

Agenda Item

Executive Board

12 April 2006

KJ



Investors in People - Summary of Assessor's Report

Summary

Following the successful Investor in People assessment, this document summarises the external assessor's report and highlights the main reasons why this badge of best practice was achieved. This report also provides a detailed action plan to demonstrate how the Council will approach areas for improvement.

Recommendation

That the Executive Board note the contents of this report and agree to the proposed action plan.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To ensure that the reasons for the Council's success are understood and that the actions to address improvement are agreed.

b) Alternative Options

Not to agree the action plan.

c) Risk Considerations

Loss of Investor in People status.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

All actions contained in the action plan are within existing agreed budgets.

e) Date for Review of Decision

The Investors in People status will be externally assessed every three years.

1 Main Body of the Report

1 Strengths and areas of good practice

The report highlighted the following areas and the wording in the bullet points below has been lifted directly from the assessor's report.

- 1.1 There has been a concentrated effort toward ensuring that the training and development offered meets the needs of the Council, individual teams and professional requirements. As a result everyone feels that there is a good opportunity for them to enhance their knowledge and skills and there are some excellent examples where people have been able to completely retrain. For example a dog warden retrained to join ICT.

- 1.2 The appraisal and ensuing training request and evaluation process is working well.
- 1.3 Staff appreciate the opportunity to discuss their training needs and understand the need to reflect on how their learning has benefited both themselves and their team. The one to ones that have been introduced are excellent in ensuring that agreed actions are followed up and staff report that this has been a useful opportunity to discuss what has been learnt and how it is being applied. In time these will also help in identifying shared opportunities for learning across the directorates.
- 1.4 The service planning days work well and make sure that everyone feels that they have an opportunity to put forward their thoughts and ideas.
- 1.5 Achievement of the 'Green Flag Award' was celebrated well and all staff that have contributed feel appreciated for their input and empowered to put forward future ideas.
- 1.6 The Core Management Development Programme has been well structured and staff that have attended all feel that they have learnt from it. They are now clear on what to do and how to do it and this has particularly given new managers increased confidence.
- 1.7 Future development of the Council's website is a high priority and there are very good project teams involved. Consultation with staff and reaction to their needs is also very good and staff feel informed with what is going on behind the scenes. Collaboration such as the INET project team ensures that good practice is shared.
- 1.8 There is good use of joint working partnerships across the Council. Initiatives such as the Devon Improvement Group have given good ideas and have ensured that creativity remains high. Staff are good at looking for innovative solutions and in sharing good practice.
- 1.9 Grounds maintenance feel that they are encouraged to develop new systems and ways of working and that the Council is proactive in looking at the products they use. Environmentally friendly products are being investigated continually and staff feel that the Council is 'leading the way'.
- 1.10 The staff awareness seminars have worked well and everyone has appreciated the opportunity to ask any questions and gain an appreciation of activities undertaken in other directorates.
- 1.11 There is a good consultation process, not just through the service planning days, but also generally through day-to-day activity. Staff feel that that they are consulted when procedures are changed and although there may be some re-deployment of manpower necessary, this is done in the best possible way with consultation between departments. Team building activities are good and as a result teams are supportive and strong.
- 1.12 The activate project is an excellent idea and all staff are aware of the opportunities available.
- 1.13 The 'back to the floors' and the high visibility of the Chief Executive have all served to give staff confidence and to feel that the Directors understand and appreciate their work roles.

- 1.14 The welcome process in particular works very well. Staff appreciate that they are held within three months of starting and this is particularly relevant for those working away from the Knowle.
- 1.15 The stock options review has been a major project involving many people. It has worked very well and has strengthened the team considerably. Everyone has appreciated the input from colleagues.
- 1.16 The 'Decent Homes' standard has been achieved in 2005, five years earlier than is required and this is in part due to the excellent team cohesion.
- 1.17 The introduction of a customer service centre for the Council will necessitate some upheaval. There is understandably some apprehension surrounding this but staff across the Council have been asked to get involved in a consultation to ensure everyone understands why this change in approach is so important.
- 1.18 The internal Corporate Training Portfolio is very comprehensive and staff find this accessible. IT training is particularly good and responsive to individual needs.
- 1.19 The intranet is very user-friendly and staff are able to search for the information they need quickly and easily. Including photographs of staff is an excellent idea.
- 1.20 The peer review process used by local authorities has worked well for the Council and staff have picked up valuable feedback on their working practices and shared ideas well. For example, food hygiene sharing best practice ideas and discussing common problems and solutions.
- 1.21 The involvement from members and their appreciation of the work of individual teams is very good and many of the staff interviewed who have worked within other Councils report that member involvement here is the best they have seen.
- 1.22 The recent stress audits are a very good idea and staff feel that the results will be taken seriously. The Council tries hard to appreciate the pressures involved and to introduce a variety of measures and assistance for staff.

2 Feedback against particular objectives

This area summarises feedback particular requested by the Council.

- 2.1 The value of appraisals in terms of objective setting and identifying personal development.

Staff very much appreciate the opportunity to have an appraisal and to follow this up with one to ones. These seem to be working well and staff report that they are able to set objectives or follow them up at each meeting. They can also clearly see what has been achieved by reviewing the objectives that have been reached. Development that is identified is acted upon and there were only a few instances where professional development has not been possible due to budgets.

- 2.2 Communication of Council initiatives, Team Brief and Staff Awareness Seminars.

These were all felt to be very effective. Team briefs in particular were always held and were crucial to the communication process. Most initiatives that have been introduced such as the lunchtime seminars/sessions have been well received and staff feel that they have been consulted prior to the event.

2.3 Welcome process

The welcome process has been well designed and new starters report that it happens promptly. They feel that there is also a good opportunity to gain an appreciation of other directorates and to meet the Chief Executive personally. The team leader for new starters is responsible for the local welcome and this could be followed up. It is also important to ensure that where staff do not work in the building they are provided with a telephone list with external dial numbers.

2.4 Effectiveness of Core Management Development Programme

The Core Management Development Programme has been welcomed by staff who are already in a management position and those that have attended the training have found it to be very beneficial. They particularly like the way that it is divided into 6 modules and they can choose which to complete first.

Staff who are new to management are also aware of the course and roughly the content. Those staff members who may have discussed their wish to move toward a management position are not yet aware of the opportunity but could begin to develop some of the core management competencies that are included in the programme. This would then easily link to the programme when people become managers.

2.5 Access to training – corporate training portfolio

Most staff are aware of the training portfolio and how to access it either through the intranet or hard copy. This is a little more difficult for grounds maintenance staff or those employed in the outdoor environment such as Street Scene as they often spend minimal time back at base. It may be useful to include a summary of a course within the team brief from time to time to ensure that all staff are aware of what is available or to circulate the portfolio to these staff members prior to appraisal.

2.6 Recognition

Staff generally felt that it was a good opportunity to celebrate where staff had 'gone the extra mile' or really achieved something **over and above** their normal working practices. The bouquets were liked for this reason so that everyone could gain an appreciation of work going on to across the directorates but it is important to ensure that these are awarded for something over and above the normal activities. However the star performer was not so popular as staff often felt it singled out individuals when they would rather it be for team achievement. Also the presentation of the photographic opportunity may not be the ideal way to reward that achievement and it may be better to hold an annual event and use the opportunity to broaden staff understanding of the work of the particular teams gaining the awards.

3 Potential for further development

- 3.1 Please see the Action Plan attached in Appendix One which outlines the action that will be taken to further develop.

Legal Implications

None

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications

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Executive Board
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