

Personnel Committee – 5 December 2022

Customer Focused Ways of Working

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To provide an update to Personnel Committee on our Council wide customer focused ways of working, following a reflections briefing note being tabled at Cabinet/ Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 16 November 2022 (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 To seek Personnel Committee support to amend our ways of working principles (as detailed in this report and Appendix 1)

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Personnel Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report.
- 2.2 Personnel Committee is recommended to approve the following amendments to our ways of working principles:
 - Customer focused ways of working that are designed to deliver the best outcomes for our residents
 - Reconfirmation of policy - 'Work is what you do not where you do it' – an outcomes based approach
 - Managers must manage within the hybrid working environment utilising performance management techniques, management information, setting clear objectives and monitoring delivery, regular communication (one to ones, huddles, face to face meetings and training)
 - Staff will work flexibly based on customer and operational service needs and remain focused on delivering the Council Plan outcomes
 - Previous principle of 'Presence with a Purpose' approach to be removed.

3. Background Information

Aim

- 3.1 This report and accompanying appendix summarises our progress against the resetting through Proud plan agreed by Cabinet in June 2021 and next steps including updating the Council's customer focused ways of working principles. The Council is no longer operating under any day-to-day restrictions driven by the pandemic. The Council is keen to ensure that all the learning and development from the last 2 and a half years is not lost and that we build on what we have learnt to be successful. The Council must continue to adapt our customer focused ways of working so we are fit for the future, efficient and an attractive employer to an increasingly, limited talent pool.
- 3.2 The Council faced the challenges of the pandemic and changed its way of working to safely comply with all Covid-19 regulations. Covid-19 was a catalyst for change - but was not the sole reason for change; it enabled remote and

technologically facilitated customer focused ways of working to be accelerated and benefits achieved more seamlessly than would otherwise have been possible. The Council is choosing this moment to reflect on the lessons learned during this period, look towards the future and ensure we continue to deliver on our council plan and corporate outcomes in an efficient, effective and equitable manner.

Know

- 3.3 Our customer focused ways of working were agreed by Personnel Committee in April 2021 and are outlined below:
- Adopt a policy of ‘Work is what you do not where you do it’
 - Enable staff to work from home unless there is a specific purpose to be in a building or in the community, i.e. there is ‘presence with a purpose’
 - Comply with public health and Government guidelines
 - Make better use of smaller community-based buildings to support our most vulnerable customers
 - Offer a wider range of digital self-serve tools via the Council’s website and Intranet
 - Work with partners to help ensure that our most vulnerable and digitally excluded residents can access the information and support they need close to home.
- 3.4 The actions required to deliver the customer focused ways of working were agreed by Cabinet in June 2021 (Resetting through Proud report). The key themes are identified and reviewed in the attached Cabinet/CMT Briefing Paper (Appendix 1) alongside reflections of our progress and operation in practice. Taking reflections into account, next steps per key theme are also outlined in the briefing note.

Our Council Plan priorities

- 3.5 The Council Plan priorities continue to be delivered within our ways of working principles and the outcomes remain a primary focus for all officers. The proposal of developing and introducing a new Ways of Working Policy for employees and workers subject to Personnel Committee agreement of the amended ways of working principles, aligns to the council’s strategic priority of internal focus ensuring all council services are customer focussed, effective, efficient and equitable and helps ensure consistency, fairness and transparency.

Response

- 3.6 The next steps as outlined in the Cabinet/CMT briefing note (Appendix 1) and accompanying appendix will continue to be progressed and monitored through DMT and CMT. Key items are listed below:
- Refreshing and communicating with SMG and the wider Council our principles and customer focused ways of working
 - Continuing to refresh our offices to reflect output based working
 - New member enquiry process
 - Refreshing the “meet the team” events with members – taking into account member feedback

- Meetings - Appropriate visibility and presence – managers will be reviewing those meetings which will happen in person versus those which will be happening remotely for example APCs, strategic team meetings, training & development, workshops, wellbeing check-in's etc.
- Refreshed training for managers on how to manage in a hybrid way – focusing on regular check ins, including face to face, performance management techniques, expected standards and communication
- Refreshed policies around customer focused ways of working focusing on outcomes including a new Ways of Working Policy to be finalised and launched in the new financial year.

Response

3.7 The council is facing similar sector wide challenges as all local government - with an aging workforce and an increasingly competitive labour market - the Council's customer focused ways of working are critical to creating a modern, thoughtful workplace that attracts, retains and motivates its employees to ensure we deliver on our Council plan and key outcomes. To do this, we remain committed to our customer focused ways of working and delivering on our reset plans whilst taking into account feedback from customers, members and our employees.

3.8 The new Ways of Working Policy will be launched in Q1 (2023) (subject to subsequent Personnel Committee approval) and will become part of the suite of employment policies that govern the expectations of employees and how they work. All employment policies will usually be reviewed on a three yearly cycle, unless legislation or internal organisational need prompt a review earlier.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report – any financial implications or savings related to the estate and investments required will be presented as separate business cases to the appropriate governing committee.

5. Legal Considerations

5.1 The Council remains compliant with its legal duties and there are no direct legal implications arising from this report or amended ways of working principles.

6. Risk Management

6.1 Full equality impact assessments will be undertaken in relation to any employment policy updates or introductions as part of the consultation and approval process for those specific policies (all of which will be subject to Personnel Committee approval).

7. People

7.1 Individually new and amended employment policies include a scope section (where applicable) and in each policy it clearly sets out who the policy applies to and who it does not.

7.2 There is a direct and positive impact on our residents as a result of our amended ways of working principles which have at their core a customer focussed and outcomes based approach aligned to the delivery of Our Council Plan.

8. Consultation

8.1 There is no direct consultation impact arising from this report – as part of the action plan, where a need arises for a consultation, the Council will ensure this is meaningful and fair and adheres to all policies and procedures. In addition all relevant employment policies will be consulted on across the organisation with senior managers and trade union colleagues and this will be the case with the development of a new Ways of Working Policy.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Cabinet/CMT Briefing Note 16 November 2022 - Customer focused ways of working – reflections a year on

Background papers

25 March 2021 – Blended Working – CMT report

16 June 2021 – Resetting the Council through Proud – Cabinet report

9 Feb 2022 – Customer Focused Customer focused ways of working Update – Cabinet report

16 November 2022 – Customer focused ways of working – reflections a year on – Cabinet/CMT report

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