



Corporate Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 17 January 2022 at
2pm in Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2DL

Present:

Cllr K Mason Billig (Chair)
Cllr A Birmingham
Cllr S Blundell
Cllr S Clancy
Cllr B Duffin
Cllr L Hemsall (from 2.08pm)

Cllr J James
Cllr T Jermy
Cllr R Savage
Cllr B Price
Cllr V Thomson
Cllr K Vincent

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Robert Savage for Cllr E Colman

Also Present:

Cllr Andrew Jamieson

Cabinet Member for Finance

Cllr Mason Billig opened the meeting and advised that the Chair Cllr Ed Colman was unavailable for the meeting and as Vice Chair of the committee she would be chairing the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ed Colman (Substituted by Cllr Robert Savage).

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

5 Public Question Time

5.1 There were no public questions.

6 **Local Member Issues/Questions**

6.1 There were no local Member questions.

7 **2021 Staff Survey 'Our Voice Our Council': Analysis, Engagement and Action Planning and Planning for 2022 Staff Survey**

7.1 The annexed report (7) by the Executive Director for Strategy & Transformation was received and presented by Director for People.

7.2 The report followed on from the initial findings that were shared with the committee on 12th July 2021. The report focuses on how the results have been analysed and used to understand themes across the Council and actions as well as informing work of specialisms and projects.

7.3 The key elements of the reported were highlighted as the following:

- Careful analysis of the survey had identified areas for ongoing discussions and actions.
- The report, key themes and actions arising was a regular item on the agenda of the Internal Corporate Board.
- One of the key elements to improved performance is to provide clarity and direction and these themes are reflected within the individual's performance development plans with line managers. This improves engagement and wellbeing.
- Connection with staff working from home, especially new staff members has been a key element to pay attention to and new initiatives have evolved to make employees feel connected, cared for, understand and motivated.
- The survey work is used to aid external inspections, for example Ofsted, of departments and services.
- The key new metrics data have all shown improvements from previous surveys.
- The survey reported that black colleagues in Adult's and Children's departments were nearly twice as likely as white colleagues to experience bullying or abuse from service user, relatives, or the public.
- Work has been undertaken to support black and Asian colleagues to update and improve policies to tackle racially abusive behaviour.
- Every quarter various employee groups representing colleagues with protected characteristics have an opportunity to meet and discuss issues with Head of Paid Service and Director of People.
- Within the senior management recruitment process a panel consisting of colleagues with varying protected characteristics is involved with selection.
- There is an intention to undertake a report into organisational wellbeing although it was acknowledged that existing measures in this area are performing well.
- The survey outcomes had enabled the leavers survey to be redesigned to come in line with the staff survey.

- The survey indicated that we have not improved in how innovative we view ourselves through the pandemic but there was a focus to see how this area could be improved with more working remotely..
- Norfolk County Council won a national award for its work on its staff survey. The Public Service People Managers Association (PPMA) awarded NCC an Excellence in People Management Award 2021 for the Best Change Management Organisational Development Initiative, for the change work involved on the Staff Survey.

7.4 The following was discussed, and responses noted to questions:

- Training for members, relating to help engaging with their communities and to understand diversity and inclusion, was about to be rolled out with a pilot being conducted by members of the committee.
- Letters had been sent to key services users advising them that racially abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.
- More information and data regarding the leavers survey was requested for a future meeting. Some further work on the leavers survey to spot trends and themes was ongoing. The turnover rate of staff was around the 12%.
- Whilst all departments had experienced additional pressures during the pandemic, Adult Social Services were experiencing extreme winter pressures on a number of fronts including retaining and recruitment of staff. Children's services adapted their engagement during lockdown periods to maintain their statutory duties.
- It was acknowledged that the lockdown period will have affected the data arising from the survey, although the survey was issued shortly before the first lockdown and then again later in the year.
- The last 18 months had provided the building blocks of inclusion and diversity to be put in place and to work from that platform to improve training and understanding. This will rise to a better understanding overall and gives staff a voice from which to be heard and understood.
- Members considered that their role with supporting staff was important and that the dynamics have changed now that face to face engagement is happening less. Members were interested to ascertain whether a question could be added to the survey enquiring how they could support staff in the future.

7.5 The committee **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the key messages from this year's survey and the proposed next steps.
- Support the performance, engagement and wellbeing of colleagues
- Acknowledge how the current methods of working since March 2020 have changed the ways Members problem solve and innovate and how we encouraged continued improvement in how we become a more innovative Council.

8. Gender Pay Gap & Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

8.1 The annexed report (8) by the Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation was received. The report was presented by the Director for People.

8.2 The Director for People gave a presentation on the report ([available from the committee's webpages](#)). The committee noted:

- The data used is always out of date as the processes required of collating and publishing is lengthy and the requirement to publish was delayed by Central Government due to the pandemic.
- The report picks up on the direction of travel of how the gap is closing.
- The gap is measured by using averages, not comparing job to job and pay rates.
- The County Council has predominately a female workforce, approximately 65% to 70%, mainly due to the nature of work attracting one gender over another.

8.3 In response to member's questions the committee noted:

- Whilst there were no specific policies in place to support employees back from career breaks the ability to flex hours and days was being used to assist.
- Flexing hours was also a critical element in helping woman apply for and manage within senior roles.
- There is evidence to indicate that men are more likely to influence their starting salary than women, at the Council a job evaluation and grade structure was in place to ensure all new starters were treated equally.
- Policies were in place for helping woman through the menopause.
- Steps were in place to support woman more to apply for senior roles and this would form a focus for the next action plans.
- The current make-up of the Council's cabinet (9 men and 1 woman) was questioned, although in contrast it was noted that until recently a local District Council had a majority female cabinet.
- Focus on recruitment processes had identified that use of language and positioning of advertisements as "positive action" can be targeted towards one gender or another to encourage a greater take up.
- There has been significant improvement in the data on younger people being recruited to the council. It was acknowledged that the successful apprenticeship scheme had helped.
- It was thought that highlighting case studies could be a good route to help recruitment. The example of the first female firefighter in the UK, which was in Norfolk, was cited.
- Employees were asked within the staff survey whether they felt they were adequately rewarded for their work.
- The Council had 5 objectives to help tackle discrimination and prejudice and looked to lead by example in all the services areas to ensure that Equality Diversity and Inclusion was embedded within the working culture.

8.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Endorse the narrative and proposals as set out in Appendix B as key actions to address gender pay
2. Acknowledge and provided direction on the proposed NCC Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Action Plan as set out in the presentation .

9.0 Strategy and Business Planning at Norfolk County Council

9.1 The annexed report (9) by the Executive Director of Strategy & Transformation was received, and a verbal presentation was given by the Head of Strategy & Policy.

9.2 The report outlined the process that had been followed to develop the newly launched County Council Strategy *Better Together, for Norfolk 2021-25*, which also informs the proposed approach to business planning for 2022/23 and into 2022/23 and beyond.

9.3 The following key points was noted:

- A “double diamond” approach was adopted to develop the strategy, to understand what was creating pressures and anxieties within the Norfolk community.
- A number of key engagement events took place to establish the recovery priorities of the community coming out of the Covid 19 pandemic and with partners and stakeholders discussing what are the trends and opportunities that the Council should be focusing upon.
- The engagement events helped shaped the themes particularly around reducing the widening inequalities in the county around health, wealth and digital exclusion.
- The five key priorities within the strategy had not changed but a refresh to help refocus efforts on the priorities that will make the greatest impact in a post pandemic environment had taken place.
- Refreshing business planning pyramid seeks to ensure that planning is no longer just a departmental exercise, and that all areas of the Council are expected to work together to ensure the strategy objectives are being planned for and reflected in a corporate delivery plan.
- The planning cycle will start earlier than previously, and a business planning group has been set up with representation for all services and departments to look at the cost saving priorities. This approach is more cross-functional than individual departments all undertaking this work.
- Governance of the new system that effects the transformation programme will also be undertaken in one place to make this more effective.
- The corporate delivery plan will be used to bring together the significant activity that will drive the delivery of the strategy.
- A series of workshops will be held with senior leadership personnel to identify what best practice looks like as well as aligning the risk register much more closely to performance.
- Data collected will be processed and collated to enable external benchmarking so that comparisons can be made within the Council’s peer group on performance.

9.4 The following was discussed, and responses noted to questions:

- Approximately 50% (1000 people) of those who joined the Norfolk Residents Panel responded to the survey. This group will be followed up to engage at the next level which would include partners such as Town and Parish Councils.
- Concerns were expressed that younger people mentioned in the report had suffered from the suspension of their social groups, and although lockdown restrictions had eased, social distancing requirements were making a return to normal activities difficult. It was acknowledged that some organisations had returned to a pre pandemic position. However, the younger generation tended to be more technology minded and older styles of social engagement were not as appealing as previous generations had experienced.
- The statistic referred to in the report regarding inequality and deprived areas was an issue members agreed they wished to work hard to reduce as quickly as possible.

9.5 A motion was proposed by Cllr Ben Price to:

Recommend that officers look at the work of the Norwich Climate Commission and the work of other commissions around the country to assess the work that has been undertaken and to make an assessment as to whether the County should adopted its own County Climate Commission to inform this cross party policy.

The motion was seconded by Cllr Terry Jermy. A vote took place and the motion was **LOST**.

Cllr Price offered to help officers to include the principle of the above proposal within a wider piece of work on climate issues that was already being undertaken.

9.6 The committee **RESOLVED** to agree to:

- Acknowledge the work to date to deliver the strategy
- Endorse the feedback on the proposed approach to business planning as outlined in section 4
- The proposed next steps as outlined in section 5.

10.0 **Forward Work Programme**

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation was received.

10.2 The committee **RESOLVED** to agree the forward work programme. It was noted that the previous meeting's addition to the programme had not been added to the plan. Cllr Price requested to be emailed when this was added and the timescale agreed.

Meeting concluded at 3.46pm