

<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Employment Committee
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Employee Opinion Survey
<b>Report by:</b>	Director of Corporate Services
<b>Wards affected:</b>	n/a
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Full Council decision:</b>	No

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## 1. Purpose of report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to advise members of the results of the 2019 Employee Opinion Survey (the survey) and the actions being undertaken to address the findings.

## 2. Recommendations

### 2.1. It is recommended that Members:

- Note the findings of the survey
- Note the actions being undertaken to address issues raised
- Note the actions being taken for future surveys

## 3. Background

3.1. The Council has been undertaking an Employee Opinion Survey for the past 10 years. The purpose of the survey is to ascertain staff views across eleven different themes. Staff can answer up to 54 different question though some questions lead to supplementary questions which takes the total number up to 66 if all are responded to (e.g. are you a carer? if yes, then staff are asked supplementary questions).

3.2. The survey is anonymous which enables staff to provide their views freely; employees also have the ability to not answer questions if they choose. The survey is distributed in both digital and paper formats to cater for all types of workers within the council.

3.3. In previous years the survey has been undertaken by an external specialist company, however the skills have now been developed in house and the survey was undertaken internally for the first time in 2019. Not only does an in house

approach provide a cost saving, it also provides a greater degree of control over the data to enable further and more detailed analysis where required, and at no additional cost other than staff time.

#### 4. Summary of Response Rates

4.1. At 49% the 2019 response rate was slightly down on the 2018 response rate of 53%, however this does nevertheless provide sufficient data that is statistically relevant from which to draw conclusions and formulate actions.

4.2. The response rates for each directorate are set out in Appendix 1, though it should be noted that the survey was undertaken during a period of considerable organisational change. The results, therefore, for the Executive group and for circa a third of Finance and Information Services were in the process of becoming what is now the Directorate of Corporate Services.

4.3. It is worth noting significant response rate increases in Adult Services (from 26% in 2018 to 38% in 2019) and in Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services (from 47% in 2018 to 83% in 2019). However, there is also a significant decrease in response rates in Finance and Information Services (from 75% in 2018 to 59% in 2019).

4.4. There are many factors that affect survey response rates, including length of survey and motivation of respondents as well as other factors. It is likely that for the two directorates seeing an increase there has been an increase in staff motivation. Further investigation has ascertained that for the area showing a significant decrease the causal factor is likely to relate to the levels of motivation, arising from organisational change, within Information Services at the time.

4.5 There is no specific benchmark for Employee Opinion Survey response rates in terms of what a good response rate is and what a poor response rate is. However the higher the response rate the more likely it is that staff are motivated to provide feedback and have a belief that actions will be taken in response to their feedback. It is worth noting that in response to the question: *The council listens and responds to views and suggestions of staff* only 38% of staff agree, which is the second lowest score other than *the council manages change effectively* where only 35% of staff agree.

#### 5. Summary of Survey Findings

5.1. The number of staff who are proud to work for the council increased to 75.67% (up 5.95%)

5.2. There was a significant increase in staff who not only understand the shared aim of the council but also how they contribute to it (up 9.77%).

- 5.3. There has however been a significant decrease in staff who understand the corporate priorities and how they can contribute to them (down 12.88%). This is likely to be because priorities weren't included verbatim in the survey, as they were last year, which would have acted as a prompt for staff.
- 5.4. There has also been a slight decrease (down 2.21%) of staff who believe their work makes a positive difference.
- 5.5. More staff are able to access the right learning and development opportunities when they need to (up 8.82%), and believe that learning and development activities have helped developed their career (up 5.61%).
- 5.6. More staff think they are fairly paid (up 4.73%) and the balance of pay is appropriate for their role (up 4.54%).
- 5.7. Staff feel more involved in decisions that affect their work (up 3.74%) and that the council listens and responds to the views and suggestions of staff (up 3.93%), although the agreement levels here are low.
- 5.8. There is a significant increase (up 13.16%) of the number of staff who feel they have clear work objectives.
- 5.9. There was a significant increase in the number of staff who know how to access support for their health and wellbeing (up 12.54%). There was also an increase in the number of staff who feel the council provides support for their physical health (up 5.82%) and mental health (up 9.96%).
- 5.10. Staff are feeling more positive about their work/life balance. More staff are satisfied with their work environment (up 4.73%), have the resources they need to do their job (up 3.57%) and can do what they believe they need to do in their contracted hours (up 2.38%).
- 5.11. Staff are generally happier with communication, and in particular there has been an increase in the number of staff who can find the information they need to do their job on the intranet (up 7.5%)
- 5.12. As can be seen from the above summary whilst across the board the majority of the questions showed an increase in overall satisfaction levels, the area with the smallest increase relative to previous years was 'change and responsiveness'. In particular the question: The council manages change effectively has the lowest percentage of positive responses. This section also has the question with the greatest reduction in positive response rate for the question I have the opportunity to work flexibly in my role with a drop of 12.88%.

## **6. Survey Findings - Actions**

- 6.1. The full survey results have been published on the council's intranet for all staff to view. Each directorate's results have also been shared with the respective director

and their management teams. Directorate management teams are tasked with developing and delivering action plans that respond to the specific issues raised in each directorate. Directorate specific results have yet to be published.

- 6.2. There is currently no overarching strategic action plan that addresses the issues identified in the survey which then makes it difficult to demonstrate to staff that their views have been heard, which in turn could impact on response rates in future years. However, the lack of a more strategic plan could be countered by the actions of individual directorates and how these directorate level plans are delivered.

## **7. Future Surveys**

- 7.1. Whilst the response rate to the survey is, on the whole, not bad, and the summary shows improvements across a range of areas, the survey on its own only represents the view of roughly half of the workforce. There are opportunities to do more with the survey to assist the council in understanding the drivers for motivation and productivity among the workforce and these are set out below.
- 7.2. The first area of focus is on engagement levels. Participation in a survey is not in itself an indicator of engagement. What is engagement?
- 7.3. Employee engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organisation to give of their best each day, committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, with an enhanced sense of their own well-being .
- 7.4. There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates a strong correlation between high engagement levels and improved business outcomes; including, reduced sickness absence levels, lower levels of grievances and other forms of workplace conflict, reduced accidents rates and higher productivity.
- 7.5. The Council does not currently measure engagement levels although the survey lends itself to doing so and therefore future surveys will start to measure engagement at both a corporate and directorate level (where response rates allow).
- 7.6. The survey itself is very lengthy and this element of a survey design often leads to a drop off of completion rates towards the end of the survey. The Council's survey demonstrates this phenomenon with a steady decline in responses from question 33 onwards (from 1837 responses overall declining to 1594, and as low as 398 at one point). Therefore the survey design will be reviewed to ensure it is capturing those elements of most value for measurement and subsequent action.
- 7.7. Survey frequency can be a challenge for large and complex organisations such as the Council. Given the time taken to analyse and publish results, develop action plans and act on them, an annual cycle can be too frequent. It is often the case that action plans have insufficient time to be delivered and embedded before the survey

is undertaken once more. The effect on the workforce can be to reinforce views that their feedback has not been heard and can lead to increased disengagement. Therefore the survey will move to a cycle of once every two years, although a short pulse survey of no more than 6 questions will be completed in between each cycle as this will track and measure engagement levels.

7.8. Although the survey contains questions on staff disabilities and caring responsibilities it does not take the opportunity to investigate other protected characteristics among the workforce and how the council can support staff as an employer. The council currently has a number of gaps in its workforce data pertaining to protected characteristics and therefore there is an opportunity to gather further information through the survey. Any data on protected characteristics that is gathered would still be anonymous but it would provide data at a strategic level that would enable a targeted and evidence based approach to workforce diversity and enable measurement of performance against key targets. Therefore future surveys will include questions on protected characteristics.

<sup>1</sup> Engage for Success: <https://engageforsuccess.org/what-is-employee-engagement>

## **8. Integrated impact assessment**

8.1. There are no equalities impacts arising directly from this report. Any changes implemented as a result of the further analysis of survey results will be subject to impact assessments at the appropriate time

## **9. Legal implications**

9.1. The City Solicitor is satisfied that it is within the City Council's powers to approve the recommendations as set out in this report.

## **10. Director of Finance's comments**

10.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

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Signed by:

**Appendices: Appendix 1**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>