

Report of the Chief Executive

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT**

Purpose of report

To update the Committee on internal communications and employee engagement initiatives at the Council.

Background

In 2018, the Council adopted a new Communications and Engagement Strategy, which focuses on the importance of engaging and communicating effectively with employees.

Employee engagement can help improve performance, allow employees to feel more able to share ideas and help the Council to attract and retain talented employees.

Engaging employees is also directly aligned to the Council's values:

- Going the extra mile - a strong, caring focus on the needs of all communities
- Ready for change - innovation and readiness for change
- Employees - valuing employees and enabling the active involvement of everyone
- Always improving - continuous improvement and delivering value for money
- Transparent - integrity and professional competence

A full list of recent and current initiatives are detailed in the appendix.

Financial implications

There is provision within the 2019/20 budget for the initiatives set out in the appendix.

**Recommendation**

**The Committee is asked to NOTE the report.**

Background papers

Nil

**APPENDIX**Employee Forum

The Council's Internal Communications Group was established in 2017 to champion internal communications across the organisation. Their work so far has included re-launching the Employee Newsletter, establishing the Employee Awards scheme and launching Staff Shout Outs. In 2019, the group was rebranded as the Employee Forum and given a new remit to make recommendations on an agreed list of employee matters, as well as helping to shortlist the nominations for the Employee Awards.

Employee Communications Channels

A monthly employee newsletter is circulated via email to employees including important corporate updates, reminders on policies and procedures, as well as more fun and human interest stories. The newsletter achieves an average open rate of 80%.

Line Managers who have dispersed workers are asked to share the information provided in the newsletter at team meetings and any employees without a Council email address is able to request to have it sent to their personal email address.

Promotional messages are also shared through all staff emails, screen saver messages, noticeboards and posters in communal areas and toilets. As part of New Ways of Working, new technology has been introduced to allow for promotional messages to be displayed on TV screens across the offices.

Employee Awards

Since 2016, an Employee Awards scheme has been run to allow employees to nominate colleagues as Employee of the Year. In 2018, the scheme was extended to include Team of the Year.

Care to Share Suggestion Scheme

A new Care to Share suggestion scheme was launched earlier this year to encourage employees to come forward with their ideas about improving services, generate income or saving money. Since its launch in May, ten ideas have been suggested which the relevant Heads of Service are considering.

Back to the floor events

Regular 'back to the floor' exercises take place at Kimberley Depot and within the Housing Department to ensure employees that are not office based are engaged with and have a chance to raise issues. As a result, in Kimberley, 'you said, we did' feedback has been promoted to highlight that employee concerns are taken seriously and acted upon.

Building on the success of these 'back to the floor' events, the Customer Services Team have developed a programme of role swap/shadowing days where Officers take on different roles to enable them to see the job through new eyes and potentially suggest ideas.

#### Developing a strategic narrative

The Council's strategic narrative has recently been developed to help employees understand how we are going to make Broxtowe a great place and successes we have had so far. An infographic is currently being designed to help communicate this to dispersed workers and continuing to share this message through SMT, Team Meetings, Briefings, the Corporate Induction and our Internal Communications Channels will help employees see the role they can play in achieving our goals and encourage them to contribute by sharing ideas.

#### GREAT values

Significant work has taken place over the past year to help employees relate to and understand the Council's values and good progress has been made in adopting the GREAT values. Continuing to promote employee and organisational success in relation to the GREAT values through Employee News, Shout Outs, Employee of the Year and SMT illustrates to employees that the values on the wall are being lived out on the floor and is something to which we can all aspire.

#### Information Cascade

In order to engage people from all levels, it is essential that Managers are engaged with what we are trying to achieve. As part of New Ways of Working, the importance of regular 1-2-1s, team meetings and opportunities to share ideas with colleagues are emphasised.

Senior Management Team (SMT) monthly meetings provide a useful forum to ensure Heads of Service are equipped to cascade appropriate information to their employees and this is supported by Manager Briefing Packs for corporate projects.

Work is also on-going to encourage employees of their own responsibility to keep themselves up to date by reading the employee newsletter, reading the SMT briefing, engaging with team meetings, following our social media and chatting with colleagues in the break out areas. As part of this, social media viewing access has been opened up to all employees for business use so they can follow the Council online.

Video has also been used to provide information updates in a more engaging way, as well as directly including employees such as the Mental Health Awareness Week video which was written, produced and featured employees.

New Ways of Working has also allowed for more open office environments that promote better sharing of information across departments.

### New Induction Format

A new format for Employee Inductions has been developed to make it more engaging for new starters and ensure they understand the Council's vision and values from the start of their employment. This has included a 'Welcome To Broxtowe' video featuring current employees. As part of their induction process, employees also meet GMT within their first few weeks.

### Roadshows

As part of the recent Let's Talk Broxtowe consultation, five employee roadshows were held, including three at Kimberley Depot to encourage employees to share their ideas about the Corporate Plan and encourage them of the role they play in continuous improvement.

Each year, employees in the Housing Department are invited to attend a Housing Conference which includes updates on service achievements and future developments, as well as a chance for team building across the different arms of the Department.

### Campaigns

Recent campaigns, such as Clean and Green have included a focus on employee engagement as part of their objectives, helping employees get involved in activities beyond their usual day job.

### Communications Toolkit

As part of the Communications and Engagement Strategy, an employee Communications Toolkit was created to help employees communicate better externally, as well as with other employees. The toolkit included a Communications themed Snakes and Ladders game to help explain the communications planning process in a more engaging way.

### Union

Trade Unions are consulted on any HR policy developments/changes. They are represented directly on the internal Health and safety group. Committee reports which have significant HR elements – e.g. departmental restructures, also are the subject of consultation before proceeding to committee.

### Mental Health Employee Champions Group

Since December 2018, the Employee Champions Group has met regularly (normally monthly) to discuss ideas, initiatives and support the awareness of mental health within the workforce. The group is made up of a cross-section of the workforce from different departments, including Kimberley Depot. The mandate of the group is as follows:

1. To promote employee resilience and wellbeing

2. To encourage positive behaviours and attitudes resulting in a happy, compassionate and supporting working environment for all employees.
3. To create conditions where people feel comfortable and safe to be open and honest about their feelings and to encourage good listening skills and skills in supporting people who face mental health challenges
4. Provide appropriate training for managers on the importance of good mental health in the workplace and their responsibilities in promoting good mental health and supporting employees with mental health difficulties with compassion and empathy
5. To help develop self-sustaining healthy teams
6. To develop resources for good mental health - including signposting
7. To give people strategies and tools to promote mental wellbeing
8. Help people to understand anyone can suffer from mental health conditions and there should be no negative stigma attached to asking for or needing help with mental health difficulties

A number of initiatives and events have been organised to increase engagement:

- Happy Calendars are now distributed to communal areas and noticeboards every month.
- A number of Mental Health magazines have been subscribed to and are distributed to breakout areas.
- Dedicated health and wellbeing page on the intranet signposting to support and advice.
- Internal promotional campaigns during Mental Health Awareness Week and Mental Health Day.

### Kimberley Depot

At Kimberley Depot, regular toolbox talks take place on general updates and issues, as well as health and safety matters to ensure employees without computer access are kept informed and have opportunities to speak to colleagues and Managers. New electronic business signage will also be introduced shortly to share promotional messages and updates.

### Surveys

Several surveys have been completed as New Ways of Working is rolled out to assess how employees are managing the change and how they feel about the working environment.