

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee: Human Resources Sub Group – 5 October 2017

Subject: Staff Engagement

Report of: Director of HROD

Summary:

This report provides an update on work to support employee communications and engagement with a focus on how the Council intends to engage and communicate with staff that currently do not have access to ICT at work. This includes the approach the approach to supporting these staff to contribute to the BHeard Survey.

Recommendations:

The Sub-Group is asked to note the report

Wards Affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

None

1.0 Introduction & Overview

- 1.1 Strengthening the organisation's approach to internal communications and engagement has been an area of significant focus over the past year and one of four priority themes in response to BHeard.
- 1.2 Additional investment has enabled the creation of a small internal communications team to drive strategy and delivery. The team, within the Strategic Communications Service, have led the development of a new Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy which seeks to create a new tone and approach to internal communications with a focus on clearer, more engaging communications and two way engagement. The continuation of the Listening in Action sessions, (with over 1,100 staff having now participated) and physical and virtual engagement from the new Chief Executive are supporting this shift in approach.
- 1.3 A number of employee groups have been developed over the past year to support specific projects and initiatives, these include our Our Manchester Guides and Digital Champions as well as a growing network of employee wellbeing groups. Supporting, guiding and developing these groups as well as existing fora such as our equality staff groups offers us an invaluable opportunity to strengthen employee voice across the organisation.
- 1.4 The launch of the Our Manchester Experience on 2 October will also provide an invaluable opportunity to strengthen our engagement with the full workforce with up to 700 employees expected to progress through the experience by the end of this calendar year.
- 1.5 Feedback from BHeard highlighted the essential role that strong line management plays in creating an engaged workforce. The launch of *About You* in April, a new approach to staff appraisals and one-to-ones, responded directly to this feedback. The approach was developed in partnership with staff and sets out a framework which is intended to both strengthen employee engagement in line with the Our Manchester behaviours and support performance management. A clear expectation that all staff will have had a full About You discussion by the time of this year's BHeard has been set and a full evaluation of the approach is being undertaken from October.
- 1.6 The remainder of this report considers two specific areas in relation to increasing engagement with staff; the roll out of universal access to ICT to staff and work to support staff without ICT access to contribute to the BHeard Survey.

2.0 Universal Access

- 2.1 Providing a universal ICT access solution for staff will ensure equality of access to key corporate messages and organisational information (including job opportunities), support new ways of working and provide an opportunity for personal development. It will strengthen the engagement that staff feel to the organisation and Our Manchester.

- 2.2 Currently circa. 1,300 staff who work away from core office buildings and do not have ICT access. Communications and engagement with this group is therefore presently dependent on management action and circulation of hard copy communications. The limitations of this approach were evidenced in the poor response rate from this group to last year's BHeard survey: 8% for this group compared to 42% overall.
- 2.3 Over recent months HROD in consultation with ICT and the Trades Unions, have led a piece of detailed analysis with affected service managers and staff to understand ICT access options and the practical requirements to provide this for every role in scope. The outcome of these detailed discussions concluded:
- All staff to be given access to existing ICT infrastructure via the Council or schools ICT estate as far as possible, with the option for staff to access through their own devices when practicable and by personal agreement
 - Log on access through existing hardware to be managed through the expansion of Citrix accounts and, on a time limited basis, the use of CAG tokens to ensure appropriate security compliance is achieved
 - Time to access corporate communications to be allowed within normal working patterns as far as possible but, when this is absolutely not possible, additional paid time to be allowed as determined by service managers
 - An appropriate training offer to be developed and made available to all staff in scope to ensure they have the skills and confidence to access provision. This will involve:
 - Determination of individual training needs through one to one discussions between with managers and the use of the existing network of Digital Champions and staff at each site (much in the same way as was followed during the corporate rollout of Google)
 - A spectrum of development as required, ranging from "crib sheets" for staff who are confident with ICT, through support from colleagues, to access to a formal basic ICT skills course for those with no experience of using computers and where they cannot be supported by colleagues or digital champions
 - Ongoing advice from the Digital Champions, who will be allowed time to support staff on site between September and November
- 2.3 The ICT Service are currently working through the technical solutions for staff identified and developing a plan to support timely implementation over the coming months, supported by the additional £200K budget investment agreed by Council.

3.0 BHeard

- 3.1 The organisation took part in the national Best Companies BHeard Survey for the second time in late 2016 asking all employees to 'have their say' on a range of areas. The Survey is the largest of its kind in the UK and internationally recognised as providing a solid evidence base to understand employee engagement and target improvement. Organisations from across sectors participate in the Survey which ultimately informs the Times Top 100 employers' index.
- 3.2 The 2016 Survey results showed a very marginal improvement on 2015, with work to strengthen staff understanding, and buy-in, to the Council's priorities and direction of travel identified as one area in particular that has supported an improvement. Our response rate also saw an increase, to 42% (circa. 3,000 employees), which is greater than the average for organisations of our size participating in the Survey. However, our overall engagement (BCI) score of 595 remains below the accreditation level ('One to Watch'). This result strengthened the case for focused priority work to improve employee engagement both at a corporate level and also locally, with the development of a culture of consistently high quality management the single most influential factor in improving engagement across the Survey's eight factors.
- 3.3 The Council's corporate response over the past year has focused on four priority areas: communication and engagement, wellbeing, skills and leadership and management and has included a range of activities such as the launch of About You, work to improve wellbeing, including our new Employee Assistance Programme, and a strengthened focus on communication and engagement with more Listening in Action sessions and a range of opportunities for staff to get involved in shaping Our Manchester and ways of working across the Council. .
- 3.4 This year's survey launched on 2 and will close on 20 October. Securing a strong response rate to the Survey will be critical if it is to continue to provide a valid and valuable evidence base to drive employee engagement.
- 3.5 A clear communication plan is in place to encourage participation across the Council with the key role of Leaders here emphasised at an event for the organisation's most senior 400 managers on 2 October. Communications have emphasised the confidentiality of the Survey and also the ability for all staff to participate in work time. In order to ensure objectivity, Best Companies have a strict policy on the extent to which organisations can promote and incentivise participation.
- 3.6 Despite our overall positive response rate last year, the rate of response from off-line staff was much less positive. In addition to the work to provide all staff with access to ICT within the timeframes of the survey, paper surveys will also be distributed through existing service communication and engagement channels and Best Companies provided paper copies of the survey a week prior to the launch date to support this process.

- 3.7 Directorate management teams have been hosting a wide range of engagement events with staff over recent months which has included a focus on promoting participation. For example, Growth and neighbourhoods and Strategic Development hosted two engagement events in July for circa.300 frontline staff and included both the Directorates' BHeard response and the importance of this year's survey on the agenda.
- 3.8 A range of measures are being progressed across front-line Services to promote staff responses. This includes:
- Rotating time to participate in Services such as libraries
 - Allocating a budget code for participation time in capital funded services
 - Group 'About You' sessions in Facilities Management for over 200 staff to answer any questions on BHeard and provide time to complete the survey and submit paper copies.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Strengthening the organisation's approach to internal communications and engagement is a key priority for the HROD Service and more broadly both in response to BHeard as as a fundamental component of the Our People Strategy. This report sets out a high level overview of work in this area with a particular focus on activity to support engagement with those staff currently without access to Council ICT systems.