

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE 8 May 2019

Staff Survey 2018

Purpose of report

1. To provide the committee with a summary of the results of the 2018 staff engagement survey.
2. A corporate results report for staff and members has been produced (Appendix A - 2018 staff engagement survey results report for staff and members) and should be read in conjunction with this report.

Background

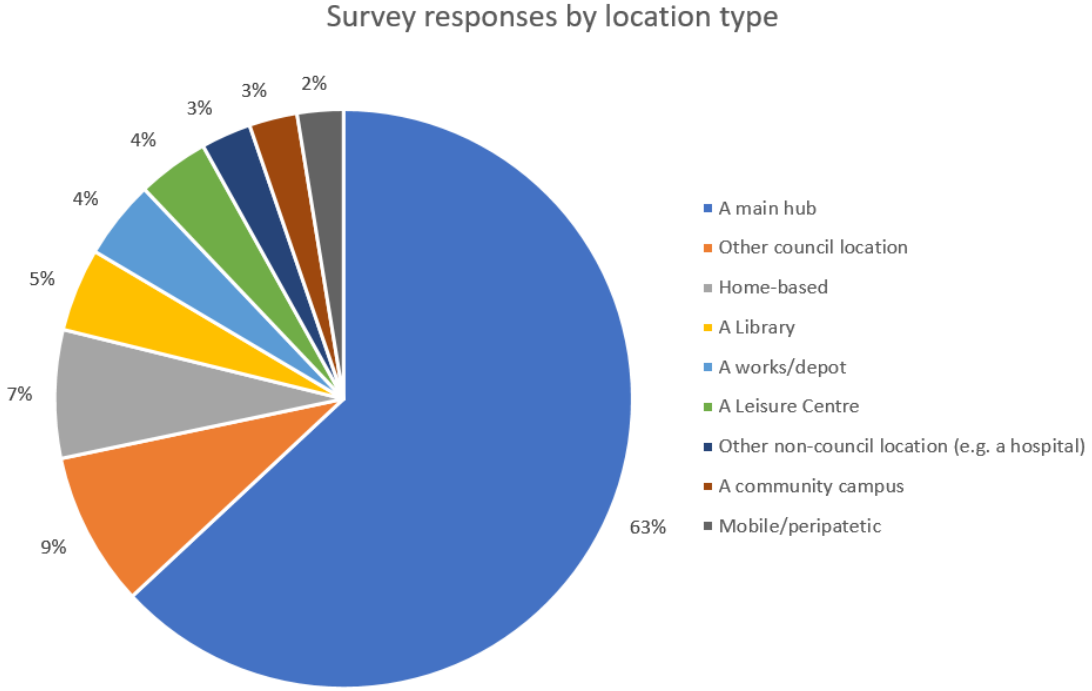
3. The staff engagement survey is a vital aspect of measuring staff engagement, recognising staff voice and giving an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of the action plans generated following the previous survey.
4. The survey also enables the identification of any new issues or opportunities, which can help shape revised priorities for both corporate and service area plans.
5. A staff survey was last undertaken in November 2016 and was completed by 65% of the workforce (2898 responses). Previous surveys were conducted in 2014, 2012 and 2011.
6. The 2017-27 People Strategy identifies a key priority of improving staff engagement. Based on the significance of this priority, the staff survey was redeveloped with reference to a model provided by "[Engage for Success](#)", a voluntary organisation that is aligned with the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) and provides advice and support to organisations to improve employee engagement.
7. A decision was made in 2016 not to benchmark Wiltshire Council results externally through ORC. That decision provided us with an opportunity to be more flexible with the way questions are asked, and to set them in a local context to better reflect our own objectives and workforce.

Timescales

8. The staff survey ran from Monday 10 December 2018 until Monday 7 January 2019, to coincide with the completion of the staff engagement forums.
9. The initial period was subsequently extended, with final responses being accepted up to 5pm on Monday 21 January. To allow for postage times, paper copies were accepted up to Thursday 24 January.
10. Corporate results reports were provided to CLT at the end of February 2019. Service level reports were then issued to directors and service heads at the end of March 2019.

Response rates

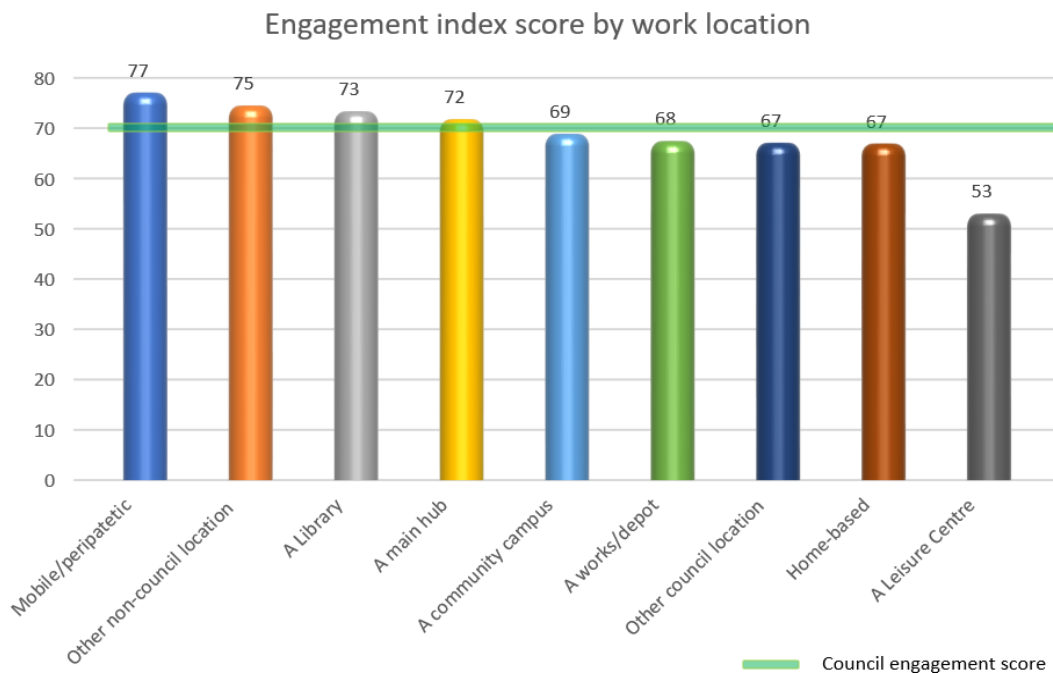
- 11. The response rate was 63.3% (2,729 individual responses). This response rate is slightly lower than the 2016 rate of 65.7% (2,898 responses).
- 12. Most of this reduced response rate can be attributed to receiving significantly less paper copy surveys in 2018. Just under 5% of responses (129) were received as paper copies compared to almost 8% (229) in 2016.
- 13. Given the challenges in distributing surveys to the sections of our workforce without readily available access to IT, this is within an acceptable range. [Gartner](#) indicate that an appropriate response rate “gives a statistically representative and reliable sample at sufficient levels of the company”.
- 14. Response rates varied widely by service areas; this is not unexpected, particularly in those services where large numbers of staff work variable hours, or in roles with very little corporate contact.
- 15. As expected, almost two-thirds of responses (63%) came from the council’s three main hubs. Responses by location were distributed as follows:



- 16. As part of the focus on engagement, the 2018 survey gave respondents more opportunities to express their thoughts through an increased number of free-text feedback sections. Whilst this type of feedback can be challenging and time-consuming to analyse, it allows for far better assessment of our “employee voice”.
- 17. Staff submitted over 5,500 free-text comments (compared to only 534 in the 2016 survey). Analysis of these highlighted the main positive and negative themes of the comments, which are presented in the results report at Appendix A.

Engagement index scores

18. The council's engagement index has increased to 70%. This is a significant uplift from the previous score of 58% in 2016, and is also a much larger increase than that seen between previous surveys in 2014 (56%), 2012 (51%) and 2011 (43%).
19. This score compares favourably with the [2017 Civil Service People Survey](#) score of 61%. More significantly, as seen above the council's engagement index has consistently improved, increasing by 27% overall since 2011, whereas over the same period the Civil Service score increased by only 5%.
20. The continued positive trend of our staff engagement index scores may indicate we should consider benchmarking ourselves against well-known global private sector organisations, or those perceived as aspirational in respect of their employee engagement image. A [2017 report by Expert Training Systems \(ETS\) plc](#), based on almost 1.8 million responses across 99 surveys, identifies an engagement average across their clients of 81%. It should be noted that the basis for their figure is slightly different to the council's, so any absolute comparison should be considered as representative only.
21. The ratio of fully engaged staff increased slightly to 32.2% (879 respondents) from 31.7%, and there was a corresponding decrease in the number of fully disengaged staff to just 0.4% (11 respondents), previously 1.2%.
22. Improvements to the 2018 survey mean that it is now possible to analyse engagement rates by respondents' work location (e.g. a main hub, leisure centre, mobile/peripatetic etc.). This has identified that work location does appear to have a degree of influence on levels of staff engagement.
23. Mobile/peripatetic respondents showed the highest engagement scores (but conversely the lowest actual number of responses), and leisure centre-based respondents indicated they are the least engaged areas:



24. The engagement indices across the three main hubs were all very similar: 72% for County Hall, 72% for Monkton Park, and 71% for Bourne Hill; all are slightly above the corporate score.

25. To allow for comparison with previous reports, the six control questions used to calculate the council's engagement index score were retained for the 2018 survey.
26. Depending on whether responses were positive or negative, they were used to identify ratios of fully engaged and fully disengaged staff, as well as the overall engagement index score.
27. It should be noted that only around half (49%) of single tier/county councils responding to the [2016/17 LGA workforce survey](#) indicated that they carried out an employee engagement survey in 2016/17. This suggests that employee engagement monitoring is still a developing concept in local authorities.

Engagement enablers analysis

28. As this survey has been aligned to the Engage for Success model of four enablers (strategic narrative, engaging managers, employee voice and integrity), survey results were categorised and analysed accordingly to establish a baseline score for each area.
29. Scores within each of the four enabler areas were further divided into engagement sub-themes to allow for more detailed analysis and better support corporate and service-level action planning.
30. The strongest enabler area was integrity (78% positive), and the lowest scoring area was strategic narrative (66%); this is manifested through lower scores in response to questions concerning corporate priorities and goals and the effectiveness of corporate communications:

Engagement enabler / sub-theme	Positive responses score
Strategic Narrative	66
Priorities and goals	63
Motivation	71
Communication	65
Engaging Managers	73
Management effectiveness	83
Performance	63
Employee Voice	72
Me and my team	75
My work environment	64
Integrity	78
Workplace values	74
Workplace experience	84
Overall council score	70

31. As these are new categorisations, there is no comparison with previous survey results available.

Reflecting on corporate priorities from 2016

32. Whilst the 2018 survey focused on staff engagement, it is also important to review survey responses against the corporate priorities identified following the 2016 survey, to assess whether the actions that were put in place have had a positive impact.

33. In 2016 four corporate priorities were agreed by the leadership team and communicated to staff:

- Improving learning and development opportunities
- Having access to the resources needed for the role
- Improving the visibility of senior management
- Improving our communication tools

34. The results of the 2018 survey in relation to these areas have been calculated as follows:

a) Availability of opportunities to learn and develop in the current role, and to support career development:

Question	2018 % positive	2016 % positive	Change in % Positive Responses (2016 to 2018)
I can find the right training and development opportunities to improve my skills	58	45	+13%
The learning and development I have received over the last 12 months has helped to develop my career	71	41	+30%

35. As can be seen, following significant efforts to address this issue the results relating to the availability and efficiency of our learning and development offer have shown a significant increase, and have returned to levels that are on a par with, or exceed, the previous highest scores.

b) Access to the resources required to effectively undertake the role

Question	2018 % positive	2016 % positive	Change in % Positive Responses (2016 to 2018)
I have the resources I need at work to do the best job I can	73	58	+15%

36. Whilst availability of resources continues to be one of the main themes mentioned in staff comments, this area also saw a significant increase in positive responses compared to 2016 and is in fact the highest score recorded since 2012.

37. It should be noted, however, that there has been considerable feedback in the comments relating to concerns about ICT. Comments indicate that concerns relate to the capacity of the ICT service to support staff and services, rather than the quality of the equipment itself as a commodity or resource as suggested by the 2016 survey.

38. This improvement in the score could also be indicative of improvements in resourcing elsewhere, including the recent £1.2m investment in children's social work roles,

improved safety and security equipment for civil enforcement officers, and service redesigns in areas such as adult social care (e.g. reablement) which staff may associate with facilitating better outcomes for customers; however further analysis of the results in services will be required to fully understand the reason for this increase.

c) Visibility of senior management

Question	2018 % positive	2016 % positive	2014 % positive	2012 % positive	Change in % Positive Responses (2016 to 2018)
I feel our Directors and Corporate Directors are interested in our service area and the work we do [n.b. this question was previously: "Our leaders (associate directors and corporate directors) are sufficiently visible"]	76	30	36	37	+46%

39. As part of the development of this staff engagement survey some questions were reviewed and changed so that staff could consider a more relevant and recognisable perception of management interest, rather than the more subjective concept of management visibility. Despite the change in the wording in the question, it still retained the original sentiment.

40. Whilst it is likely that the change in the wording of this question has improved the level of positive responses it should also be recognised that, from an engagement perspective, the score is also a very positive indicator of how senior managers are now better meeting staff expectations of "being visible".

d) Effective communication

Question	2018 % positive	2016 % positive	2014 % positive	2012 % positive	Change in % Positive Responses (2016 to 2018)
The information I receive from my managers (line manager, service head, director or corporate directors) about what is going on in the council helps me do my job effectively	53	60	63	58	-7%
Senior Management (service heads, directors and corporate directors) are open and honest with staff	69	47	49	38	+22%
The corporate information I receive (including on The Wire, Electric Wire updates and global emails) is relevant, useful and informative	45	61	63	67	-16%

41. The significant increase in staff feeling that senior managers are open and honest with staff aligns with the improvements in senior management visibility described above, as these two perceptions are closely linked.

42. However, there have been reductions in positive responses relating to corporate communication/information, and to information cascaded by managers. As a result, a more comprehensive review of the current arrangements for providing and distributing corporate information and communications is required.

People Strategy values update

43. The previous publication of the 2016 staff survey results coincided with the introduction of the council's People Strategy for 2017-27. This strategy describes our employer brand values: Empowering People, Innovation and Collaboration (EPIC).

44. The degree to which staff identify with these values and can positively recognise them within the workplace is a significant driver of staff engagement. The 2016 survey results were used to establish initial baseline scores for each of these values, and since then there have been several EPIC staff engagement initiatives launched.

45. The 2018 survey gave us the opportunity to identify how effectively these values have become embedded in the organisation over the last two years. The results indicate that staff recognition and understanding of these values has improved consistently across each of them:

People strategy value	2018 % positive	2016 % positive	% change	2018 % negative	2016 % negative	% change
Empowering People	79	72	+7 ▲	3	10	-7 ▼
Innovation	62	46	+16 ▲	7	24	-17 ▼
Collaboration	74	71	+3 ▲	4	9	-3 ▼

46. These scores were measured by assessing responses to 13 questions split across the three values. 10 of the 13 questions saw increases in positive responses, and all 13 questions saw a reduction in the negative responses.

47. This indicates that the people strategy values and the EPIC brand are becoming effectively embedded in our working practices, and that corporate efforts to improve staff engagement since the last survey are taking effect.

48. The overall results show positive trends in engagement and the embedding of the people strategy values, but there are still some areas where scores have reduced since 2016 or, in some cases, through a reducing trend from previous surveys.

49. The questions that saw significantly reduced positive responses can be grouped into three broad categories:

- a. Corporate priorities and goals;
- b. Internal communications and information sharing;
- c. Performance and feedback

50. The reduction in scores for these areas influences our overall engagement index score, and therefore addressing these areas is likely to lead to a further improvement in the council's engagement index score, and ratio of engaged/disengaged staff.

51. These categories are also reflected in the themes identified through the analysis of free text comments, which, as well as issues relating to ICT, include "performance

management”, “corporate communications” and “management support” amongst the more prevalent negative themes. The positive themes in the free text comments include “staff engagement” and “training opportunities” as well as “encouraging managers”.

Corporate priorities for 2019/20

52. To continue building on the significant improvements in the council’s staff engagement scores over the last two years, the following areas have been proposed as the corporate staff engagement priorities:

- **Promoting the corporate priorities and goals (enabler: strategic narrative)** - The council’s business plan sets out the organisation’s vision and describes its priorities and goals. It is a vital aspect of engagement that all staff are aware of these, that they are visible and frequently communicated, and staff can see how the work they are doing supports the organisation to achieve them. This must also provide ongoing clarity and engender a sense of ownership around new corporate initiatives and projects designed to deliver the vision (for example, the digital programme) as they develop.
- **Internal communications (enabler: strategic narrative)** - Helping staff clearly and consistently relate to the corporate priorities requires effective and compelling communication that reaches all levels of the organisation. This must be inclusive, accessible and engaging, and should help every member of staff feel they have a stake in a common story. This means they are more likely to recognise and demonstrate our corporate values and gives staff confidence they are being listened to and their views heard.
- **Performance management (enabler: engaging managers)** – Performance management is more than completing annual appraisals; staff need to see that promoting good performance and managing poor performance is part of the council’s culture. Managers need to have access to the right support and tools to help them develop staff who are performing well and be able to give effective feedback on those that are not performing as they should. Engagement (and the performance gains that can be had from it) needs managers to give regular, thoughtful, and constructive feedback on performance. An “inspiring performance” toolkit is being created and a programme of work to roll this out to all staff, along with appropriate training and support, should be considered.

53. It is further proposed that the council’s staff engagement index should be measured more frequently than every 2 years, and so future staff engagement surveys will take the form of shorter, more frequent surveys based on each of the four enablers of engagement. This approach, on conjunction with more prevalent use of the Pulse employee sentiment tool introduced in 2018, will support more timely and regular feedback from staff and will establish how effective corporate and service action plans are.

Recommendations/Decisions

54. It is recommended that Staffing Policy Committee notes the contents of the report.

Joanne Pitt
Director HR&OD
April 2019

Report author: Stuart Honeyball, HR Systems and Insight Manager

Appendices:

Appendix A - Corporate results report for staff and members.