

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Tuesday 25 September 2018

Present

Cllr M Mackrory (Chairman)	Cllr M Hardware
Cllr V Metcalfe (Vice-Chair)	Cllr J Moran
Cllr J Abbott	Cllr R Pratt
Cllr J Beavis	Cllr A Sheldon
Cllr M Garnett	Cllr M Steptoe
Cllr I Grundy	

Apologies

Cllr I Henderson	Cllr A Turrell
Cllr W Schmitt	

Andy Gribben, Senior Democratic Services Officer was in support of the meeting.

1. Membership, apologies and declarations

Apologies were received from Cllr Henderson, Cllr Schmitt and Cllr Turrell.

Cllr Grundy acted as a substitute for Cllr Schmitt.

No declarations of interests were received.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 31 July 2018 were agreed as an accurate record by the Chairman, pending one alteration which has now been amended.

3. Questions from the public

There were no public questions.

4. Your Voice Focus Groups – initial findings

Cllr Mackrory welcomed the following officers to the meeting:

- Pam Parkes, Director, Organisation Development and People
- Craig Tubbs, Employee Experience Lead

Cllr Mackrory began by providing the committee with the context around this item. This topic was originally brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Board by Gavin Jones, Chief Executive at its meeting in May 2018. Concerns were raised around some of the negative feedback received following the staff survey and suggested that the relevant scrutiny committee receive more detailed information around the results of the survey.

In introduction, Pam stated she appreciated the concerns raised by the Chief Executive around how staff were feeling and is aware that happy staff means productive staff.

Prior to this being raised at the Scrutiny Board, the Chief Executive had already commissioned Pam's team to undertake more detailed work to find out more about the results of the staff survey.

The staff survey was conducted in March 2018 and around 5000 employees completed it, which equates to around 58% of the total workforce and was felt to be a good response rate.

The survey was conducted by an independent, third party company – the reason being that it gave staff confidence that would be managed well, remain anonymous and response put forward would not be pre-vetted.

Up until 2016, previous staff surveys have been conducted yearly however following review this approach was changed and the surveys are now undertaken on a bi-annual basis. The reason for this was that it was felt that the annual surveys were not providing the right sort of trend data.

Overall, the employee engagement index went down by 2% compared to the survey completed in 2016. Pam felt this was not a dramatic reduction in engagement. Over the last two years, there has been significant change in how Essex County Council (ECC) conducts itself and its leadership. Employees have gone through the organisational redesign as well as changes to pay and contractual terms and conditions.

The two main issues that arose from the staff survey were around:

- Change is not managed well
- Didn't feel ECC had its customers at the heart of everything

The main positive from the survey was that employees felt the perception of leadership and management had improved significantly. The Chief Executive had one of the highest scores in terms of employee perception around his leadership. There were also indications of improvement around employee development, communication and collaboration.

During July and August, the Employee Experience team ran 12 Your Voice Focus Group sessions across the County, at all of ECC's main office building sites.

There were two ways employees could sign up to attend one of the groups. Firstly, there was a sign up option which could be accessed via ECC's Intranet and OneNews site. The second option used random sampling to generate a list of employees across different teams, job roles and length of service who received a personal invitation to attend one of the sessions.

In total, 80 employees attended across the 12 sessions, which were hosted by a member of the Employee Experience team.

Cllr Beavis left the meeting at 11:15am.

The committee were encouraged to hear about the work that has been undertaken and were pleased to hear that so many staff attended the staff roadshows.

Consideration is being given to holding meetings outside of County Hall, to increase engagement with those employees who are not based in Chelmsford, making management more visible.

There is no structural format around identifying hidden staff talents during these surveys. There is a desire to improve this however the system at the moment is not sophisticated at the moment. It is important to see staff as rounded individuals.

In summary, a report on the outcomes from the Your Voice Focus Groups will be written and presented to the committee at its October 2018 meeting.

5. Summary of committee activity since September 2017

This report was noted by the committee. Some of these items will fall into this year's works programme.

6. Work Programme – September 2018

The updated work programme was noted. A further planning session took place upon conclusion of the formal meeting.

7. Date of future meetings: 2018 – 2019

The dates of future meetings were noted by the committee. All meetings will commence at 10:30am, following a private pre-meeting at 9:30am.

Calendar invites for these meetings have been sent to all committee members.

8. Date of next meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 30 October 2018.

9. Urgent business

No urgent business was received.

10. Urgent exempt business

No urgent exempt business was received.

The meeting closed at 11:40am.

Chairman