

Report to Scrutiny

2 February 2023

Subject:	Organisational culture, values and behaviours
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1 Recommendations

1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon:

- a) A progress update regarding the previous report that was provided for Scrutiny on 6 December 2022 (Appendix A: Organisational Culture and employee engagement).
- b) The proposed actions and direction of travel for organisational culture, values and behaviours.









2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Organisational Culture forms an integral part of Sandwell's Improvement Plan and will be key to the future success of the Council.
- 2.2 Our organisation values and behaviours are central to customer experience and will both drive and be embedded through work on customer journey and around equality, diversity and inclusion.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

- 3.1 Organisational Culture is fundamental to delivery of all corporate plan objectives.

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The feedback from the culture listening sessions was provided to Leadership team on 22 November 2022. This meeting considered the initial proposals from the external partner for new aspirational behaviours that would apply to all members of staff. A follow up



meeting took place on 13 December 2022 with Leadership team. Leadership Team agreed to the development of a behaviour framework called the “One Team Framework”.

- 4.1.1 The Leadership Team agreed that this concept of a One Team Framework could be further developed based upon the listening group analysis provided by the external partner.
- 4.1.2 The purpose of the One Team Framework
The One Team Framework aims to provide clarity on how we should be delivering our organisational values in all that we do. These values and behaviours will form an integral part of our Workforce Strategy. The feedback is drawn from feedback received from stakeholders, to create a simple, practical framework to help everyone put the desired behaviours into action in everything they do.
- 4.1.3 The One Team Framework will set out the desired behaviours from all employees with a set of behavioural indicators for “everyone” and a set of behaviours for all managers/leaders.
- 4.1.4 With One Council One Team in mind, we will continue to build a working environment that is underpinned by our values. Continually challenging ourselves to demonstrate these values through our behaviours is critical to the delivery of strategic goals and to enhancing customer, members of the public and staff satisfaction. They will help us guide the way we work together and underpin our key people processes and enable our change agenda. The One Team Framework also provides a common language and consistent framework for assessing and developing behavioural attributes across the organisation.
- 4.1.5 Our values are the framework for our behaviours which we expect from our colleagues. The One Team Framework will nurture an environment where each colleague is respected and supported to play their full part in our success. The One Team Framework will create an environment where individual differences are valued, embraced, and respected. It will ensure we fully embody inclusive values and behaviours to secure Sandwell Council’s future as a place where people want to live, work and prosper.



4.1.6 The One Team framework can be used a point of reference for one to one staff or team meetings and it will be included in the revision of appraisal. The framework is intended to act as a guide, rather than a prescriptive checklist of the behaviours the Council will recognise, reward, and endorse.

4.1.7 Organisational culture narrative

We have worked hard to change the way we work over the last year. We've made a lot of progress and the challenge now is to make sure the improvements are sustainable. Growing the right organisational culture is a crucial part of this.

Changing the council's values would be the easy thing to do, but the feedback from the listening sessions and the survey with members of staff last year is not necessarily that our values are wrong, but that we haven't always lived them.

We are a different organisation now, moving forward with confidence in the future.

The proposal has been developed in conjunction with the Communications Team to ensure a set of values and behaviours that can be used effectively in corporate communications. The “We are Sandwell” message aims to promote a sense of belonging and pride.

The One Team Framework builds on the council's One Team One Council ethos and provides a guide and structure as to how this applies to everyday working.

4.1.8 The proposed values and behaviours

From the feedback via the external partner and further consultation with stakeholders including Leadership Team, Culture Champions and the



Culture Working Group, Communication Team the following behaviours are proposed but still subject to final feedback at this stage:

We are one team - united and working together with the shared purpose of achieving great results.

We care— about providing the best possible public service. (N.B Consultation with Wider Leadership Team suggested this should be reworded to “We are customer focused” .

We are inclusive – treating each other with respect and knowing our diversity is our strength.

We are ambitious – striving for excellence, always looking to get better and making sure everyone can take pride in our borough.

We are accountable – delivering what we say we will.

These are aligned with both the One Council One Team ethos and also align to the council external communication approach of “We are Sandwell”.

4.1.9 Leadership behaviours

On 12 January the values and behaviours were discussed with wider Leadership Team and an aspirational leadership style and language was captured to develop a Leadership part of the One Team Framework.

The proposal put to the wider Leadership Team considered the benefits of having a two-tier or three-tier set of behaviours. A two-tier framework may prevent the risk of drift towards reference to process and procedure, and encourage anyone with responsibility for guiding, supporting and directing the work of others to see themselves as a leader, whatever their grade level.

One recommendation from the wider Leadership Team session is that “We Care” requires rewording to be more specific about our customers. Suggested alternative is “We are customer focused”.



Feedback from wider Leadership team on 12 January 2023 was that 67% felt the council need to move away from Trust, Unity and Progress and fully adopt new values.

4.1.10 Staff consultation and engagement

In addition to the listening sessions that took place in 2022, a staff panel session took place on 16 January 2023 which provided the opportunity for all staff, including those that attended a listening session to receive an update on progress and make final comments on the proposed framework. Feedback from this session showed an equal opinion on whether the council should retain Trust, Unity and Progress. Suggesting that the focus should be living which ever value descriptions are selected.

4.1.11 Trade Union feedback session on 10 January 2023.

The Trade Union's welcome further detailed discussions about how the framework will apply in practice. This will be subject to a separate consultation process around the review of employee appraisals.

5 Next steps

Following the final feedback from staff panel, the One Team Framework will be finalised and submitted to Cabinet for approval on 15 March 2023. The report for Cabinet is due 16 February 2023. The following steps will be required before and after presentation to Cabinet.

- Leadership Team sign off the agreed desired values and behaviours.
- Develop a plan to promote and communicate values and behaviours.
- Embedding the One Team Framework into HR practices, appraisals, employee induction and the alignment to a management development programme.
- Embed the One Team Framework as a foundation of the council's workforce strategy and aligned with and to our work on Customer Journey and equality, diversity and inclusion



6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>The resources including budget are assigned as part of the Improvement Plan. The Improvement & Capacity Reserve approved by Council on 7 June 2022 included an allocation of £300,000 to fund the Organisational Culture Change Programme. To date, just under £50,000 has been spent, with the majority of the fund to be allocated to interventions required to embed the desired culture.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>On 22 March 2022, The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued Directions under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the 1999 Act) in order to ensure that the council can comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act.</p> <p>Under these Directions, the council is required to develop and implement an improvement plan that includes “<i>actions to deliver rapid and sustainable improvements in governance, leadership and culture in the Authority.</i>” Failure to comply with these Directions may lead to further intervention measures for the council.</p> <p>Ultimately, the changes made through the Improvement Plan will enable the council to effectively deliver its strategic priorities and ensure it is delivering value for money for Sandwell.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>If the Council fails to take appropriate action to meet the requirements set out in the government Direction, or the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State do not have sufficient confidence that appropriate actions are being taken to implement and sustain the required improvements, then the council</p>



	<p>risks not having appropriate arrangements in place to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the 1999 Act. This could lead to further government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.</p> <p>Organisational Culture is included within the Improvement Plan Risk Register, recognising the importance of organisation culture to successfully implement the necessary changes and embed the improvement. The risk is currently rated as Amber, reflecting the impact should this risk materialise as well as the interventions already taking place to respond to the Employee Engagement Survey and future planned activities.</p>
Equality:	The culture working group has ongoing visibility and steers the planning and delivery of actions related to employee engagement and culture. Membership of this group includes leads on EDI and member development to ensure strategies and activities are aligned.
Health and Wellbeing:	Employee engagement and a positive organisational culture brings benefits to organisations, including greater customer/client satisfaction, increased employee happiness and wellbeing, and increased productivity and creativity.
Social Value:	The new values and behaviour will underpin work of the council, defining expectations for ways of working, and in turn directly influencing our delivery of social value.
Climate Change:	Current and future activities have been conducted virtually where this approach will achieve the desired



outcome. This reduces staff travel to offices or other venues.
However, in order to maximise the engagement of staff there is a recognition that face-to-face meetings, events and conversations will have more impact on developing and embedding the desired culture than virtual interactions. This will inevitably mean increased staff journeys which will generate carbon emissions.

7 Appendices

8

A) Scrutiny Report 6 December 2023: Organisational culture and Employee Engagement

B) Draft One Team Framework with “everyone” behaviours.

