<b>Report of:</b>	Jane Burns: Executive Director, Corporate Services
<b>Report Reference No:</b>	CP/09/21-22
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All Wards

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### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the work undertaken on the Brighter Future Together (Culture) Programme. It covers its key milestones, the pulse survey, benefits, and work planned for 2021 and beyond, contributing to the Council achieving its priority to support and develop a workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient, and empowered.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. That Corporate Policy Committee:
- 2.1.1. Note the report.
- 2.1.2. Agree to monitor progress of future actions.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1. To ensure Members are kept up to date with the progress on the Brighter Future Together (Culture) Programme and its contribution to the Council achieving its priority to support and develop a workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient, and empowered.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1 Not applicable

## 5 Briefing Information

### 5.1 Update on Activity

5.1.1 The achievement of all the recommendations made within the LGA's culture review in 2018 was recognised by the Corporate Peer Challenge carried out in January 2020. The Brighter Future Culture Programme has continued to embed our collective vision for workplace culture, with our values, behaviours and employee deal being co-produced by staff. Our vision and values continue to be embedded through the Corporate Plan and the Brighter Future Transformation Programme.

5.1.2 There has been an emphasis for the Brighter Future Together (Culture) Programme since March 2020 on supporting staff and promoting their wellbeing throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Feedback from staff on the additional wellbeing initiatives, put into place as a response to the pandemic, has been excellent. These have included:

- **Time to Listen and Chat 'TLC' calls.** Originally set up in April 2020 to provide wellbeing support to all staff through themed calls.
- **Workplace Wellbeing Conversation Toolkits.** These have been added to those that already exist to support managers in having conversations with their staff around managing their resilience and wellbeing.
- **Manager Support Sessions.** These themed sessions will continue to run to support all people managers across the organisation manage their staff and provide an opportunity to share best practice. The forum has also proved a highly effective mechanism for 'sense checking' new initiatives.
- **'Golden Practices'.** These were developed and launched initially in September 2020 in conjunction with the Brighter Future Champions. A series of 'Golden Practices' will continue to be rolled out to help staff achieve the right balance between being productive and maintaining a positive approach to health and wellbeing at work each day.
- **Stress and resilience training for individuals and managers.** Modules have included resilience, wellbeing and managing staff remotely.

5.1.3 The Brighter Future Champions have continued to meet virtually throughout the pandemic every month 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 the Chief Executive, Lorraine O'Donnell.

5.1.4 Following on from a 'Pulse' survey carried out in July 2020, the Council commissioned the same third-party company, Djs Employee Research, to

conduct a follow-up employee survey – ‘Looking to the Future’ to understand how staff are feeling around a wide range of issues focussed on the current and future ways of working. The survey was conducted over a three-week period between 29 March and 23 April 2021. All employees were given the opportunity to participate in the survey via an electronic link which could be used on any work or personal device. Additionally, staff who do not have access to a personal or work device were offered support via libraries to complete the survey.

5.1.5 The purpose of the survey was to understand how staff feel about the current way of working, how effective it has been for individuals, teams, and our customers and how staff might work in the future. The survey results will inform the work being undertaken by the wider *Future Workplace* workstream.

5.1.6 In total 2110 employees completed the survey. This equates to a 59% response rate. This response rate is higher than the previous Pulse Survey and the last full staff survey, which both reported a 55% response rate. Djs Employee Research provided a summary infographic, which can be seen as Appendix 2. Importantly 82% of staff enjoy working for Cheshire East Council and 87% feel trusted to do their job. 81% also agree that communication from the Council has been effective since the pandemic began.

5.1.7 The overall survey findings were broken down by directorate (Adults, Children’s, Corporate and Place) and then into service level to better inform individual service workplace design.

5.1.8 A key element of the culture programme more recently has been the support offered to the wider transformation programme. This has included:

- **Customer Experience** - a team conversation, linking in with the customer journey has been developed alongside an e-learning module for all staff. Customer Service managers have all attended the first stage of the manager development programme attending a ‘Having the Conversation’ session.
- **Carbon Neutral.** Work is underway to develop a carbon neutral conversation toolkit. This will include a conversation to be used at a 1:1 meeting and a team conversation. A carbon neutral e-learning module was reviewed by members of this project group and is currently live on Learning Lounge and support has been given to the Communications Team to engage with staff on the Wildlife Trust’s #30DaysWild campaign.
- **Governance** – phase one of the training has been commissioned and delivered to Members and officers. An e-learning module has also been developed in conjunction with Democratic Services. The inaugural meetings of the new services committees and the Finance Sub-Committee have included presentations covering member/officer relationships and mutual respect.

- **Commercial** – a training programme has been co-ordinated and will be rolled out from June onwards.
- **Workplace** - the recent pulse survey was developed in conjunction with the Estates and ICT programme to ensure it provided relevant information to inform future workplace design, as covered in para 5.1.5.

## 5.2 Key Milestones & Next Steps

5.2.1 The diagram at Appendix 1 sets out the key milestones for the Culture Programme for the next 12 months.

5.2.2 The Pulse Survey results have provided a wealth of information to develop future ways of working. Sharing of the results will stimulate a wider conversation around future workplace design, providing an enhanced understanding of the results. This will allow key priorities and actions to be agreed to support customers, service delivery and our staff.

5.2.3 The development of a 'flexible workplace handbook', with input from Brighter Future Champions will set out clear cultural principles for the future way of working that will inform service agreements, alongside toolkit conversations for teams and individuals to support the shift in workplace design. It will act as a 'one-stop' point of reference, including links and further information on wellbeing, training and future support alongside the relevant HR policies and risk assessments. This will be launched in the Autumn.

5.2.4 A revised agile and flexible working policy will also be launched, following further consultation with the trade unions.

5.2.5 The success of the additional wellbeing initiatives has meant that these activities will now become part of business as usual and allow further engagement with staff and the enhancement of the employee deal.

5.2.6 As part of the wider business planning process, services were asked to complete a Service Workforce Plan, in line with bespoke HR data for their areas. The workforce plans will be used to inform wider workforce priorities and an overarching Workforce Strategy for the Council.

5.2.7 Training plans and the existing programme for leadership and management development will be updated to reflect new ways of working.

5.2.8 There are also several measures that demonstrate the benefits of the Culture Programme, linked to key priorities in the Corporate Plan: -

- % staff satisfaction rates. In the latest staff survey, 82% of staff said that they enjoyed working for Cheshire East Council.
- Staff turnover rates - in 2020-21 employee turnover was 8.3%, which is lower than the previous four financial years.
- Staff absence - sickness absence as days lost per FTE employee during 2020-21 at 8.93 days per year has fallen year on year since 2016/2017.
- Empowered staff and streamlined robust processes – the number of Brighter Future Champions has remained consistent at 110.
- Wider results from staff surveys around trust and communication – 87% of staff state that they feel trusted to do their job.
- Remote working is built into the ethos and ways of working within the organisation so that we release council office space. This is being taken forward as part of the *Future Workplace* workstream.

## **6 Consultation and Engagement**

6.1 Consultation with staff through the Pulse Survey is described above. Consultation with the trade unions has been carried out throughout the Programme.

## **7 Implications**

### **7.1 Legal**

7.1.1 There are no legal implications for the Council at this stage.

### **7.2 Finance**

7.2.1 The work is being done within existing resources.

### **7.3 Policy**

7.3.1 This is consistent with and complements the policy context set out in the Corporate Plan.

### **7.4 Equality**

7.4.1 The cultural change programme is all inclusive. Additional consideration is given to ensuring accessibility for all staff. Further links are being built with the EDI Board in the work undertaken on the future way of working.

### **7.5 Human Resources**

7.5.1 The outcomes of the programme inform and influence service redesign and restructuring and 'the deal' for our employees.

### **7.6 Risk Management**

7.6.1 The relevant strategic risks are capacity and demand (SR6) and dealing with the pandemic (SR11).

## **7.7 Rural Communities**

7.7.1 There are no implications for rural communities.

## **7.8 Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

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

## **7.9 Public Health**

7.9.1 There are no public health implications for the Council.

## **7.10 Climate Change**

7.10.1 The new ways of working will contribute towards a reduction in the amount of commuting and travelling carried out in staff. This will support the Council's pledge to become carbon neutral by 2025.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Sara Barker Sara.barker@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 686328
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Milestones Appendix 2 – Staff survey infographic
Background Papers:	All information in relation to the Brighter Future Culture Programme can be viewed on Centranet.