Developing a People and Organisational Development Strategy

Background

1. This work reflects the continued interest in capturing the organisational benefits of employee engagement as set out in the 2009 Macleod report *'Engaging for Success'* [1]. The benefits include increased productivity and performance and a greater overall commitment to the organisation and willingness to innovate. The People Strategy was to be based on the data collected across the organisation through a range of diagnostic approaches.

2. It was agreed that John Barradell would be the project 'sponsor' and Charlie Stewart the lead and that John would 'launch' the work with an announcement at a Senior Managers Forum on 21 June 2011. The work would take account of other organisation-wide initiatives taking place such as:

    - the development of the corporate plan for 2011 - 2015
    - the bi-annual staff survey due to take place in November 2011
    - the One Planet Living approaches
    - the 'work styles project'
    - the organisation re-assessment for Investors in People early in 2012

3. It was intended that the approaches would engage colleagues in a discussion of the broad employment issues that were important for the organisation and the City and to them as individuals.

Scope and approaches

4. The scope of this work would be the 'total system', that is, it would not be specific to any single service area and we would not begin with a particular organisational problem to solve.

5. The approaches would be:

    - collaborative and open
    - developmental, emergent and adaptive with no immoveable plans or deadlines
    - 'realistic' and set within the current climate (political, economic, social & technological)
    - engagement would be both an 'outcome' and a 'process'
    - communication would be two-way - to build collective ownership of the strategy

6. These approaches were designed to allow us to adapt the work to the needs and preferences that were expressed by those taking part in the exercise. The aim was to encourage open and honest discussion and feedback, even when that feedback might be uncomfortable to hear. It would also be important to respond swiftly and honestly without seeking to overly 'manage' any difficult messages.

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[1] www.bis.gov.uk/files/file52215.pdf

Aims and themes

7. The People Strategy will support the delivery of the organisational priorities laid out in the Corporate Plan by describing how we need to attract, engage, support & develop colleagues to provide the best services for the City.

8. The aim of the work would be to align employment strategies to emerging themes and priorities and create an organisational (collective) narrative that reflects organisational values and behaviours. This would be supported by a series of action plans and programmes to deliver the desired outcomes.

9. Although it was recognised that the themes may change as a result of the diagnostic exercise, initially four broad subject categories were identified:

   - **our changing environment** ~ economic, political, social & technological
   - **the changing organisational culture** ~ values and beliefs
   - **our working lives** ~ health, wellbeing and development
   - **organisational effectiveness** ~ goal clarity and performance

Activities

10. These included:

   - ten questions were posted on the Wave (intranet) over ten weeks and colleagues were encouraged to participate in a live 'real-time' discussion. The questions were selected, to provide full coverage, from those suggested by colleagues. There were posters and postcards for those without ready access to the Wave and the issues were discussed in the printed Wave bulletin. There were more than 600 responses.

   - a 'world café' event where we invited participants from partner organisations from across the City to share their experiences of working with the council. We also asked them to tell us how they thought we should build closer and more collaborative working relationships for the future.

   - a number of discussion groups on the four subject categories

   - staff survey – feedback from 50% of colleagues across the organisation

   - People Strategy focus groups to discuss the emerging themes from engagement with staff. 500 colleagues said that they would like to attend and focus groups took place in December 2011 and January 2012

   - sessions and discussions with the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB), the Corporate Management Team (CMT), the Staff Consultation Forum, the Staff Workers Forums and the leadership of the Administration

11. An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared on the diagnostic process. A similar assessment will be required in due course on the content of the Strategy.

Emerging themes

12. Twenty themes have emerged from the engagement activities. These themes have been set out in a range of documents and discussed at the focus groups. We are also planning to share an account of the process so far and the emerging themes in a communication tool called a 'Prezi' which we may be able to present at the OSC meeting.

13. The twenty themes are beginning to be organised into a framework to give a structure and shape to the People Strategy. The framework includes three values and behaviours that have emerged as important and continuous threads throughout our work, they are also featured as the three (external) priorities in the Corporate Plan:

   - engagement
   - equalities
   - sustainability

1. The analysis of the great many views that have been expressed through the engagement process is just starting. Some are not surprising considering this time of considerable change.

Next Steps

14. The diagnostic phase will be completed by the end of January 2012 and the senior management will be engaged in developing the draft People Strategy to discuss with colleagues across the organisation before Easter. This draft strategy will then go forward through the organisations various decision making bodies along with a series of action plans. At this point and having had a chance to review with the appropriate Members Committee, OSC may wish to consider looking at the strategy while at this development stage.

15. We will build measures into our action plans that will allow us to evaluate the success of this work and to report back to the organisation.