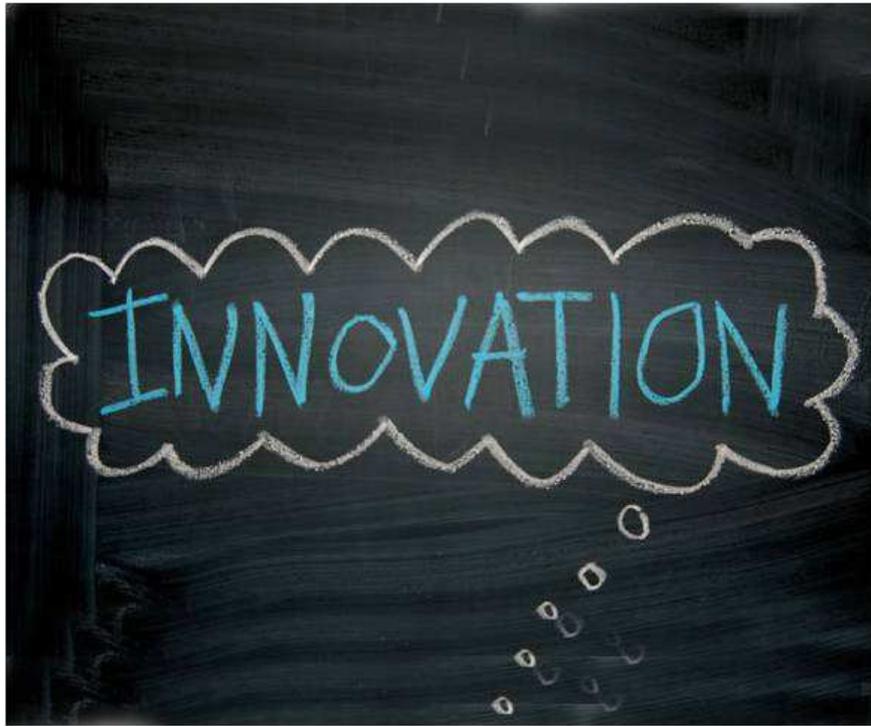


## **Can do, yes please**

*How can Swansea Council ensure that service delivery is always supported by a can do culture?*



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**The Corporate Culture Scrutiny Inquiry Panel**  
**City and County of Swansea - Dinas a Sir Abertawe**



June 2015

## Why This Matters by Councillor Andrew Jones (Convener)



This topic was chosen for scrutiny because, as a Council our corporate culture underpins everything we do, from how we engage with our citizens and provide services to how we treat our staff and how we grow and develop as an organisation.

There is no one overarching culture within the Council, rather a number of shared cultures that operate within the Council to bind us together as one organisation. However, the challenges faced by cuts to Council budgets and the threat of public sector reorganisation pose a serious threat to that notion of a shared culture.

Therefore as Councillors, management and staff we have a shared responsibility to respond to these challenges by developing a “can do culture” that ensures the citizens of Swansea continue to receive the best Council service possible.

The evidence represented in this report clearly shows that there is a genuine will and enthusiasm from all involved to develop a “can do culture” throughout the Council. However this can only be achieved through the development of a clear shared vision that encourages innovation, values staff and puts in place mechanisms that empower and motivate all involved to deliver high quality services.

I am pleased to see that the both the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance and the Director of Corporate Services have already embraced some of the ideas outlined in the report and we hope that all our recommendations will be welcomed by the Cabinet.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow panel members for their diligence and hard work in carrying out this inquiry. I would also like to thank the many officers and witnesses who willingly gave their time to present evidence to the panel as it was this evidence that helped shape our report, its key findings and recommendations.

## **Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

*How can Swansea Council ensure that service delivery is always supported by a can do culture?*

### **Conclusions**

1. Drive organisational change forward in a systematic way
2. Develop a strong and clear Swansea Story
3. Develop the skills and improve the attitudes of Managers across the organisation
4. Change staff attitudes, develop staff skills, overcome barriers to improvement develop innovation and actively encourage staff to question how we deliver our services
5. Recognise that visibility in all aspects of the programme will be key to driving change
6. Develop our income generation potential and engage staff in this
7. Be more customer centred
8. Do more targeted work by focusing in on areas for development through a more holistic and co-ordinated approach
9. Develop the role of councillors in improving the councils corporate culture
10. Monitor progress regularly include looking at good practice

### **The Panel recommends that Cabinet:**

#### **Long term challenges**

1. Ensure sustainability of a can do culture by embedding it in all aspects of organisational development.
2. Embrace a wide range of innovation methods to bring about organisational changes including using for example systems thinking approaches and user stories to help inform work.
3. Develop skills for using these methods internally within the Council in the longer term to avoid the cost of 'buying in' expertise.

#### **Medium term improvements**

4. Develop and deploy a holistic and co-ordinated approach for improving the organisational culture using a targeted approach by:
  - a) ensuring staff are engaged in the Swansea Story
  - b) developing a prioritised shortlist of those services to be targeted
  - c) introducing a development programme for Managers specifically around supporting and empowering staff including managing effective change
  - d) introducing a peer coaching initiative for Managers

- e) considering staff training needs for any future changes
- 5. Establish a streamlined measuring and monitoring process for driving improvement which is incorporated in the balanced scorecard.
- 6. Produce a single action plan that incorporates the recommendations from the peer review, staff survey, Corporate Assessment and the outcomes from this inquiry with clear development milestones.
- 7. Compare the outcomes of the annual staff survey with customer survey and publicise the results.
- 8. Take steps to ensure new staff receive corporate induction within 1 month of starting work with the Council.
- 9. Review the corporate induction programme to ensure it includes required behaviours for a can do culture and information on the innovation programme.

### **Quick wins**

- 10. Provide a clear instruction to managers prior to the next survey to maximise completion of staff survey within their teams.
- 11. Set a target for completion of the staff survey of at least 50%.
- 12. Provide guidance to managers to ensure a consistent approach to staff Induction.
- 13. Ensure that Senior Managers and Councillors model the behaviour they would like to see from staff by building innovation into manager's personal development plans and councillor annual training programmes.
- 14. Ensuring managers incorporate innovation into staff appraisals, 1-2-1s and team meetings.
- 15. Increase the variety of ways the Innovation Programme reaches staff and publicises activities considering tools like an 'innovation blog' and recording sessions accessible to staff on the Intranet.
- 16. Encourage Senior Managers to undertake 'back to the floor' type activities with the outcomes forming part of the innovation blog.
- 17. Enable Councillors to be included in innovation activities including open invitations to Purple Room events and activities including publicising these activities on councillor micro site.
- 18. Develop a procedure for Councillors to be able to spend time in an observational/shadowing capacity within different Council departments.
- 19. Meet with Trade Unions to discuss how they might be involved.

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# 1. WHY WE PRODUCED THIS REPORT

## Overview

1.1 In selecting this topic and producing this report we wish to underline both the significance of Corporate Culture and the challenge that comes with ensuring the Council is always supported by a positive can do culture. We recognise that this work takes time to achieve in such a large and complex organisation and that it is ongoing forming a major part of the Sustainable Swansea: Fit for the Future programme. Our report aims to contribute to developing and improving the corporate culture across the organisation.

## Selecting the topic

1.2.1 The Inquiry into Corporate Culture was proposed at the Annual Scrutiny Work Planning Conference in May 2014 and was subsequently included in the scrutiny work programme by the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

1.2.2 This topic was chosen because Councillors recognised that having the right Corporate Culture was essential if the Council is to effectively tackle the challenges it faces. It was recognised that the staff culture needed to focus upon empowerment, personal responsibility, innovation and collaboration.

## Sustainable Swansea: Fit for the Future Programme

1.3.1 Sustainable Swansea, fit for the future is the council's long term plan for change in order to address the financial, demographic and social challenges facing Swansea. The savings of £70 million that will need to be achieved over the next three years illustrates the scale of this challenge and why change will need to be radical and far reaching.

1.3.2 The Council recognises that getting the right Corporate Culture is essential. Sustainable Swansea has four workstreams, all of which are relate directly to our organisational culture. These are:

- Efficiency
- New models of service delivery
- Prevention
- Stopping services

1.3.3 This innovation programme, which has been developing is underpinned by, Sustainable Swansea: Fit for the Future Programme and the Council's Policy Commitments, those particularly relevant to this piece of work include:

- Policy Commitment
- Innovation strand
- Income generation strands

1.3.3 Further information about Sustainable Swansea can be found at:  
[www.swansea.gov.uk/sustainableswansea](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/sustainableswansea).

## Intended contribution

1.4.1 As a Panel we believe that we can make a valuable contribution from a Councillor perspective to improving the Corporate Culture of this organisation.

We recognise that the challenges are varied across the council and that one size does not fit all.

1.4.2 We hope that this report gives a health check on where we are currently and acts as a springboard to further improvement.

1.4.3 Specifically this report aims to contribute to this vital debate by giving cross party councillor views on the work in progress and making suggestions for further improvement. It is in this spirit that our conclusions and recommendations are offered.

## **2. EVIDENCE**

### **Evidence Collected**

2.1.1 Evidence was collected between December 2014 and April 2015. In total seven evidence gathering activities were undertaken by the Panel as follows:

- a. Q&A with Director of Corporate Services and Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
- b. Visit to the Purple Innovation Room<sup>1</sup> and presentation and Q&A with the Innovation Co-ordinator
- c. Roundtable meeting with staff who are Innovation Leads
- d. Annual corporate Staff Survey results
- e. Q&A session with Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance
- f. Survey of Councillors
- g. Information on good practice
- h. Q&A with Councils Commercial Manager

2.1.2 For full details of how the evidence was gathered including details of all of the findings from each session please see the findings report for this inquiry. This report can be downloaded at [www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications)

## **3. CONCLUSIONS**

(The Panel's conclusions are based around answering the inquiry key question) *How can the City and County of Swansea ensure that service delivery is always supported by a can do culture.* The Panel concluded that the Council should:

### **3.1 Drive organisational change forward in a systematic way**

3.1.1 The Panel recognise that the Innovation Programme has made a good start but the organisation must be more systematic in the way it drives change

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<sup>1</sup> Purple Room – an area to enable individuals and teams to meet away from their desks in a more flexible space specifically to think about new and improved ways of working. This room is available for activities related directly to innovation.

forward using a more co-ordinated and targeted approach. The Panel agreed with the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance that a 'cultural jolt' is needed and particularly that we must address the blame, rule and process bound culture of the organisation. This should allow staff to take more personal responsibility, be more collaborative and ultimately more innovative. Behaviours are changing but there is still a lot of work to be done. The Panel believe this will require a combination of approaches tailored to different parts of the authority. The Panel will in this report detail what they mean by this statement.

- 3.1.2 The Panel recognise that the council does not work in isolation and that it is subject to the same influences and social changes as other public sector organisations like advancing ICT, pace of life, work life balance and public expectations. We acknowledge that it is a complex organisation, made up of a wide variety of different services, recognising that *one size will not fit all*. We will need to tailor the innovation and organisational change work around what is required by each service area while keeping to the same vision and message of the organisation.
- 3.1.3 The Panel looked at desk based research around different models for organisational change along with key indicators of change and concluded that many of the outcomes found mirror those highlighted as issues here in Swansea.

***Challenges to culture change in the public sector, pointers to implementation***

In implementing culture change the evidence suggests:

- It is important to clarify, develop and sustain a shared vision across all services and at all operational levels within each individual service.
- Managers and practitioners should take time to reflect on their role and consider how they can effect positive change, and what change will mean for people supported by services.
- Leadership should be developed and demonstrated at all service levels.
- Staff training needs to be considered for current and future changes.
- Streamlined systems for recording and assessing impact of culture change need to be implemented.

**Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services in Scotland (IRISS)**

- 3.1.4 We recognise that the recent Peer Review<sup>2</sup> will also be an important driver for change and that many of the Panel's findings mirrored those within that report. The Panel were encouraged to see that many of the recommendations and the main theme of the report was about developing our culture and approach. The Panel were keen to see the action plan arising from the Peer Review being taken forward in conjunction with the outcomes highlighted in the corporate staff survey, the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment<sup>3</sup> outcome and those highlighted by this scrutiny inquiry.

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<sup>2</sup> Peer Review – The Council underwent a Wales Local Government Association critical friend Peer Review in 2014

<sup>3</sup> Corporate Assessment: A Corporate Assessment is a periodic in-depth 'health check' which all councils in Wales are given and will look at the work of all areas of the organisation

## 3.2 Develop a strong and clear Swansea Story

3.2.1 The Panel agreed with the Peer Review that Swansea needed a stronger vision and clear message about what we are trying to achieve. We were encouraged to hear that the Review found overall that *Swansea is a good council, doing good things and is aware of what it needs to do to change*. The Panel believe it is important that the authority is able to be self critical and able to assess what it needs to do in order to make changes.

**Areas of strength and weakness identified in the Peer Review include:**

- A strong sense of pride in the City and County of Swansea was highlighted
- Swansea was a good council doing good things and is aware of what it needs to do to change, is self aware
- Need a stronger vision, a Swansea story, narrative that brings things together about what we want to achieve. Work has started on this.
- Needs to be quicker at decision making.
- Actions rather than meetings.
- Need to work more as one council breaking down silos.
- Leadership including Councillors must be visible and 'walk the talk'.
- Need to establish more of a role for the council as a city leader and develop our brand/approach.
- Need to be more commercial by trading and exploiting our assets.

3.2.2 The next important step will be getting staff to 'buy in' to the Swansea Story and ensuring commitment to those priorities. Getting the message out there to all staff will be absolutely vital. The Swansea Story needs to matter to staff, and must include what we trying to achieve. Staff must be able to understand where they fit into the Story. This will be an important role for managers. Staff must be clear about what they can actually do to improve services. The Panel believe that staff (and managers) also need to understand what innovation actually means to them i.e. that it can be small ideas within their work as well as big ideas for how to change and run services. The Panel was of the view that staff needed to understand what will be in it for them, what is their motivation for change - will this be for example better processes, a better service for the end user, a better more empowered working environment etc.

3.2.3 Communicating with and engaging staff across the Council in this process is vital. The Panel heard about the work that is currently being done around internal communications and were supportive of the new Staff Engagement Strategy. The Panel heard that the council has a number of ways of engaging with employees but found one of the biggest challenges was engaging with those staff who work more remotely and/or do not have access to IT at work. This is where getting the basics of staff appraisals, 1-2-1's and team meetings is essential in order for information to be cascaded to and for feedback to be initiated.

## 3.3 Develop the skills and improve the attitudes of Managers across the organisation

3.3.1 Our message and approach must be clear that managers must engender an environment of trust where staff feel they are able to be innovative within their work environment, feeling empowered to make suggestions and carry through change. The Panel recognise that this is not necessarily something that all

managers are currently skilled to do, that many will need to learn how to get the best from staff through coaching and empowerment rather than micro management. Supporting and empowering staff should be a key tool in a managers' portfolio of skills, development in this area is therefore especially important. We must move away from micro management, wasting time, controlling small detail and move towards encouraging staff to be more self-aware.

- 3.3.2 We need to address any potential barriers to engaging with the innovation programme. This includes changing attitudes of staff particularly where a block has been identified at middle manager level. It is important that managers portray the wider picture and a positive and encouraging attitude to their team's involvement in innovations activities.
- 3.3.3 It appears historically that many managers across the organisation have been subject specialists rather than people managers. We must identify and address the deficit using management training, peer mentoring and through future recruitment practices.
- 3.3.4 There must be a clear expectation that managers take time to connect regularly with their staff. Engaging with them through consistent and regular appraisals, 1-2-1's and team meetings.
- 3.3.5 Issues identified in the staff survey particularly around bullying and harassment must be addressed. The Panel were pleased to hear that the council has made it clear that there is a zero tolerance policy in this matter and managers should play a role in ensuring this policy is active.
- 3.3.6 New and existing managers will need specific training in how to support and empower staff. Some may need more support than others, requiring more than simply a few hours in off-site training and then be expected to be able to empower their staff. Some managers may require a more hands on approach for example peer mentoring from fellow experienced people managers. The authority needs to be certain that all managers have the capacity and ability to do this; this should to be monitored and follow up training offered if required.

### **3.4 Change staff attitudes, develop staff skills, overcome barriers to improvement, develop innovation and actively encourage staff to question how we deliver our services**

- 3.4.1 The Panel found the Purple Room concept is a good one and supported the notion where staff are given the space to innovate whether this is physically in the actual 'purple room' or elsewhere.
- 3.4.2 The Panel were keen to hear about some of the events that have taken place and about what happens to many of the ideas that arise through these sessions. We wanted to explore what happened to those ideas but were disappointed to hear that they were not recorded and tracked. The Panel did recognised that this would be rather labour intensive but felt it could help to provide a clearer understanding of what is happening in departments to new ideas/innovations and identify where barriers might be. The Panel did also feel that it is important for service managers to have responsibility for this. The Panel did recognise that there is no central budget for innovation work.

- 3.4.3 It was also thought that the authority could build upon and capitalise more on the work that is being done in the purple room sessions and other related activity by reaching a wider audience through accessing and participating in activities in different ways including remotely, investigating the Webinar or similar type activity and recording sessions to view on line after. The importance of communicating outcomes and successes of these sessions and innovation work more widely was raised. For these reasons the Panel suggest that an innovation blog is put in place. This could be modelled around the successful chief executive's blog and be open to views, ideas and comments. One example of this is the Local Government Information Unit blog at <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/blog/> which is clear and encourages comments and debate on issues blogged. The Panel were pleased to hear that an innovation newsletter was circulated on a quarterly basis which is made available to all staff, recognising that only 40% of staff may have access to any online activity.
- 3.4.4 The Panel heard about the Innovation Leads Network and were impressed with the enthusiasm and experience of the staff from the innovation community who participated in the roundtable meeting with them. The Panel considered this community of approximately 85 staff to be a hugely beneficial tool in helping to take the message across the council.
- 3.4.5 Some of the barriers identified through the councillor survey to developing a 'can do' corporate culture were poor communication, not engaging with staff and resistance to change.

The innovation community is a virtual community and is open to any member of staff who is involved in or interested in innovation, continuous improvement and change activity. The purpose of the community is to:

- Help drive cultural change and support the corporate change agenda
- Assist with delivery of the Sustainable Swansea Fit for Future Programme
- Develop officers to support/lead change, improvement and innovation
- Create a forum to support idea development and design
- Share and research best practice
- Provide a mechanism for practitioners to network
- Provide information and advice on relevant subject areas

**Terms of Reference of the Innovation Community**

- 3.4.6 The Panel found the issue around changing the blame culture in the organisation as a particularly difficult one and hard to change because we do not work in isolation with the organisation being influenced by internal and external attitudes. We therefore need to counteract the *blame environment* prevalent outside the council as well as internally, including for example bad publicity and public criticism.
- 3.4.7 The Panel also recognised the difficulty and barriers to the council becoming less risk adverse. There are many influences on council staff around this including the importance of holding the public purse and ensuring we are not taking undue chances with public money. We recognise that this is a fine balance to strike and staff, managers and councillors fear getting this wrong.

We were encouraged by the work being completed by the Councils Commercial Team around income generation and raising staff awareness.

- 3.4.8 The Panel would like to emphasise the role that can be played by Trade Unions within the organisational change process. Developing a good relationship with unions can both enable views from a staff perspective and help get the message out there to all staff especially those staff not on email system.
- 3.4.9 The Panel were provided with information on the first council wide survey of staff since 2005 and were informed that there at been a response rate of 25%. This is a disappointing uptake and a more consistent completion of the survey by staff across the council was needed. It had been accessible online via internal and external website, with hard copies available for staff not on email. A total of 2227 responses were received. The survey will be run annually and work to address the next survey completion rates will be made running up to that. We believe it is essential that this work is done to improve the response rate and also to engender more trust in the process. The Panel were pleased to see work in relation to this was planned.
- 3.4.10 The perception that staff suggestions are not taken seriously was identified as a barrier to completion which the Panel believe will ultimately cause disengagement and disinterest amongst staff in the innovation process if not addressed. It was also believed that managers could have a much stronger role in emphasising the importance of completion of the survey especially in reaching those staff that are not on email/Intranet.
- 3.4.11 The Panel found the outcomes of the most recent staff survey was largely positive and was reflective of many of the issues arising from the peer review. The Panel thought it would be beneficial to correlate the outcomes of the staff survey with any customer surveys annually to identify commonalities and issues to be addressed.

***Staff Survey Results – Actions agreed by Executive Board***

- Publicise results to staff
- Develop and promote the Swansea story to provide clear vision
- Adopt a zero tolerance approach to harassment, bullying and abuse
- A commitment to ‘continue the conversation’ with staff by improving day-to-day engagement led by managers
- Provide more opportunities for staff to participate and become involved, including new staff suggestion scheme
- Develop service-based action plans to tackle ‘local’ issues raised in the survey

- 3.4.12 There is a clear need to improve the consistency and promptness of Induction practices for new staff within the Council. We were informed that e-learning is available but believed that there also was a need for a human element. Part of it must be ‘face to face’ with managers. Managers need to introduce staff to ‘can do’ ways of working including the importance of the innovation programme and the Sustainable Swansea agenda. This should be done with all new staff and done quickly after starting with the organisation. A form of induction also needs to be in place for any short term Agency staff to ensure they are clear about our ways of working.

3.4.13 Changing attitudes will be central to improving the culture and especially in creating a 'can do' attitude. The Panel recognise that culture change can be a gradual process especially where staff may have been required to be rather process bound. It is a challenging process getting staff to change their mindset to be more problem solving. This will be essential for staff and the organisation in meeting future challenges.

3.4.14 Staff morale was recognised as a potential barrier which the Panel believe will need to be addressed. Attitudes and motivation in some areas may be more negative, where some members of staff may have experienced displacement, redundancies and negative job evaluation grading.

3.4.15 The Panel were pleased to hear about the revamped staff suggestion scheme, hoping it will provide staff with another avenue for ideas. It is essential that a clear process to feedback the outcome of their suggestions is built into the process.

### **3.5 Recognise that visibility in all aspects of the programme will be key to driving change**

3.5.1 The Panel agreed that it was important that staff see the bigger picture of the organisation and understand the wider delivery of services, suggesting that this will help them move away from silo working and encourage new methods of working that are more joined up and less bureaucratic in nature.

3.5.2 The Panel found that there is a need for greater visibility with staff of Senior Officers and Councillors both Cabinet Members and elected councillors more widely. The Panel wished to emphasise the importance of demonstrating the drive for change and leading by example. Breaking down barriers between the executive board, councillors and staff is important for example through more activities like 'back to the floor' and spending time with staff especially in the front line services. Publicising this work and what was learnt to staff via the internet or an innovation blog would help with extending this visibility.

3.5.3 Showing visibility in what we are doing as an organisation around innovation and culture change including publicising success stories is essential. This blog should also be public to encourage external and public engagement.

### **3.6 Develop our income generation potential and engage staff in this**

3.6.1 It is important that we meet the challenge as a council of reduced budgets by increasing income generation. In order to do this we need to actively adjust staff attitudes and thinking to become more commercially minded. The Panel agree that many staff across the organisation have the skills and expertise to identify and progress income opportunities but we need to increase this knowledge base. The Panel emphasised the importance of staff being kept aware of developments and of the achievements made to ensure that staff recognise that the very best is being done to retain services and jobs. They need to understand that their input and assistance is absolutely vital. There is a role for this in the new Employee Engagement Strategy.

3.6.2 The Panel found that one of the barriers was at middle manager level, where ideas are not always encouraged or taken seriously. The Panel agreed that

all managers at all levels of the organisation must understand how important it is for ideas and innovations to be nurtured and recognised. Staff must also receive feedback about the progression of their ideas/innovations.

- 3.6.3 The engagement of staff and councillors in developing the council's income generation potential as well as identifying areas of waste was seen as key to addressing the Councils budget challenges.

### 3.7 Be more customer centred

- 3.7.1 We must as a Council regularly look at how we operate and ensure we are being customer centred. Panel members particularly mentioned the issues of not being 'shunted' about the organisation when you have a query or request. Helping customers at the initial point rather than 'passing calls on' was encouraged. This will require staff to work together more effectively and not just in departmental boxes. Some improvements have been made in relation to silo working but the Panel believe that this is still an issue that needs to continue to be addressed.

- 3.7.2 We must look at our systems and processes from the viewpoint of the customer. This will include removing unnecessary or inadequate processes and procedures. User stories<sup>4</sup> can also be a useful tool when looking to improve services. It is vital that staff are closely involved in this as they are in the best position to identify, understand and rationalise these processes. It will also help to ensure 'buy in' to the new ways of working which in turn will make them more sustainable.

#### ***The Importance of organisational culture***

The patient experience can be key to transforming the organisation. For patient experience to be used effectively within an organisation, the organisation needs to be prepared to change. There is no 'tick box' exercise, but rather a fundamental engagement with the idea of starting with the patient.

However, culture change is challenging, particularly when the change can threaten traditional ways of working. NHS organisations reported that investment in understanding patient experience and providing support for staff at all levels is necessary to achieve a real change in culture.

One senior manager explained '*just having a nice big action plan was not enough, there was a need for staff to believe in what they were doing. Its addressing staff attitude and values head on*'.

**NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement**

- 3.7.3 The Panel were keen to hear about 'systems thinking' work within the council and also encouraged the use of 'user stories' to inform services/process changes. The Panel understood that the authority is 'buying in' expertise to do some 'systems thinking' work but would like to see staff internally trained within the organisation to carry out these activities in the longer term. The panel were subsequently informed that the expertise that has been brought in has been to 'up skill' a core number of employees so they are able to support the systems thinking work with the purpose that staff internally carry out these activities going forward.

<sup>4</sup> User stories – information collect from service users about what they want from a particular service.

### 3.8 Do more targeted work by focusing in on areas for development through a more holistic and co-ordinated approach

3.8.1 We recognise that a lot of work is already being done in relation to changing the organisational culture here in Swansea but the Panel felt that for it to be most effective the authority will need to draw it all together in a more targeted, co-ordinated and joined up way. This would require a 'co-ordinated hit' on areas across the authority with the aim of tipping the balance in favour of an excellent can do culture.

3.8.2 In order to do a co-ordinated hit in areas of the council those services that will benefit most will need to be identified. A priority list of areas to be targeted should therefore be identified. The Panel did look into this aspect but from their evidence do not get a clear message about who should be prioritised. But did agree that it should start with those services with the most public face. It will be beneficial to pilot this in smaller area/s, with quick wins along the way publicised. This will help raise morale and ensure a co-ordinated approach.

3.8.3 Targeting areas with a co-ordinated approach should include:

- Training for managers in supporting and empowering staff
- System thinking work
- Consistent appraisal, 1-2-1 and team meeting processes incorporating innovation time within these
- Innovation awareness and events for staff and managers
- Visibility of senior managers and Councillors raised
- Encouragement of staff suggestions, recording and tracking these to fruition, identifying any barriers, publicising outcomes and feedback to staff.
- Involvement of trade unions

*Issues highlighted by staff in respect of innovation and the culture of the organisation*

- Innovation is often seen as something that is nice to do than something that is part of the day job.
- Suggestions put forward by staff going unanswered.
- Staff are being 'blocked' from engaging with the programme or attending events.

*Themes to overcome barriers and encourage innovation and creating a can do culture*

- Programme of events for senior leadership team
- Heads of Services are involved in developing a programme for middle management development.
- Innovation built into Employee Management process with managers.
- A back to basics approach is adopted and checklist of behaviours is to be developed in respect of leadership style.
- Staff given space away from job to innovate
- Senior Management Group and role of the quarterly meeting to be reviewed to incorporate more problem solving sessions

*Linked to above, Peer Review suggests:*

- All Directors and Heads of Service to specifically host action learning events
- Develop a programme of positive change stories for the public and internally 'INSPIRE'
- Develop a programme of member seminars focussed on change agenda
- Develop a programme of public seminars focussed on change agenda

**Director of Corporate Services Overview Report 12 November 2014**

3.8.4 Once targeted work moves on from an area we must ensure there is follow up/monitoring in place to ensure successes are sustainable.

### **3.9 Develop the role of councillors in improving the councils corporate culture**

3.9.1 The Panel were keen to emphasise the importance of engaging and involving councillors in improving the corporate culture of the organisation. The Panel were pleased to see from our councillor survey that 86% of those who responded felt well informed about matters relating to corporate culture so the next step in for them to feel well engaged in the process.

3.9.2 The Councillor Survey highlighted that they felt they could best contribute to the development of a 'can do' culture in Swansea by meeting and talking with staff, demonstrating and reinforcing the 'can do' culture, improving communication and thinking more widely and not just within their own wards.

3.9.3 Visibility and involvement of councillors was seen as important to improving organisational culture. Building relationships with officers is seen as important, especially for councillors to get to know the staff in different parts of the council. The Panel liked the idea of Councillors having the opportunity of spending a little time in a chosen service, to see how it works and maybe shadow an employee.

3.9.4 The ideas identified in the councillor survey to improve the corporate culture within the organisation included working together and engaging with all staff and residents, strong leadership, regular communication, staff rewards and the importance of a no blame culture.

*How do you think Councillors could best contribute to the development of a 'can do' culture in Swansea?*

- By talking and meeting staff in all services that the Council provides so that it shows we are all working for the citizens of Swansea.
- Communication is vital. Meetings on a regular basis. Making clear what the policies are & monitoring the implementation of any new policies. Work together with staff however good scrutiny is a priority.
- Councillors can help by getting the council to understand the frustration experienced by their Council Tax Payers.
- Invite all councillors to put up a suggestion for something off the wall, at least twice a year.
- Be prepared to adopt practices that may go against political views.
- Being more visible
- Important to think beyond own ward, strive to achieve improvements beyond self-interest - however, this has to be balanced by representing the interests of own constituents. Not accept status quo: challenge 'official views' of officers if they stand in the way of making things better. Actively listen to constituents and, even if a request appears to be unfounded, make enquiries before coming to conclusions (sometimes something 'ludicrous' turns out to be a misunderstanding and has real value).
- We need to be included in all aspects of Sustainable Swansea, then if we know what is on the agenda and we understand we can gently deliver the message to the people of Swansea. Also when we try to engage with officers they accept we are part of this organisation and that we need to work together.
- Demonstrate a desire for change

**Councillor Survey February 2014**

### **3.10 Monitor progress regularly include looking at good practice**

3.10.1 The Panel explored how we might know when we have an excellent corporate culture and how will we measure it? The difficulty in measuring attitudes and creating a benchmark was recognised but the Panel believed that some of the best ways to do this could include annually:

- a) Staff survey, benchmark established this year.
- b) Customer survey, benchmark established.
- c) Focus group with staff
- d) Focus group with users
- e) Consulting with councillors, views sought

3.10.2 The results of the Councillor survey suggested that the main indicators of a can do culture should include the following and these should be recognised in any measuring/monitoring process developed:

1. A willingness to try new things
2. Satisfied customers
3. A no blame culture
4. An organisation that listens and responds to staff and the public
5. Where ideas and innovations are embraced
6. Where staff feel happy

3.10.3 Evidence gathered suggests making connections with other organisations is a positive thing. Reviewing our practice and looking at innovations elsewhere will ensure that we are at the top of our game. It is important to see how others, with similar pressures, are improving their organisational culture. The Panel recognise that one size does not fit all but by continuing to be outward looking and seeing how others are operating will always be of benefit.

3.10.4 Ensuring that we plan for the sustainability of any culture change was seen as essential - we must not take our eye off the ball when attention moves on from the issue.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel commends Cabinet to consider all issues and ideas raised by this inquiry and, in particular, the recommendations set out below.

The Panel recognises that the Authority

- (a) will need to ensure that any subsequent actions are legal and meet the requirements of any relevant legislation;
- (b) has a responsibility to make the best use of limited resources and that any additional costs will need to be considered carefully as part of the annual budget setting process.

The Panel has kept these principles in mind in the course of its investigations.

## **The Panel recommends that Cabinet:**

### **Long term challenges**

1. Ensure sustainability of a can do culture by embedding it in all aspects of organisational development.
2. Embrace a wide range of innovation methods to bring about organisational changes including using for example systems thinking approaches and user stories to help inform work.
3. Develop skills for using these methods internally within the Council in the longer term to avoid the cost of 'buying in' expertise.

### **Medium term improvements**

4. Develop and deploy a holistic and co-ordinated approach for improving the organisational culture using a targeted approach by:
  - a) ensuring staff are engaged in the Swansea Story
  - b) developing a prioritised shortlist of those services to be targeted
  - c) introducing a development programme for Managers specifically around supporting and empowering staff including managing effective change
  - d) introducing a peer coaching initiative for Managers
  - e) considering staff training needs for any future changes
5. Establish a streamlined measuring and monitoring process for driving improvement which is incorporated in the balanced scorecard.
6. Produce a single action plan that incorporates the recommendations from the peer review, staff survey, Corporate Assessment and the outcomes from this inquiry with clear development milestones.
7. Compare the outcomes of the annual staff survey with customer survey and publicise the results.
8. Take steps to ensure new staff receive corporate induction within 1 month of starting work with the Council
9. Review the corporate induction programme to ensure it includes required behaviours for a can do culture and information on the innovation programme.

### **Quick wins**

10. Provide a clear instruction to managers prior to the next survey to maximise completion of staff survey within their teams.
11. Set a target for completion of the staff survey of at least 50%
12. Provide guidance to managers to ensure a consistent approach to staff Induction.
13. Ensure that Senior Managers and Councillors model the behaviour they would like to see from staff by building innovation into manager's personal development plans and councillor annual training programmes.
14. Ensuring managers incorporate innovation into staff appraisals, 1-2-1s and team meetings.

15. Increase the variety of ways the Innovation Programme reaches staff and publicises activities considering tools like an 'innovation blog' and recording sessions accessible to staff on the Intranet.
16. Encourage Senior Managers to undertake 'back to the floor' type activities with the outcomes forming part of the innovation blog.
17. Enable Councillors to be included in innovation activities including open invitations to Purple Room events and activities including publicising these activities on councillor micro site.
18. Develop a procedure for Councillors to be able to spend time in an observational/shadowing capacity within different Council departments.
19. Meet with Trade Unions to discuss how they might be involved.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Panel is very grateful to everyone who contributed to the inquiry.

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## **ABOUT THE INQUIRY PANEL**

The **Corporate Culture Scrutiny Inquiry Panel** was established by the Scrutiny Programme Committee on a task and finish basis to carry out this work. It is a team of cross party Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. The role of inquiry panels is to examine a strategic issue of concern and to make recommendations about how policies and services can be improved.

### **Members of the Panel**

Andrew Jones (Convener)  
Jan Curtice  
David Cole  
Paul Meara  
Anthony Colburn  
Erika Kirchner  
Nick Davies  
Mandy Evans  
Joe Hale  
Terry Hennegan  
Mike White

### **NEXT STEPS**

The report will be presented to Cabinet for decision. The Panel will reconvene within 12 months from decision to follow up on progress with the implementation of recommendations agreed by Cabinet and assess the impact of its work.

The inquiry was supported by Michelle Roberts from the Council's Scrutiny Unit.

### **For further information contact:**

Michelle Roberts  
Scrutiny Officer  
City and County of Swansea  
[Michelle.roberts@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.roberts@swansea.gov.uk)  
 01792 637732