

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Refresh Organisational Development Programme

Date: 23 April 2015

Author: John Robinson, Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

This report launches the development of a programme of activity across the Council that seeks to kick-start further organisational change and improvement. It seeks to achieve two outcomes:

- On-going improvements in residents' satisfaction with the Council and with Gedling as a place to live and work
- An enhancement in staff satisfaction and well-being.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Background

- 1.1 In all sorts of ways, the Council is a very different organisation now from what it was just a few years ago.
- 1.2 It is smaller, employing approximately 15% (90) less staff than in 2009. It has less money, operating on a revenue budget that has fallen by over £3 million, with another £2.6 million reductions still to come. It interacts very differently with citizens, with digital innovations enabling new ways to communicate and provide access to services and information. It has a broader outlook, wider agenda and greater sphere of influence, fulfilling a community leadership role that is more typical of an upper tier authority. It has forged all kinds of new partnerships, co-locating and sharing services across the public sector family and increasingly trading within commercial markets.
- 1.3 Irrespective of the outcome of the general and local elections, the Council's operating environment will continue to be characterised by:-

- Financial restraint
 - A strong focus on economic and housing growth
 - Rising customer expectations for choice of access channels, personalisation and responsiveness
 - Pressure/desire to collaborate
 - Various models of local governance (eg. Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships etc)
 - 'Allsorts' of service delivery arrangements (in-house; shared; trading etc.)
- 1.4 This context presents a number of particular challenges for maintaining and developing our performance and community leadership role and preserving what are generally excellent industrial relations.
- 1.5 Given that 'business as usual' is not a viable option, this report proposes the introduction of a wide ranging and cross-cutting programme of organisational development, under the name of Refresh.

Proposals

- 2.1 The Council has undergone significant and in some respects unprecedented change in recent years. In many ways, we are performing well, have a strong reputation and a robust medium-term financial plan in place.
- 2.2 However, as the role of public services and the needs and expectations of our local community continues to change and evolve, the Council needs to keep in step and as far as possible get ahead. In the words of the CBI: "We must overhaul services in ways that match the needs of tomorrow's society".
- 2.3 The Refresh programme is proposed to be organised around the following themes to stimulate further cultural change and organisational improvement.
- Leadership and management
There are two aspects to this. Political leadership, political priorities and member: officer relationships have a significant impact on organisational culture and performance. At the start of the next administration's term of office, it is proposed to re-visit the current overarching vision, values and priorities to ensure these (a) remain fit for purpose and (b) are consistent with political ambitions/ethos. Flowing from this, it is also proposed to refresh the current leadership and management standards. These set out expected competencies and behaviours and though only four years old, they are in some respects dated and no longer fully reflect what's needed. While the emphasis of Refresh is culture and ways of working, the senior management structure needs some adjustment and proposals will be brought forward in the summer.

- Employee recognition and reward
In some parts of the organisation, recruiting and retaining staff has become problematic. Gedling's attraction as an employer is about much more than just pay but we need to ensure that we are not only competitive in the jobs market but also rewarding our staff appropriately.
- Customer engagement, insight and responsiveness
Intelligent gathering, analysis and use of customer data is increasingly important and can lead to better targeted support and intervention. The Council currently obtains customer data from a range of different sources but there is considerable scope for more sophisticated use of this.
- Employee engagement, health and well-being
It is widely acknowledged that there are strong links between customer and employee satisfaction. We already have a number of communication channels in place (staff briefings, weekly e-gen, team meetings etc.) and various sports and social activities are organised for staff. In addition, there are plans to improve some areas of the physical working environment. Notwithstanding the existing arrangements, this is a feature of organisational life that constantly needs to be kept under review, move on and stay fresh.
- Digitalisation
This theme will focus on identifying new ways of utilising technology to deliver services more effectively and enable staff to work in new ways. Society is becoming increasingly 'digitised' and as the typical man and woman embraces digital technology in all aspects of their daily lives, so too must the providers of public services.
- Workforce planning and development
As the role and operating environment of the Council changes, so must the skill sets of its employees. Teams need to be increasingly multi-skilled, flexible, able to work with new technology and a range of partners and combine a strong public service ethos with commercial nous.

2.4 A cross Council Programme Board is to be established to develop and oversee a work programme comprising representatives from different levels of the organisation, chaired by the Chief Executive. It is envisaged that different Corporate Directors and Service Managers will take the lead on specific work strands and it is further proposed to establish a cross party member reference group to oversee the programme and its impact – membership to be determined after the forthcoming elections.

Alternative Options

- 3.1 The Council could choose to stand still or adopt a 'business as usual' strategy. However, that is not considered appropriate given the financial environment, the Council's ambitions for its communities and the need to continually evolve/adapt.

Financial Implications

- 4.1 A Transformation Fund, currently containing £340,000, was established to support organisational change and development activity. Any costs arising from the implementation of the Refresh programme will be accommodated within this budget.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Recommendation (s)

That Cabinet:

- (a) endorses the establishment of a new organisational development programme as outlined in the report;
- (b) requests the Chief Executive to establish a cross party member reference group to oversee the progress and impact of the programme, the membership of which is to be determined following Annual Council.

Reasons for Recommendations

To enable the Council to continue its development/improvement after the forthcoming elections.