Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

7 November 2017

Subject:	**People Strategy (2017 – 2027) priorities - progress on staff engagement, recognition & communication**
Cabinet Member:	**Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts and Tourism**
Key Decision:	**No**

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to outline progress against one of the three strategic priorities in the People Strategy 2017 – 2027; Staff engagement, recognition & communication, and specifically the steps being taken to improve staff engagement.

Background

2. Research tell us that 54% of disengaged employees are considering leaving their present jobs (Gallup) and replacing them costs up to 33% of an employee's salary (HR Dive). Disengaged employees are far less productive and are more likely to be absent from work. Employees who are physically present at work but disengaged from what they are doing negatively affect the service constituents are receiving. Highly engaged organisations benefit from decreased turnover, fewer workplace accidents, higher productivity, a 41% reduction in absenteeism and a 17% increase in productivity (Gallup).

3. In light of this research, and in the face of significant funding cuts, job losses and organisational restructures, we recognised the need to focus on improving staff engagement and organisational culture.

4. Steps to improve staff engagement started in 2016 and this included the development of our employer brand and a range of social media platforms to improve communication and engagement with both prospective employees and our workforce, and the Grow system (learning & performance management system) was developed to allow staff to communicate socially.

5. The annual staff forums in November 2016 were redesigned and rebranded in line with the employer brand pillars. The new "staff engagement" forums focused on interaction with staff and sought ideas and feedback about what needed to change. Staff were also invited to ask "one burning question" and a commitment was given to answering all questions. The questions and answers, and all of the feedback received were subsequently published on the Council's intranet (The Wire).

6. The 2016 staff survey results, (the survey ran from 21 November to 19 December 2016), showed an increase in staff engagement from the 2014 results, despite the on-going changes and disruption to the workforce that had continued to take place over that period. Over 65% (2,900) staff responded to the survey (an increase of 6% since 2014) and staff engagement overall increased by 2% from 2014 from 56% to 58%. Some services showed engagement levels of 85%, and that 31.7% (917) of staff are fully engaged whilst only 1.2% (36 staff) are fully disengaged.

7. The results showed that staff are aware of the councils vision and aims (80% positive responses), are committed to the organisations goals (72% positive responses), are proud to work for the council (62% positive responses), believe their job makes a difference to the community (80% positive responses) and that working for the council makes them want to do the best job they can (63% positive responses). In addition, and in support of the impact of the behaviours framework, 96% of staff responded positively when asked if the council has made it clear about how they are expected to behave.

8. However, despite the positive overall results of the staff survey results they also identified areas where further work was needed to improve staff engagement to ensure the council has the positive culture needed to deliver the business plan priorities, and to meet the challenges that the council continues to face in respect of both finance, but also the increasing demands on our services. As a result, a staff engagement group to develop new initiatives that would further embed the employer brand and improve staff engagement was proposed.

9. The focus on improving staff engagement is also a key priority in the new people strategy (Appendix 1). This strategy was approved by Cabinet in July and defines how we will manage our most important asset, and aims to ensure that we are able to attract, retain and motivate our staff to continue to develop great outcomes for communities and achieve the council's vision and business plan priorities.

10. The people strategy outlines our employer brand pillars; empowering people, innovation and collaboration, and our employee promise.

11. The strategy also outlines our values and overarching outcomes, one of which is

"Our staff identify and engage with our employee promise which is based on our employee value proposition of **e**mpowering **p**eople, **i**nnovation and **c**ollaboration, and which is embedded in the recruitment processes.

Main Considerations

12. At the staff engagement forums in November 2016 the formation of a staff engagement group was announced and subsequently applications for volunteers to join for a 12-month period (in addition to their day to day duties), were invited and staff were selected to be part of the group.

13. The staff engagement group launched in February 2017. The group are called **#EPIC** after our employer brand pillars of **E**mpowering **P**eople, **I**nnovation and **C**ollaboration, which is the foundation of our employer promise to deliver engagement initiatives "for the staff, by the staff". This creates a powerful channel for employee voice, empowering them to drive positive change, amplifying EPIC employee culture and to help make the Council an even better place to productively deliver our services.

14. The work is led by HR&OD, with group meetings managed by Amanda George, HR Strategic Delivery Manager, and James Kent, Strategic Engagement Lead. It is made up of 21 volunteers representing a range of services and locations across the council (from facilities management to the programme office) who work within 3 teams reflecting our employer brand pillars; Empowering People, Innovation and Collaboration.

15. The #EPIC group meets monthly and the teams are supported by facilitators from HR&OD, systems thinking and communications to help focus the work that the three teams are doing and to pool knowledge and skills, and ensure collaboration across the three teams. Key outcomes and deliverables are agreed to be completed by the next meeting, and the teams and facilitators donate their own time to achieve them.

16. As the group rely on its members to volunteer, the resources are limited so we have partnered with organisations for support including, Engage For Success, who have joined us at #EPIC meetings to share ideas on innovation in engagement and best practice, and Comenius (supplier of grow) who have sponsored our engagement efforts to cover promotional costs (banners, printing and associated collateral).

17. Since the group launched in February 2017 they have launched two new staff engagement initiatives.

EPIC impressions

18. EPIC Impressions was born out of suggestions from the 2016 Staff Engagement Forums that employee recognition is something that could be improved. At the opening #EPIC meeting, the Empowering People team took this on as an area to deliver improvements on. Through idea generation and feasibility exploration, they decided that they wanted to make sure there was a way for employees to

thank each other for a job well done, in a visible and simple way to make sure that efforts were recognised. This was achieved by adapting functionality of our Learning Management Software **grow** and now employees, and councillors can send colleagues an EPIC impression from grow, in the form of a badge (currently 'thank you', 'you're EPIC', 'loving your work' and 'well done') and text with a 2,000-word character limit:

19. When an EPIC impression is sent, it goes to both the employee and their manager, to raise the awareness of just how much good work is being done, the impression remains permanently on the employees grow profile, and can be added to appraisals by the recipient or their manager.

20. EPIC impressions launched on the 5th July 2017, with a range of marketing events and information using social media, email, posters, and by members of the #EPIC group working in each of the three main hubs, as well as several depots, to show colleagues how to leave impressions. As at the 20th October:

- 2,803 EPIC impressions have been sent since the launch day
- 1,303 individuals have received at least one EPIC impression
- All directorate areas have both sent and received an EPIC impression
- 68 service areas have received an EPIC impression, and 66 service areas have sent an EPIC impression
- 'Thank you' badges are the most popular badge to send (53%)
- Wednesday is the most popular day of the week to send an EPIC impression
- The EPIC impressions workspace has had 2,791 unique pageviews since the launch day
- On average, users spend 1 minute and 14 seconds looking at the EPIC impressions workspace

21. This means there have been 2,803 times a manager has been made aware of the great work a member of their team has done, which they may not have known about, 2,803 times someone has been made aware that their efforts were

appreciated and 2,803 times someone had the opportunity to show appreciation for colleagues and the job they do.

22. To support the launch, we announced an EPIC idea of that month where we picked an EPIC impression which summed up the ethos of EPIC impression and as a result Corporate Directors Carlton Brand and Carolyn Godfrey awarded a cake to Marianne Eattell and Matthew Sawyer (Waste Services).


23. From the New Year "EPIC impression of the month" will take place to continue the promotion of this initiative, and to further amplify the recognition of people who are doing a great job. We will be relaunching with #EPIC every four months in the main hubs, EPIC impressions will be live streamed at the staff engagement forums in November, and we also have EPIC impressions day planned next year at the second relaunch.

EPIC ideas

24. This initiative was developed from staff requesting a staff suggestion scheme. However it was clear that if launched the scheme would have to be a success, or it could result in having a detrimental effect on staff engagement. The EPIC group felt that senior support for this initiative was critical and once the #EPIC Innovation team came up with a solution, which again was hosted in grow using adapted functionality, they presented it to senior managers at the Managers Forum, where it was well supported.

25. EPIC Ideas allows employees to go to the EPIC ideas page in grow and submit an EPIC idea. Once an idea is submitted, other employees can comment, 'like', or share the idea, generating discussion, awareness and the growth of ideas. The ideas are monitored by the #EPIC group, who in turn find the person who would be responsible for making the idea a reality, and share the idea with them, at which point they become an implementation lead on grow. The implementation

lead then updates the comments section of the idea as to the progress, or reasons not to progress the idea, this is visible to everyone with a grow account, and their feedback can also be commented on.
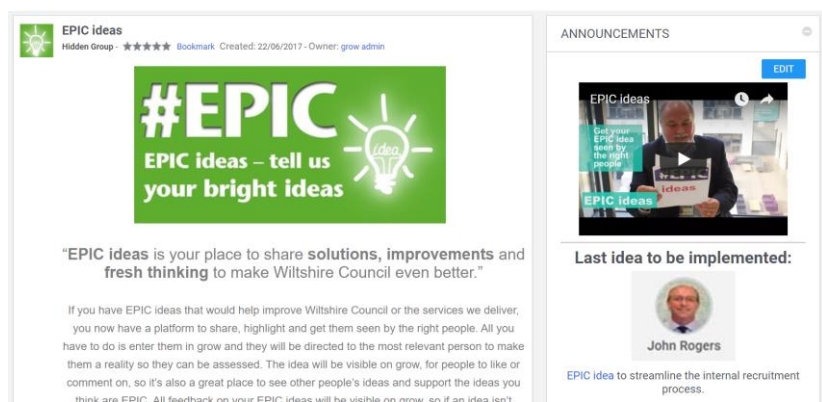
26. EPIC ideas was launched on September 9th 2017, with a range of marketing events and information using social media, email, posters, and again members of members of the #EPIC group were in the three main hubs and several depots to show colleagues how to leave an EPIC idea, and how to comments about ideas left by others.

27. As at 20th October 57 EPIC ideas have been submitted, and two fully implemented. The most recently implemented EPIC idea is already saving time and resource. John Rogers, Head of Systems thinking had the bright idea of making internal candidate references discretionary for hiring managers, this was passed to the recruitment team and implemented. A significant number of our vacancies are filled by internal candidates so this means in these cases preferred candidates can be processed more quickly to considerably reduce the overall time to recruit.

28. Other ideas submitted are being progressed but in many cases this involves numerous stakeholders so the #EPIC group will continue to drive these to ensure good ideas are implemented.

29. On average, grow has had 283 more unique pageviews every day following the launch of EPIC ideas, compared to the three months before, which is significant.

30. Currently there is a consistent amount of great ideas being submitted, but we will be talking to heads of service to use it to generate ideas around specific service issues, and will be asking for feedback through it with questions that are raised at the next staff engagement forum.

**Other staff engagement activities**

31. A huge focus of the staff engagement activities is to amplify the organisational culture so that it supports and displays engagement, this includes less corporate

and more 'fun' messaging and communications using rich media (video, audio and photographic images), which will be shared via social media (where appropriate), the intranet, grow and a corporate social media channel. This will support the strengthening of our employer brand, both internally for engagement and retention, but also externally for candidate attraction. This also includes making senior leadership more visible using rich media.

32. Using the drivers of engagement and engagement theory from the [MacLeod report](#), we have mapped the results from the staff survey to show areas that indicate where these drivers require attention, this has been broken down into teams and services HR Business Partners will work with these services to deliver bespoke engagement solutions and where appropriate, these solutions will be rolled out across the council. An example could be a disconnect in a certain service from understanding the business plan so we could build a short learning module to support this in grow, which if shown to be successful could be rolled out to the wider council.

33. Pulse surveys will be introduced shortly as additional functionality in grow. These short surveys will qualitative feedback to support improvements in staff engagement, and most importantly help us measure how successful our staff engagement initiatives are.

34. We are developing an engagement strategy, linked to the business plan and the people and digital strategies, which will inform the internal communications plan.

35. To further reinforce and support our employer brand, we are also launching 'the little book of #EPIC' in the new year, which will raise awareness of the positioning of our employer brand, and also give brand guidelines for how to use it.

36. The success of the #EPIC group, and the impact of the initiatives launched so far, will feature in this year's staff engagement forums where the focus on improving our engagement with staff remains a priority. A film that showcases the #EPIC team will be shown at the Forums and in the film members of the group talk about the experience they have had and why staff engagement is so important.

37. The work of the #EPIC group and other activities taking place to improve staff engagement has also been recognised externally and the Council is now confirmed as finalist in the Engage Awards 2017 in the category "Best Use of Innovation in Employee   Engagement".

38. Feedback from the #EPIC group includes:

> *"After a restructure, which temporarily left me in role I didn't enjoy, **#EPIC** gave me the platform to put ideas forward and feel listened to. It also gave me motivation, confidence the hope that I can achieve my career goals. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to be part of something so fresh and innovative!"* - Wali Rathman, Organisational Development   Officer

*"Through **#EPIC** I have met some amazing team members from other departments. I feel refreshed and inspired by the big changes that even small things can make to the Council. The feeling of working with an inspirational, engaged group has made me a better person and this I take back to my team – making me a better manager."* - Lisa Lowton, Street scenes Area Manager
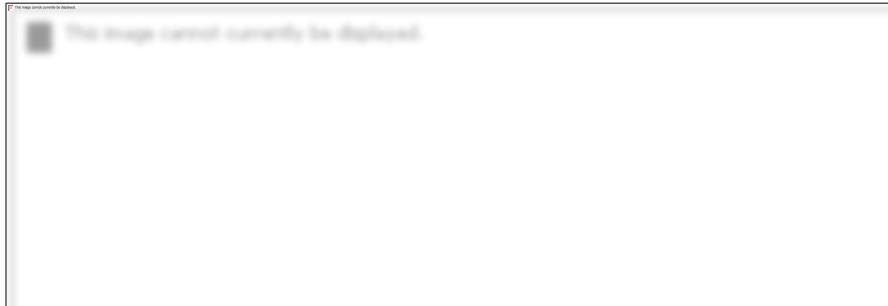
#EPIC Group February 2017

#EPIC 2018

39. Applications to join #EPIC 2018 will be invited in December, and raising awareness of that, and the achievements so far, will take place at this year's Staff Engagement Forums.

40. As well as some further work needed on internal communication, staff recognition and visibility of senior leadership (all areas for improvement identified in the 2016 staff survey results), and ideas and feedback from the Staff Engagement Forums, the new #EPIC 2018 group will also share their own ideas with the aim of developing new initiatives to further improve staff engagement. There have been some star performers in this year's cohort who have expressed an interest in being part of #EPIC 2018 so we will allow these members to reapply, and may nominate some current members to be facilitators for #EPIC 2018.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

41. The People Strategy priorities have been subject to the scrutiny of Staffing Policy Committee, who will be kept informed about progress against these.

Safeguarding Considerations

42. The new People Strategy is closely aligned with the new business plan and supports the recruitment and development of high calibre staff. Our recruitment policy and procedure ensures that appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out and training on safeguarding is provided to ensure our staff understand their responsibilities and work hard to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Public Health Implications

43. There are no public health implications as a result of the information in this report.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

44. There is no environmental or climate change impacts as a result of the information in this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

45. The new People Strategy has been equality impact assessed.

Risk Assessment

46. There are no risks identified as a result of the information in this report.

Financial Implications

47. There are no financial implications relating to the progress outlined in this report. Staff involved in the #EPIC group do this voluntarily, and the group have also received some sponsorship which is being used to meet the cost of any marketing materials and events.

Legal Implications

48. There are no legal implications identified as a result of the information in this report.

Options Considered

49. No other options have been considered.

Proposals

That the cabinet:

50. endorses the actions and initiatives being taken to deliver the priorities in the new People Strategy to enable the council to attract, retain and develop staff.

51. recommends that Officers proceed with the new initiatives planned for 2018, including a focus on communication, additional staff recognition and continuing to develop alternative approaches for improving the visibility of senior leadership.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – People Strategy 2017 - 2027