

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday, 31 October 2017

Spot-checking on the Dissemination of Council Policies

Item number	7.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

Executive summary

The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee on 19 June 2015, agreed to strengthen existing arrangements and provide greater assurance with regard to the dissemination of committee decisions. This report provides a spot-check that actions have been undertaken by directorates in order to ensure that policies are being effectively communicated to staff and that they are aware of where to find more information if required.

Spot-checking on the Dissemination of Council Policies

Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the response to the staff surveys on the dissemination of Council policies and ongoing efforts to improve dissemination.
- 1.2 To note that a report exploring with directorates more effective ways to monitor the dissemination and understanding of Council policies by employees would be submitted in Spring 2018.

Background

- 2.1 The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee had previously agreed a revised approach for the dissemination and implementation of committee decisions by directorates.
- 2.2 It was agreed to introduce a spot-check on the dissemination of Council policies with updates being provided to the Governance, Risk and Best Value. This is the fourth of these updates.

Main report

- 3.1 This report focuses on the dissemination of relevant policies to staff. The setting and agreeing of policies is one of the key functions of committees and focusing on this provides an effective way of gauging whether important decisions are being effectively disseminated to appropriate Council officers. An outline of the procedure for the dissemination of existing and new policies to staff is outlined below.

Council Policies

- 3.2 As part of the compliance, risk and governance workstream within the Efficient Effective Transformation Programme, a review of council policies was undertaken in September 2013 to rationalise existing council policy, publish agreed policies on the council's website and ensure an appropriate process of update and review going forward.
- 3.3 As the initial step in rationalising Council policies, a policy register was developed and is available on the [Council's website](#).

- 3.4 It is essential for good governance and the efficient and effective running of the Council that officers clearly understand the policies applicable to their role, and their responsibilities in relation to the implementation of Council policy.
- 3.5 Directorates are responsible for the dissemination of policies to their staff and the process adopted by each can vary.
- 3.6 All new policies agreed at Committee or Council level are captured and published in the public facing policy register.

Spot-Check of Policies and Staff Survey Results:

- 3.7 The most recent spot checking exercise in April 2017 focussed on dissemination to Council officers of two Council policies by way of a questionnaire to randomly selected officers from two service areas. This was emailed to officers by Senior Executive Officers using the Survey Monkey platform and utilised an expanded sample size. Questions were tailored to gain an understanding of officer's awareness of where to find policies.
- 3.8 The spot-checking exercise in this report has been undertaken using similar methods as outlined in paragraph 3.7 above, the expanded sample size of 240 for each survey was maintained, however, response rate was significantly lower than previously, with only 34 individuals responding to each survey. The selected policies were the Health and Safety Policy and the Managing Customer Contact in a Fair and Positive Way Policy. Results are listed in paragraph 3.11 and 3.12 below.
- 3.9 The Health and Safety Policy was most recently reviewed at Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee in March 2017. The policy applies to all employees and extends to third parties who interact with Council services but are not employees such as members of the public, contractors and service users. Separate policies exist regarding the safety of residents in receipt of care and public event safety. When the new policy was published in April 2017 this was accompanied by communication from the Chief Executive
- 3.10 The Managing Customer Contact in a Fair and Positive Way Policy was most recently reviewed on 29 September 2015 and provides guidance on how customers should be treated in a fair and positive way while managing demands that result in unreasonable demands on Council staff. The policy was previously known as the Unacceptable Actions Policy but was renamed to better reflect objectives and best practice guidance supporting it.

3.11 **Policy 1 – Health and Safety Policy (34 respondents)** (agreed at Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on 28 March 2017)

	Yes	No
Are you aware of the policy	82.35%	17.65%
Do you know where you could find this policy if required	88.12%	12.00%
I understand the aims of the policy	Strongly agree – 26.67% Agree – 73.33% Neither – 0% Disagree – 0% Strongly disagree – 0%	
I understand how the policy will inform/change my day-to-day work.	Strongly agree – 13.33% Agree – 73.33% Neither – 13.33% Disagree – 0% Strongly disagree – 0%	
I understand the steps needed to implement the policy to ensure it is effective	Strongly agree – 13.33% Agree – 73.33% Neither – 13.33% Disagree – 0% Strongly disagree – 0%	

3.12 **Policy 2 – Managing Customer Contact in a Fair and Positive Way (34 respondents)** (agreed at Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on 29 September 2015)

	Yes	No
Are you aware of the policy	32.35%	67.65%

Does the policy place any specific responsibilities or obligations on you in your role?	11.76%	88.24%
Do you know where you could find this policy if required?	85.19%	14.81%
I understand the aims of this policy	Strongly agree – 100% Agree – 0% Neither – 0% Disagree – 0% Strongly disagree – 0%	
I understand how the policy will inform/change my day-to-day work	Strongly agree – 0% Agree – 75.00% Neither – 25.00% Disagree – 0% Strongly disagree – 0	
I understand the steps needed to implement the policy to ensure it is effective	Strongly agree – 50.00% Agree – 25.00% Neither – 0% Disagree – 0% Strongly disagree – 25.00%	

Survey Responses

- 3.13 Awareness and understanding of the Health and Safety Policy was very high, with only a small percentage stating that they did not know of the policy or where to find it.
- 3.14 Information on the policy would continue to be included in health and safety induction training for managers and supervisors. The content of the policy, in particular roles and responsibilities would also be discussed by the Corporate Health and Safety Team at upcoming marketplace sessions.
- 3.15 Awareness of the Managing Customer Contact in a Fair and Positive Way was less prevalent, however, almost all respondents directly impacted in their role by the policies indicated they were aware of where to find policy details if required. Those who completed the survey stated that they understood the aims of the policy and the majority understood how the policy informed their day to day work.

- 3.16 Analysis of individual responses shows that in the Managing Customer Contact in a Fair and Positive Way survey those responding tended not to complete the whole questionnaire with only 4 individuals completing the whole survey.
- 3.17 Complaint handing across the Council has recently been reviewed and as a result a Corporate Complaints Improvement Plan has been developed. As part of the improvements identified, a review would be undertaken on training available for appropriate staff on policies impacting their role. This would include sessions on the Managing Customer Contact in a Fair and Positive Way Policy. Information on the Council's internal intranet site (the Orb) regarding this policy will also be reviewed and updated accordingly.
- 3.18 Almost all respondents directly impacted in their role by the policies indicated that they knew where they could find more information if required. This high awareness correlated with the original key aims of creating a central policy register; to foster greater transparency, accountability and openness for officers and members of the public.
- 3.19 Respondents were invited to provide comments as to how policies or strategies should ideally be disseminated, answers tended not to vary from methods currently utilised by directorates. This included one-to-one briefings, emails, team meetings, mandatory training sessions and use of the orb intranet site. Suggestions from previous surveys to use notice boards for dissemination have been adopted and several respondents noted that they had become aware of policies in this way.
- 3.20 In considering the responses and uptake to the surveys, it is clear that the approach taken is now not as effective as previously evidenced. Responses were much reduced from similar surveys in 2016 and those responses were often unfinished or lacked full answers. It is proposed that ways to improve the approach to monitoring policies are explored further with directorates and further build on the work already being undertaken to improve employee awareness of policies. This will be reported back to Committee in February 2018.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Sufficient knowledge of Council policies by relevant officers.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no direct financial impacts as a result of this report.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The improvements in business processes help ensure increased transparency and assurance across the Council's decision making processes.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no direct equalities impacts as a result of this report.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There is no direct sustainability impact as a result of this report.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Officers from across the Council were consulted by anonymous questionnaire.

Background reading/external references

[Compliance, risk and governance programme: review of Council policy \(CP&S Committee 3 September 2013\)](#)

[Minute of the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee 19 June 2014](#)

[Minute of the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee 12 November 2015](#)

[Minute of the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee 26 May 2016](#)

[Minute of the Governance Risk and Best Value Committee 20 April 2017](#)

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Appendices
