

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

28 June 2017

Lead Officer Response, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, into the Scrutiny Review on Health & Wellbeing and Morale

Report of Councillor N Barker, Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for Human Resources, Training and Member Development

This report is not for publication under Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

Purpose of the Report

- That Cabinet confirm acceptance of the Scrutiny Review recommendations, attached at **Appendix 1**, to the report.
- That Cabinet approve the action plan, attached at **Appendix 2**, to the report from the Lead Officer.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to detail the lead officer's response, Assistant Director – Human Resources and Payroll, to the findings on the Scrutiny report on Health & Wellbeing and Morale. The Review details the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Panel. Please refer to **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The lead officer's response to the review is contained in the Action Plan, which details proposals of how officers intend to address the recommendations made by the scrutiny panel, if Cabinet confirms the acceptance of the Scrutiny recommendations. Please refer to **Appendix 2**.
- 1.3 The review aimed to speak to staff directly about their Health & Wellbeing and Morale in order to gather further evidence on issues that had been raised in the Council's recent Employee Survey and Health & Wellbeing Survey.
- 1.4 A copy of the Report produced by the Organisation Scrutiny Committee is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.5 The recommendation was that Cabinet and the Chief Executive consider how the issues raised in the review report could be improved.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 Cabinet are asked to confirm their support for the review recommendation.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to agree the actions identified in the action plan, attached at Appendix 2, to the report.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 As part of the scrutiny review various officers and leavers were consulted.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 That Cabinet confirm acceptance of the Review recommendation and approves the Action Plan attached at **Appendix 2** to this report.

5 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: <i>BDC: Revenue - £75,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £150,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £250,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
District Wards Affected	N/A
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	Transforming our Organisation

6 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1 2	Organisation Scrutiny Committee – Report Health & Wellbeing and Morale Scrutiny Review Action Plan
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
None	
Report Author	Contact Number
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AGIN10- (CAB 0628) H&WB & Morale Scrutiny Review/AJD

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

10 May 2017

Health & Wellbeing and Morale Scrutiny Review

Report of Councillor B Wright - Chair of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee

This report is not for publication under Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

Purpose of the Report

- To ask Cabinet to approve the recommendation of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee's Review of Health & Wellbeing and Morale.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 The Organisation Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of Health & Wellbeing and Morale as part of its work programme for 2016/2017 following the Employee Survey and the Health and Wellbeing Survey undertaken by the Council. It was felt timely to review this area as the Authority had undergone a significant amount of change in recent years. This had occurred as a result of a number of drivers, including the formation of the Strategic Alliance in 2012, the move to new office premises in 2015 and a number of transformation projects undertaken to respond to the decreasing funding being provided to Local Authorities.
- 1.2 The review aimed to:
 - Speak to staff directly about their morale and Health & Wellbeing in order to gather further evidence on issues that had been raised in the Employee Survey and the Health and & Wellbeing Survey.
- 1.3 The Review Panel met on six occasions to consider the scope of the review, any relevant documentation, key issues they wanted to discuss with staff and the method they would use to hold informal discussion groups with staff. Two discussion groups were held.
- 1.4 The review recommendation was:

- That the Cabinet and Chief Executive consider how the issues raised in this report could be improved.

2 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

- 2.1 To support the Council in its review of Health & Wellbeing and Morale within the Authority.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 As detailed in the full report.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

- 5.1.1 This will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendation as part of the Lead Officer response.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

- 5.2.1 This will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendation as part of the Lead Officer response.

5.3 Human Resources Implications

- 5.3.1 These will be determined if Cabinet decide to accept the Scrutiny Review recommendation as part of the Lead Officer response.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1 To ask Cabinet to consider the recommendations in paragraph 1.4 of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee and if accepted ask the Chief Executive to provide a response in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is an executive decision which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
District Wards Affected	N/A
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	N/A

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
A	Health & Wellbeing and Morale
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number
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**NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

**HEALTH & WELLBEING
AND MORALE**

APRIL 2017

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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee. It details the findings conclusions and recommendations of the Committee from its Health & Wellbeing and Morale Scrutiny Review.

Members of the Committee felt that it was timely to review this area as the Authority had undergone a significant amount of change in recent years. The Authority had also undertaken an Employee Survey and a Health and Wellbeing Survey recently and the Committee felt it would be useful to hold some informal discussion groups with staff to gather further evidence arising from the survey results.

I would especially like to take this opportunity to thank the members of staff who took the time to participate in the focus groups the Committee held and also for their openness and honesty in the discussions.

I would also like to thank members of the Committee and Sue Veerman our Scrutiny Manager for the work they undertook in gathering the evidence and co-ordinating the review.

Councillor B Wright

Review Panel

The review panel comprised the following members:

Councillor B Wright	-	(Labour) – Review Panel Chair
Councillor J Barry	-	(Labour)
Councillor A Dale	-	(Conservative)
Councillor B Lewis	-	(Conservative)
Councillor T Mansbridge	-	(Labour)
Councillor B Ridgway	-	(Labour)
Councillor L Robinson	-	(Labour)
Councillor R Welton	-	(Conservative)
Councillor J Windle	-	(Labour)

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That the Cabinet and Chief Executive consider how the issues raised in this report could be improved.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 At its meeting on 27th July, 2016 the Organisation Scrutiny Committee considered a number of topics for its Scrutiny Review. The Authority had recently undertaken an Employee Survey and a Health & Wellbeing Survey to look at Health & Wellbeing and Morale within the Authority. The Committee thought this would provide a useful topic for the Committee to look at. It was agreed that the Committee, in support of these initiatives, would hold some informal discussion groups with staff to gather further detailed evidence which had produced the survey results.
- 2.2 The Committee also thought it timely to review this area as the authority had undergone a significant amount of change in recent years. This had occurred as a result of a number of drivers including the formation of the Strategic Alliance in 2012, the move to new office premises in 2015, and a number of transformation projects undertaken to respond to the decreasing funding being provided to Local Authorities.

3. Scope of Review

- 3.1 The review panel wished to speak to staff directly about their morale and Health & Wellbeing in order to gather further evidence on issues that had been raised in the Employee Survey and Health and & Wellbeing Survey.

4. Method of Review

The review panel met on six occasions to consider the scope of the review, any relevant documentation, key issues they wanted to discuss with staff and the method they would use to hold the informal discussion groups. Two discussion groups were held.

5. Evidence and Research

- 5.1 A number of documents and evidence were provided to the review panel for consideration. Details are provided below:
 - Reward, Recognition and Retention Framework
 - Did You Know Poster
 - Bolsover and North East Derbyshire Healthy Workplaces Survey
 - Employee Survey
 - Employee Assistance Programme report and promotional poster
 - Online links to Health and Wellbeing documents

6. Key Findings

6.1 Strengths

6.1.1 How do you feel about working for North East Derbyshire?

- The majority of interviewees said they thought North East Derbyshire was a good place to work overall and compared well to the private sector. One interviewee said they loved working here but preferred private. Several said that they genuinely liked working for the Council and enjoyed their job. Comments were made that serving the public was still important to them. The Authority was considered friendly and had a lot of nice people working for it. However, some of these statements were qualified because working life at the Council was getting increasingly more difficult and the pace of change was constant.

6.1.2 Has the Strategic Alliance changed your working environment?

- Benefits arising from entering a Strategic Alliance mentioned were that some people had seen enhanced job roles which had been a positive experience. Several interviewees said that in their area staff seem to get on well as a team but they were trying to work through the Strategic Alliance issues that arose. These are dealt with under section 6.2 of the report.

6.1.3 How safe and secure do you feel in your work place environment?

- The recent installation of CCTV was welcomed and had improved the sense of safety. Further comments are made in section 6.2 of the report.

6.1.4 Which are the most helpful ways that the authority support staff wellbeing at North East Derbyshire?

- A number of statements were made in support of this question and the benefits the Council provided that interviewees valued. These included the flexi scheme and holidays that allowed staff to have a work life balance. Both these facilities were highly regarded by the focus group attendees.
- Reference was also made to the Councils provision of a counselling service which was regarded as a good service both for the people that have used it and managers who refer members of their staff. This provision was seen as positive, helpful and improved sickness levels. Phased returns after sickness was also raised as beneficial and worked well for some.
- The free gym and leisure centre use was also seen as a real benefit to people's health and wellbeing. Comments made included, invaluable and the swimming pool at the Leisure centre is brilliant. Facilities such as boilers to make tea and microwaves to cook lunch at Mill Lane were also appreciated by the interviewees.
- Other statements raised under this section included staff road shows and the formation of the Healthy Living Group. The recent healthy heart checks

provided in January, 2017 were regarded as good and worthwhile attending. The impending promotion of a walking group was also welcomed as a positive measure.

6.1.5 How does the Council communicate to you the value of your work?

- Comments were made that members make staff feel valued and some interviewees said they had received merit and compliments from them that recognised the work they were doing.
- In one of the focus groups it was commented that if the department had done well they may get a visit from the Chief Executive or a member of the Senior Management Team to say thank you or well done. However, the comments in the other focus group were a different experience. Several interviewees said their immediate manager was very good, was supportive and discussions on achieving targets were held.
- Other areas raised included the recent chairs drinks which were regarded as a nice event and a good gesture that was appreciated. The Employee Awards were also mentioned with the proviso that only a limited number of people are recognised and at times of restructures and redundancy people can be cynical of such events.

6.2 Areas for Improvement/Observations

A number of areas were identified by interviewees that are impacting on their morale and health and well being. These comments are documented to demonstrate how the focus groups said they felt and what they thought could improve the situation.

6.2.1 Workloads

- Workloads were one of the most significant areas raised. It was stated that the benefits of working for a Council for some were now becoming outweighed by the changing workload. Entering the Strategic Alliance had made this worse for some staff. A number of other comments were made. People are pushed to the limits by the day job. Staff are resigning themselves to do best endeavours rather than previously doing a good job. When I first came here, loved it but times have changed, stay for flexibility now and pension. Having to pick up workload not being done by manager.
- Restructures were raised as having a significant impact as staff have been made redundant and vacancies are not always filled when people leave. Other comments made included people picking a variety of extra tasks up, which go unnoticed. Workloads have increased but these are unmonitored. The recognition and the logistics elements have gone because of the increased pressures. Some part time staff are being asked to work extra hours to cover gaps. Some don't wish to do so but feel they have to support colleagues. People's experience of the budget cuts varies between sections. Some stakeholders thought they had been large, others thought they had not

suffered as much as some. Recognition by some that good management by the Authority may have contributed to this.

6.2.2 Pay

- A number of issues were raised by staff under this heading. The impact of a seven year pay freeze had caused a significant issue for people. This had been made worse for those sections that had also had reductions in pay/grade through restructures. Interviewees commented that Job Evaluation not necessarily a positive now and by some seen negatively as a pay restraint method. This feeling that it is being used as a cost cutting exercise has had an effect on morale. Staff appear to be earning less on the scheme with this becoming the norm. The Job Evaluation progress not ideal now as handwritten form completed first with the computer system being updated afterwards. Original Job Evaluation Exercise several years ago was positive for some but not sure that would be the case now, does worry me. Already been re-graded last year, now doing it again. Comments also made on staff helping to make savings by loss of essential car user allowance, using their own cars, paying for car parking at Saltergate, although this is not the case at Mill Lane which is good. Morale is up and down after several years of efficiency savings.

6.2.3 Strategic Alliance

- Comments made about the commencement of the Strategic Alliance are as follows. Has changed our working environment, we are not a joint service but our managers are. Time to sit down with them and get help is difficult. Manager still finding out who does what. The lack of cover/backup was mentioned by several officers. A lot of time is wasted travelling between two sites. It does cause morale issues and unsettlement.
- Strategic Alliance has meant more work, less pay and more responsibility for many. Issues with joint service having two separate salaries between North East and Bolsover which has caused contention, with Bolsover getting more salary. This does affect morale and team work. Salary difference causing disunity. Do try to work together but relations not good for some. There is a disparity in pay, people doing same job but paid differently.

6.2.4 Working Environment

- Staff toilets are smelly and don't flush properly, gets into the corridor. Red hot water in the taps is a hazard. Disabled toilets used by public are not in a good state of repair. There are no baby changing facilities, tiles are missing off the wall and they don't flush well. There are also not enough toilets the public can use when attending meetings.
- Basic hygiene measures in the kitchens, like washing up liquid and tea towels would help with sickness. Provision of water coolers would be welcomed
- The varying levels of temperature were raised as a major issue for comfort when working. The one that received the majority of comments was heat in offices. This was made worse by lack of enough ventilation because most of the windows don't open fully in offices and other parts of building as they have

restrictors on them. This does not allow for sufficient airflow to circulate. Fans help to some extent but air con should be considered where appropriate. Some do have a problem with cold as well dependent on location within the building.

- The location of the building was discussed. People felt they were isolated and had little to do at lunch time. The canteen was used by some but some staff felt it is a bit sterile. Measures had been taken to improve it such as settees and a television but staff thought this could be looked at further to make it more comfy. The provision of tables and benches was raised as a positive measure that had been taken. These were very well received by staff. Requests were made for more benches to be provided on the outside of the building (not in the quadrangle) because some people prefer to sit out of view.
- Staff felt that the location could easily be improved with some simple measures. Suggestions put forward were a programme of lunchtime events so staff had something to do. These could be health related like cholesterol and blood pressure checks or courses or talks. It was felt this would also encourage more interaction within the building. Events would need to be staggered so people can attend sessions but staff would appreciate this. The recently formed Healthy Living Group could help provide some of these events. Mental Health awareness was mentioned as it was thought it was not always there with some staff. Some had been on courses which have been very helpful but one interviewee said he would like to see them rolled out across the authority. Mindfulness would be another helpful session. It was felt that a good working environment will improve morale.
- Some comments on rooms were the Council Chamber not considered fit for purpose and the lack of sufficient meeting rooms. A Loop system being available in meeting rooms was also raised.
- Some joint officers commented on Bolsover offices. They said they did not find them a comfortable environment as many of the offices were large and noisy. Space at Bolsover for staff working at both sites was also a squashed space to work in. Another comment was that people don't always have a desk at North East and Bolsover as there are not enough, so they have to share.

6.2.5 Safety

- Lighting in the car park was considered inadequate and it was very dark and felt unsafe. Some improvement had been made but more was still needed. More signage in the car parks was required to stop the public driving out the wrong way. It's an accident waiting to happen was one comment made. Travel on the buses, walking to and from the bus stop was described as very dark, lonely, and scary, without enough lighting.
- Some interviewees were concerned when working late as only the cleaners were in the building, no cars were parked outside and no-one was about. Also limited caretaker provision because not in the building as doing other duties like courier runs. Feel people could be attacked and it would not be noticed. Safety in reception was raised as the doors don't lock properly and people

coming in out of hours. CCTV had now been installed round the building which is better but it was not monitored so late leavers still vulnerable.

- An issue was raised that lots of adaptors being used in one socket because not enough plug sockets.

6.2.6 Sickness

- With regard to sickness some staff said they felt pressured to not be sick. Policies had not changed but people feel pressured. Understand have to have targets to control and bring down sickness but feel consistent implementation by some managers and explanation not always there. Sickness reviews are increasing. Stress and depression are high and increasing. One interviewee felt we could be more supportive of some staff sickness with mental health issues. An interviewee said she had not thought of leaving but sickness and wellbeing management needs improving. Occupational Health not considered useful, bit of a tick box exercise.

6.2.7 Other

- Some other thoughts expressed included some said they don't feel valued but others said that morale came from within their individual team rather than from above. EDPR can be tick box for some and we need to ensure a consistent approach by managers across the Authority. People are raising that they wish to stay with North East and progress at appraisals but jobs are going external without opportunity for people to apply and develop internally first. We need to train our own staff rather than relying on agency staff.
- Not all services enjoy equal benefits like flexitime and extra leave when regularly working extra hours. More tuition needed from HR on policies so people understand them. Managers don't get opportunity to talk together any longer.
- Some people feel scared to express views because of fear of redundancy and also opportunity to do so has decreased. People fighting for jobs because of restructures and it was felt the culture was an economic one. Some feel there is a disconnect and detachment present. Visibility of Senior Management Team was also raised. Some staff felt they needed to see them walking about the building, speaking to staff and have face time with them. It was understood that they are busy and under pressure but very important to be seen. People need to feel they care and understand what is happening at ground level. Some officers attend management meetings so get this time but not always experienced by those lower down.

7. **Conclusions**

- 7.1 The review panel heard views from a mix of staff during this review. A number of positive comments were made about working for the Authority and recognition was demonstrated that staff were aware of the difficult environment Local Government as a whole was working in.

7.2 However, some areas for improvement were identified. Some of these were very easy measures that could be taken which would help improve the working environment for staff. Others were more difficult around pay and harmonisation of terms and conditions.