

The Highland Council
Redesign Board 10th May 2016

Agenda Item	6
Report No	RDB/6/16

Approach to engaging with staff

Report by the Chief Executive

Summary

This report recommends seven new ways of involving staff in the Board's work on redesign. These methods would have a legacy beyond the redesign period.

1. Background

1.1 At the Redesign board meeting on 18th April 2016 Members requested a report on proposals for consulting with staff, including on potential improvement in service delivery. This report sets out a proposed approach that builds on current methods for engaging staff and introduces new methods.

2. Current methods

2.1 In the normal processes for engaging staff it will be helpful for the Board to have assurance that redesign is a topic covered. Engagement may be face to face, electronically, through publications such as newsletters and it can be with staff representatives. Early examples of such engagement in normal processes are:

1. Majoring on redesign at the 6 monthly management briefings. The next briefings are later in May and workshops can be run to feed into Phase 1 of the Board's work.
2. Including redesign in the quarterly senior leadership team meetings for Heads of Service. The next session is in early June and can support Phases 1 and 2 of the Board's work.
3. Cascading information through scheduled face to face team briefings.
4. Including articles in the staff newsletter on redesign.
5. Email communication from the Chief Executive.
6. Information on the intranet or Council's website.
7. Including redesign in discussions with Trade Unions in formal and informal meetings. The next meeting of the Staff Partnership Forum is in early June.

2.2 Making the best use of current information

As well as gathering new feedback on redesign issues the workshops for the early phases of the Board's work will use information already available from staff including from previous staff surveys.

3. New methods

3.1 To reach more staff and in a systematic way, additional and new methods are proposed below. These support two way communication and dialogue to involve staff in the process rather than only informing staff of progress and decisions.

3.2 Staff representation

Two proposals are made. In addition to discussing redesign through scheduled meetings and forums with Trade Unions the Chair and Vice Chair are considering how best to enable Trade Union involvement in the Redesign Board. A verbal up-date will be provided at the meeting on discussions with Trade Union representatives.

3.3 Secondly it is proposed that a Staff Panel is established, to operate in a similar way to the Citizens' Panel. It would be designed to gather staff views confidentially through surveys and for the Panel to be statistically representative of staff views. If Board Members agree further information on the size and composition of the Panel and the approach to inviting staff to participate can be provided at the next meeting of the Board. A Staff Panel once established can be operational beyond the work of the Redesign Board.

3.4 Further face to face engagement

Three new and additional methods for engaging staff face to face are proposed as part of the redesign process. Firstly, at different stages in the process staff focus groups can be arranged to gather views and experience on topical issues. For example some of the workshops for Board members in Phase 1 could also be run with staff based in different localities. It would be particularly helpful to gather staff views on what works well in the Council just now and how to get more of it as part of the discussion on purpose, values and outcomes. Later it would be helpful to gather staff views on impacts of proposals for redesign.

3.5 In reviewing current functions and considering options for alternative ways of providing services Phase 2 of the Board's work involves discussions with Heads of Service. These should enable Heads' of Service experience and ideas to be gauged as well as challenging current delivery arrangements. This will include performance information as requested by the Board. These discussions may identify further staff to engage in a similar way. Individually Board Members may be willing and able to take part in these discussions.

3.6 Another proposal has come from a member of staff following an email communication from the Chief Executive after the first Board meeting. This proposed that Members individually could shadow a member of staff for a day to understand their experience of service delivery. This could be really helpful in highlighting job pressures, achievements, how current systems work in practice and provide insight into how things could be done differently in future as well as the type of change needed. This might be particularly helpful during stages 2 and 3 of the Board's work.

3.7 New electronic engagement

Two proposals for electronic engagement are made. Firstly it is proposed that a staff Facebook closed group page is created to enable up-dates of the redesign to be posted and shared quickly across staff and for staff to post and share comments. This would be particularly helpful to get messages out following Board workshops and meetings and to gauge feedback from them. The page could be a valuable tool for reaching staff who do not have digital

access in the course of their work. It can also be used for wider staff information, such as promoting learning and development and awareness of other projects.

- 3.8 The second proposal is about using new digital platforms for engagement that have come to attention from the Council's work on participatory budgeting (PB). In exploring how to enable public involvement in project ideas, debating ideas, ranking projects and voting on them, a range of digital tools have been reviewed that are in use internationally. Currently the Scottish Government is offering to support the costs involved in PB applications for a year and there is scope to use the Government's framework and the negotiated costs involved.
- 3.9 Several of these tools could be used as part of the redesign work as the Board's work will involve generating ideas, debating them, ranking priorities and deciding what to do differently. The tools reviewed would allow user groups to be created and this could be done for particular staff groups on particular proposals or for engaging staff as a whole. The tools clearly have potential for wider application and to engage with communities on redesign and potentially the work of the Commission on Highland Democracy. Further work is required to recommend a tool for the Board to subscribe to, as most costs are for licence fees, and this can be reported to a future Board meeting.
- 3.10 If the Board agree to the use of the proposed methods these will be further discussed in partnership with the Trade Unions. This will provide the opportunity to identify any other methods of engaging employees and also to consider how best to implement the methods set out in this report.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Board Members are asked to note that redesign and the work of the Board will be covered in normal arrangements for engaging staff over the next 12 months, whether face to face, electronically and through Trade Unions.

4.2 Board Members are asked to agree that the following new methods of involving staff in redesign are pursued and discussed further with Trade Unions:

1. Representation from Trade Unions in the work of the Board, as verbally reported to the Board meeting from the Chair and Vice Chair;
2. A Staff Panel is created to gather staff feedback by surveys, with a report on recruitment to the Panel and its size at the next Board meeting;
3. Staff focus groups are run in localities to feed into relevant phases of the Board's work;
4. Discussions with Heads of Service, and others as identified, to gather information on current functions and how they may be delivered differently in future. Individually Board members may be willing and able to take part in these discussions;
5. Board Members shadowing particular staff to understand their role and service delivery issues and ideas for change;
6. The creation of a staff Facebook page (closed group);
7. Recommendations on a digital platform to subscribe to at a future Board meeting to enable staff to provide redesign ideas, debate them, rank them and vote on them. Such a platform would have wider community use too.

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Background Papers: Notes from discussions with the Learning and Development Manager, Corporate Communications Manager and HR Manager. Email correspondence from staff to the Chief Executive.