

Report of the Chair

Engagement and Inclusion Cabinet Advisory Committee – 1 April 2015

STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Purpose: To improve staff engagement and internal communications with and for all staff of the City & County of Swansea.

Reason for Report: The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance requested a report on the current situation and for recommendations on possible improvements.

Recommendation(s): It is recommended that:

- 1) The findings of the Cabinet Advisory Committee be noted;
- 2) A clear action plan is developed for improving staff engagement/internal communication based on the best practice seen;
- 3) Consideration be given to resourcing a member of staff to lead on staff engagement e.g. Staff Engagement Manager;
- 4) Options for staff champions for engagement within all parts of the Council are explored;
- 5) Short term (3-months) actions to show immediate improvements that are visible to staff are implemented;
- 6) Performance management and recruitment reflect the importance of people management/staff engagement in the role of ALL managers;
- 7) A 40% return is targeted in the next staff survey with staff being able to complete it anonymously;
- 8) Staff recognition is reviewed and suggestions made on how this can be improved in the future e.g. staff awards etc.

Report Author(s): Cllr Erica Kirchner and Rhodri Jones, Stakeholder and Communications Manager (Education)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In order to improve staff engagement within the City & County of Swansea the Cabinet Advisory Committee (CAC) was actioned with looking at examples of good practice in various organisations to see how the City & County of Swansea can learn from others and make improvements to how it engages its staff.
- 1.2 Members of the committee visited the DVLA in Swansea and looked at example of good practice at Admiral, the National Health Board and Engage for Success. Following the visit Rhodri Jones attended a meeting of the committee to provide feedback.
- 1.3 On arrival at the DVLA we were given a brief tour of the facilities. This included large community areas for staff to congregate and hold events, a staff gym and fitness studio, an open and welcoming (yet outsourced) occupational health service, a resource centre (including library and PCs) and a staff Starbucks café. The brief tour was followed by a presentation by the Head of Internal Communication.

2.0 DVLA Visit – Internal Communications

- 2.1 The DVLA employs 4800 staff based in their Swansea and Swansea Vale offices. Over the past few years they have looked at their internal communications and looked to make improvements for the benefit of their staff.
- 2.2 These changes have included using the Government Digital Service (GDS) to break down some communication barriers. The GDS is leading the digital transformation of government, making public services digital by default, and simpler, clearer and faster to use.
- 2.3 The internal staff magazine has been replaced with web chat, blogs and corporate videos with senior managers taking part and recording pieces to camera. Staff have been trained to use the various avenues and comments were made that this has led to improvements in the output produced.
- 2.4 The staff intranet has been re-designed recently with the newly launched site being well received by staff. An offer was made for City & County of Swansea staff to visit in the future for a more in-depth look at the process used and how the improved site was developed.
- 2.5 The DVLA have encouraged anonymous staff feedback to ensure that all staff feel comfortable in sharing their views without any individual being attributed to the views. This has led to an improved response rate.

- 2.6 The DVLA use Yammer extensively for staff communication on various aspects of its work. It has allowed its use to grow organically and hasn't put any pressure on officers to use it. They now have 1500 users.
- 2.7 A final key comment on internal communication from the DVLA highlighted the importance of the tone of the language that you use with staff. To quote, "You need to keep it real, not over shine your wording and keep it honest."

3.0 DVLA Visit – Staff Engagement

- 3.1 We received a presentation from the Support Engagement and Survey Manager looking at how the DVLA delivers staff engagement.
- 3.2 The current return rate for the DVLA staff survey is 68%. This is compared to 20% in the recent City & County of Swansea survey. The engagement score from this survey has gone from 51% to 60% in the last 5 years. It is important to note that the DVLA's staff survey is completed anonymously by staff.
- 3.3 Following the completion of the staff survey, focus groups are held with groups of staff to look in more detail at the results and look at how things are improved for staff.
- 3.4 The DVLA has 9 engagement managers who are based in different parts of the organisation. These individual members of staff focus purely on staff engagement in their own areas and run focus groups for staff to discuss staff survey issues, have an understanding of different staff groups in their area, are responsible for issues/ideas logs, keep a live timeline of actions since the last survey and co-ordinate all staff communication within their own area.
- 3.5 In addition to the engagement managers there are further staff engagement volunteers within teams. These members of staff have clear objectives and play a vital role as organisational ambassadors. Their roles receive recognition via the appraisal process and there are numerous examples of them changing the views of apathetic staff.
- 3.6 The importance of staff knowing their organisational journey came out strongly from the DVLA, as it did from the City & County of Swansea staff survey. It is also important to record the milestones along the way to ensure that staff are aware and signed up to the plan of action.
- 3.7 It is the role of line managers, with the support of the executive, to create conditions for engagement with lower level staff. It is the people in the directorates that know how best to give messages and when. The DVLA have provided training to managers on staff engagement with strong support coming from senior managers to make this a priority.

- 3.8 It was recommended from the DVLA experience that the City & County of Swansea take each individual point from the staff survey and tackle them. Regular feedback then needs to be provided to staff on what is being done and when.
- 3.9 Staff recognition is also given a lot of attention by the DVLA. This can be anything from a simple thank you to an awards ceremony at a specific point in time. At the DVLA the quarterly staff awards are funded by the staff themselves via a ticketed event.
- 3.10 We were encouraged to look at what is available on the Engage for Success website, as this is a good starting point for everything to do with staff engagement.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 Following our visit and some further research we would make the following recommendations:
- The findings of the Cabinet Advisory Committee be noted;
 - A clear action plan is developed for improving staff engagement / internal communication based on the best practice seen;
 - Consideration be given to resourcing a member of staff to lead on staff engagement e.g. Staff Engagement Manager;
 - Options for staff champions for engagement within all parts of the Council are explored;
 - Short term (3-months) actions to show immediate improvements that are visible to staff are implemented;
 - Performance management and recruitment reflect the importance of people management/staff engagement in the role of ALL managers;
 - A 40% return is targeted in the next staff survey with staff being able to complete it anonymously;
 - Staff recognition is reviewed and suggestions made on how this can be improved in the future e.g. staff awards etc.