

Scrutiny Committee

Review of Staff Morale



Final Report – August 2017

Agreed by the Scrutiny Committee: 6 September 2017

Task Group:

- ▶ Councillor Matthew Tomlinson (Chair)
- ▶ Councillor Colin Coulton
- ▶ Councillor Keith Martin
- ▶ Councillor Karen Walton

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is all about challenging decision made by the Council and other local organisations, keeping an eye on local issues and reviewing local policies.

In other words, Scrutiny acts like a watchdog for the people of South Ribble. It is about helping the council to work with local people, partners, other businesses and organisations and voluntary and community groups, to improve the quality of life of residents in the borough.

Scrutiny:

Challenges local performance so that we can raise standards, ensuring the services provided meet customers' expectations;

Questions the decisions of the Council's cabinet and other local organisations;

Reviews policies and becomes involved in the development of new policies;

Holds inquiries and reviews services provided by public organisations on issues of public interest or concern e.g. local hospitals, the police, fire service, utility companies etc.

Makes recommendations for action, change and improvement.

Who is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is made up of twelve members of the Council who are appointed by all members of the council on an annual basis.

How can you get involved?

Local people and organisations have an important part to play in the Scrutiny process. If you use a service it is important that you let your councillors know your views on how it could be improved.

You can do this in a number of ways:

- ▶ Attend meetings
- ▶ Suggest a topic
- ▶ Get involved in a consultation

You could be asked for your views on an issue or be invited to provide specialist knowledge you have by being a witness in a Scrutiny review or by being co-opted onto one of the task groups.

More information?

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Chair's Foreword

Like most Members, the Scrutiny Committee was extremely concerned at the powerful results of the employee survey results from November last year. The Scrutiny Committee has tracked the Council's improvement journey with keen interest and decided to carry out a more focussed piece of work to explore staff morale some 9 months since the survey.



We hope that this report provides a useful temperature check of the progress made in improving staff morale and helps to inform future plans. This review has been timed to help inform the work of the Council and new Chief Executive in developing the organisation to ensure it is fit for purpose and delivers our vision and priorities.

We would like to thank everyone involved in this review for their support and providing honest and open feedback. We hope that we have done justice to the wide-ranging comments made and that our findings and recommendations make a real difference for our employees and the benefits that then has for Members, our residents and stakeholders, including employees.

Finally, we would like to place on record our admiration and appreciation to all employees for all their hard work day in, day out, in delivering quality services to our residents and making South Ribble a great place to live, work, visit and play.

Councillor Matthew Tomlinson
Scrutiny Committee Chair
On behalf of the Scrutiny Task Group

Rationale for the Review

In January 2017, the Scrutiny Committee considered the results of the employee survey conducted in November 2016.

The Committee expressed its deep concern with the results of the Employee Survey and recommended that the Leader develops a detailed plan of the steps that will be taken to respond to the issues identified in the survey and these be provided as a matter of urgency (minute no 35 refers).

At its meeting on 22 June 2017, the Scrutiny Committee received the following response from the Leader:

“The new OD strategy seeks to address: Leadership development, PDR process, Coaching and further employee surveys.

Poor communications has been addressed by the roll out of the new Communications Strategy agreed March 2017. This includes the launch of both Staff Connect and Councillor Connect both of which have been received well by staff and Members alike.

A staff panel has also been introduced to engage employees on a range of issues – using staff as a sounding board on new developments and improvement activities.

Member and officer relationships are being addressed in a number of ways. There are a number of externally facilitated workshops planned for Members together with a programme of activities to address Member conduct issues that are currently being developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny following its report published in April.”

Following this response the Scrutiny Committee agreed to carry out a review of staff morale (minute number 7 refers).

This review will consider the results of the survey and assess the effectiveness of the actions taken following the survey.

Scrutiny Committee Review Team

- ▶ Councillor Matthew Tomlinson (Chair)
- ▶ Councillor Colin Coulton
- ▶ Councillor Keith Martin
- ▶ Councillor Karen Walton

Review Aims and Objectives

- ▶ Review the steps taken to respond to the results of the employee survey.
- ▶ Assess the effectiveness of the actions taken following the survey and impact on staff morale.
- ▶ Consider the role of Members in inspiring and encouraging staff morale.
- ▶ Demonstrate to staff the commitment of Members to respond to their feedback and be the best possible employer.
- ▶ Consider best practice and complement the work of the new Chief Executive in engaging with employees.
- ▶ Make recommendations on how the Council could improve staff morale.

Links with Corporate Priorities and Corporate Plan

The review links with the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-2018

Corporate Priority:

- ▶ Efficient, effective and exceptional council

Corporate Outcome:

- ▶ More staff satisfied with the Council as a place to work

Key Action:

- ▶ We will implement a new Organisational Development Strategy and action plan and meet all the targets that are due for completion by 31st March 2018

This review also links with the Council's Improvement Plan and Transformation Strategy.

Methodology

The Task Group has carried out extensive research to inform their review and ensure that as many people as possible could get involved in the review:

- ▶ The Task Group carried out desktop research reviewing best practice from other Scrutiny reviews carried out by other councils around the country.
- ▶ The Task Group reviewed key documentation to set the context for the review including:
 - Employee Survey Results 2016
 - Employee Survey Results 2015
 - LGA Corporate Peer Challenge
 - Corporate Improvement Plan
 - Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Diagnostic Assessment
 - Organisational Development Principles
 - Transformation Strategy
 - Best practice publications and CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personal and Development)
- ▶ The Task Group has met on 7 occasions at the end of July and during August to carry out the review meeting with a selection of key Members and officers:
 - Councillor Peter Mullineaux, Leader of the Council
 - Heather McManus, Chief Executive
 - Tracy Boustead, HR and OD Consultant
 - Mark Hodges, Branch Secretary – UNISON union
 - Mark Gaffney, Director of Neighbourhoods, Environmental Health & Assets (representing the Senior Management Team)
- ▶ A focus group was also held with members of the Staff Involvement Group.
- ▶ The Task Group also met with Kash Haroon, Director at North West Employers' Organisation.

Key Findings

The Task Group has used all the research mentioned in the above methodology to come up with the following key findings that have been used in developing recommendations for the review.

1. The Task Group found that there had been a significant amount of work carried out since the employee survey results were published in January, which has included:

- ▶ New corporate plan, service plans agreed and higher proportion of appraisals carried out
- ▶ Centre for Public Scrutiny Diagnostic Assessment Team visited the Council, met with staff and reported back
- ▶ Peer Review Team met with staff and reported back
- ▶ Re-launch of CONNECT employee intranet to improve communications
- ▶ Regular Chief Executive and Senior Management Team blogs
- ▶ New Employee Involvement Group to act as sounding board created and increasingly being used
- ▶ Political Awareness Training has been rolled out for cross section of colleagues
- ▶ Senior Management Team and Core Managers' Team Workshop to look to the future and what needs to be done to achieve our vision and priorities
- ▶ New performance management framework in place
- ▶ New Transformation Strategy agreed, which acknowledges the need for us to re-connect with our staff, capture their voice and improve morale
- ▶ District Councils Network staff development opportunity attracted 13 applications, with two being submitted to the national scheme and those nominated taking part in corporate projects to help develop skills and in improvement activities
- ▶ Brand new Graduate Development Programme saw two graduates employed by the Council to strengthen corporate capacity

- ▶ Continuation of apprenticeship scheme with 10 apprentices appointed this year
 - ▶ Reduced sickness absence (final figures awaited)
 - ▶ Secondment opportunities available, such as Electoral Support Officer, Chief Executive's PA, transformation etc.
 - ▶ Softer improvements for staff: new settees in Coppice Room, table tennis table and social area at Moss Side Depot and Civic Centre
 - ▶ Continued other employee and health/wellbeing activities: pilates, badminton, Moss Side-deers charity walk, themed weeks in Gateway etc.
2. Whilst the above work is very positive, it is early days and there is more to do in engaging and particularly communicating with staff about them to ensure the outcomes become truly embedded.
 3. The appointment of a permanent Chief Executive has had a positive impact on staff, with the pace of change being significant with roadshows held with all staff. The Chief Executive led the sessions with the Leader introducing them and Cabinet Members listening to the outcomes.
 4. The new Communications Strategy has made a difference, but communications with staff continues to be seen to be a major problem – not just internally with employees but externally with residents and partners. .
 5. There appears to be a feeling that there is a differential approach to staff based at Moss Side Depot and the Civic Centre.
 6. There is genuine concern that the behaviour of some Members has had an adverse impact on staff morale, particularly in the inappropriate use of social media, but also their conduct in public meetings.
 7. The re-structure of the management team, which is currently being consulted upon, is seen as an opportunity to improve the managerial leadership of the Council.
 8. We heard much about the South Ribble Way, which is at its embryonic stage, but understand this will be an important element of defining the culture of the organisation.

Recommendations

1. The Political Group Leaders, and wider political group membership, consider how best they ensure that their Members' behaviour, on social media and in public fora, adhere to the Council's constitution, code of conduct and policies.
2. The Communications Strategy be reviewed and updated with an increased emphasis on everyone improving communications and further engagement with staff, such as:
 - ▶ Formalise the role, selection process and impact for the staff involvement group, including report to Members
 - ▶ Focus on those who don't have access to the CONNECT intranet
 - ▶ Service planning team away workshops
 - ▶ Strengthen the team briefing process to make it a more regular opportunity for dialogue between managers and staff that facilitates positive two-way communication
 - ▶ Maximise the use of staff noticeboards
 - ▶ Develop a staff suggestion scheme
 - ▶ Review reward and recognition mechanisms
 - ▶ Capturing staff stories and giving staff a voice
 - ▶ Improving the working environment
3. Bring forward the idea of having a quarterly 'health/temperature check' on staff morale to supplement the biennial staff survey.
4. The Council work with North West Employers' and other councils in devising a set of standard employee survey and engagement measures that can be effectively benchmarked.
5. Break the barriers down between Members and officers in an appropriate way to ensure clarity of roles, such as:
 - ▶ The proposed development of the Member / officer protocol to be clear on the way in which Members should work with staff and the standards of behaviour expected.
 - ▶ A Member / officer shadowing programme be developed so that there is a greater understanding of respective roles, responsibilities and expectations and pressures.
 - ▶ Quiz nights, Member / officer Mayoral events, bowling etc. be organised
 - ▶ The Leader and Chief Executive meet informally with a small cross-section of staff over lunch on a regular basis to discuss any issues and provide feedback.

6. Consideration be given to the workforce information provided to Members to ensure it is analysed and presented in a way that Members can effectively interpret and use in managing the Council's performance.