

# Report to Cabinet

**15 March 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	Organisational Culture, Values and Behaviours
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Bob Piper Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources
<b>Director:</b>	Shokat Lal Chief Executive
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Victoria Lee Head of HR  Debbie Sant L&OD Manager

## 1. Recommendations

1.1 That approval be given to adopt the following set of values and behaviours for Sandwell Council following the work that has taken place as part of the culture workstream within the Single Improvement Plan:-

- **We are one team** - united and working together with the shared purpose of achieving great results.
- **We are customer focused** – caring about providing the best possible public service.
- **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.









## 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 There are clear links between culture and the key drivers of employee engagement.
- 2.3 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.

	The 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 Improvement Plan

4.2 The external reviews conducted in Autumn 2021 and early 2022 highlighted a number of cultural issues that were presenting the council from moving forward. In their Value for Money Governance Review from Autumn 2021, Grant Thornton highlighted a number of issues that needed to be addressed:

*“The Council has seen deteriorating senior officer and senior member relationships over a number of years. This has resulted in a breakdown in trust, respect and confidence between those holding governance roles. This has limited the Council’s ability to look forward and manage the challenges and opportunities it faces. This breakdown in relationships between senior officers and senior members is central to the governance issues identified by this review... The Council has been insular and siloed. Its focus has been on responding to external service-based challenges as well as managing the fallout from previous decisions or investigations. Senior officers and senior members have historically been unable to make the changes required to move away from this organisational culture and focus.”*

4.3 The Improvement Plan that was developed in response to the three external reviews and the government’s intervention, acknowledges the importance of establishing the right organisational culture in enabling the council to deliver sustainable improvement. The Improvement Plan Theme of Organisational Culture includes a multi-faceted approach to developing and embedding a positive working culture in the Council. This includes actions to address the findings of the Employee Engagement Survey, and the need to develop a set of values and behaviours that will underpin organisational development going forward.



#### 4.4 Work completed to date

June 2022	<p>Culture Working Group established, this includes representatives from across the council that can contribute to and provide constructive challenge to the approach, including leads on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Member Development.</p> <p>Engaged specialist delivery partner to support with initial phases including the facilitation of a workshop with Leadership Team.</p>
July	Identification and appointment of Culture Champion volunteers
End August	Delivery of 'train the trainer' sessions to Culture Champions enabling the Champions to undertake listening group sessions with employees.
End of August to 18 October 2022	<p>Employee listening sessions to gather qualitative feedback from employees about the current culture and what they believe should be the aspirational culture. Delivered as face-to-face sessions and virtual sessions and included targeted group sessions for the Disability Support Group and Trade Unions.</p> <p>Ongoing marketing of sessions during this time.</p>
18 October to 4 November 2022	A survey which ran from 18 October to 4 November 2022 for employees who had not attended a listening group session. Paper based copies available for employees with no access to SMBC electronic devices.
4 November to 18 November 2022	Collation and analysis of employee feedback.
22 November 2022	Feedback to Leadership Team of findings and initial proposals for desired values and behaviours.
Early December	Further refinement of proposals with stakeholders.
6 December 2022	Scrutiny update.
13 December 2022	Leadership Team agreed to the development of the behaviours as the "One Team Framework" concept.
10 January 2023	Trade Union item for discussion.
12 January 2023	Wider Leadership team workshop on manager and leader behaviours.
16 January 2023	Staff panel workshop on proposal for One Team Framework.



24 January 2023	Culture Working Group to finalise
2 February	Approval of One Team Framework behaviours by Leadership Team.  Scrutiny update.

#### 4.5 The values and behaviours

From the feedback via the external partner and further consultation with stakeholders including Leadership Team, Wider Leadership Team, Culture Champions, the Culture Working Group and the Communications Team, the values and behaviours are:

- **We are one team** - united and working together with the shared purpose of achieving great results.
- **We are customer focused** – caring about providing the best possible public service.
- **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 values and behaviours are aligned with both the One Council One Team ethos and align to the council communication approach of “We are Sandwell”.

4.6 The Leadership Team agreed that this concept of a One Team Framework should be further developed based upon the listening group analysis provided by the external partner. (Appendix: The One Team Framework).

4.7 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 People/Workforce Strategy. The Framework is drawn from feedback received from stakeholders, to create a reference point to enable everyone put the desired behaviours into action in everything they do.



- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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/resident and staff satisfaction. They will 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. The framework is intended to act as a guide, rather than a prescriptive checklist of the behaviours the Council will recognise, reward, and endorse.
- 4.10 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 the appraisal process and aligned to performance management.
- 4.11 The next steps

To ensure that the behaviours are adopted by everyone the next steps are:

- i) A communications plan for roll out - this will include staff briefings, videos, branding, posters and screen savers.
- ii) Engagement workshops – This will commence with wider Leadership Team 9 March 2023 and then manager workshops in April utilising the Culture Champions to support.
- iii) Embedding into processes and practices – this will initially include a review of the current appraisal process and recruitment and selection approach.





#### 4.12 Additional information

#### 4.13 Linked development activity

The Improvement Plan also calls for skill and knowledge development in key areas for managers that will embed the changes made to governance and decision-making arrangements. This includes financial management and procurement training linked to the revised Contract Procedure Rules, as well as project management and effective officer and member relationship training. The initial phases of this are now complete. The findings from the effective officer and member sessions that were led by the LGA have influenced the development of the One Team Framework behaviours.

#### 4.14 External Partner

The external partner has provided objectivity and independence to the approach that has been used. They have delivered ‘train the trainer’ sessions and have been responsible for the collation of outputs from the listening sessions and surveys. This has assured anonymity to employees taking part.

### 5. Alternative Options

5.1 There is no alternative option as this recommendation has been agreed as part of the Single Improvement Plan.

### 6. Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The resources including budget are assigned as part of the Improvement Plan. No additional spending is required above and beyond what is agreed.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<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 “actions to deliver rapid and sustainable improvements in governance, leadership and culture in the Authority.” Failure to comply with these Directions may lead to further intervention measures for the council.</p>



<p><b>Risk:</b></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 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>
<p><b>Equality:</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Health and Wellbeing:</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Social Value:</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Climate Change:</b></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>





## 7. Appendices

Appendix: One Team Framework

## 8. Background Papers

Not applicable

