

Subject: **Staff engagement survey results 2018**

Cabinet Member: **Councillor Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism**

Ken Decision: **Non-key**

Executive Summary

The staff survey has been carried out biannually since 2012, with the last survey taking place in 2016 when the staff engagement index score was 58%.

Since 2016 there has been greater focus on improving staff engagement as it is proven that increased staff engagement delivers better business outcomes. The 2018 staff survey was re-modelled to be a staff engagement survey and similar questions were used to measure staff engagement. Because of the increased focus on staff engagement this index has risen to 70%.

Three areas were identified and agreed by CLT as key areas to focus on from the 2018 results as follows:

- Promoting the corporate priorities and goals
- Internal communications
- Performance management

CLT also agreed that the measurement of the staff engagement index would take place more frequently than every 2 years and that future staff engagement surveys would take the form of shorter, more frequent surveys based on the four enablers of engagement. This approach supports more timely and regular feedback from staff and establishes how effective corporate and service action plans are.

Proposal(s)

It is recommended that Cabinet notes the contents of the report.

Reason for the proposal(s)

To update Cabinet on the results of the 2018 staff engagement survey and to highlight the agreed corporate priorities for corporate and service action planning.

Terence Herbert
Executive Director

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

30 April 2019

Subject: Staff engagement survey results 2018

Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism

Ken Decision: Non key

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an overview of the results of the 2018 staff engagement survey, to include a summary of the key themes from the survey results and an assessment of the results against the four “enablers” contained within our adopted engagement model.
2. The report also contains the agreed corporate priorities following the results of the staff survey 2018.

Background

3. The staff survey has been carried out biannually since 2012, with the last survey in 2016. One of the key factors to compare between the staff surveys is the staff engagement index, which measures the extent that staff feel emotionally connected with their organisation i.e. that staff believe in the organisation’s goals and priorities and therefore care about doing the best job they can. In 2016 the employee engagement index figure was 58% for the whole council, increasing slightly on the result of the previous survey in 2014 when it was 56%.
4. The 2017-27 People Strategy includes a specific priority to develop and measure staff engagement and its associated benefits. Because of the increased focus on staff engagement a staff engagement officer was appointed in HR to drive the engagement agenda forward.
5. In 2017 a staff engagement initiative called #EPIC (standing for empowering people, innovation and collaboration) was launched, which included the development of a staff engagement group comprising staff from across the council. This group have launched several successful staff engagement tools including EPIC impressions and EPIC ideas all aimed at improving staff engagement.
6. In preparing for the 2018 staff survey and based on the staff engagement initiatives that have been taking place CLT approved a recommendation to develop the 2018 survey as a staff engagement survey. This resulted in the survey questions and structure being reviewed and changed to provide a more effective measurement of engagement.
7. In making these changes reference was made to an externally verified model provided by “[Engage for Success](#)”, a voluntary organisation that is aligned with the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) who provide advice and support to organisations to improve employee engagement.

8. The 2018 survey was carried out between Monday 10 December 2018 and Monday 21 January 2019 and responses to the survey have now been collated to provide a corporate staff survey report as well as individual reports for each service area.

Main considerations

Response rates

9. The response rate in the 2018 survey was 63.3% (2,729 individual responses). This response rate is slightly lower than the 2016 rate of 65.7% (2,898 responses) and is likely to be attributed to the reduction in paper copies being returned by those staff without IT access.
10. Response rates varied widely by service area, but this is not unexpected, particularly in those services where large numbers of staff work variable hours, or in roles with very little corporate contact. As expected, almost two-thirds of responses (63%) came from the council's three main hubs.
11. 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". This provides the council with much richer information to develop appropriate action plans in direct response to the issues identified by the workforce.
12. Staff used this opportunity to submit over 5,500 free-text comments (compared to only 534 in the 2016 survey).
13. More detailed analysis is being undertaken for individual services, and specific themes will be highlighted in the service reports, together with a copy of the comments for their service area (subject to review by HR). Where comments from one service area relate to other service areas, these will be shared as appropriate.

Engagement index scores

14. To allow for comparison with previous staff survey results, the six control questions used to calculate the council's engagement index score in those surveys were retained in the 2018 survey.
15. Responses to these questions were analysed and, depending on whether responses were positive or negative, were used to identify ratios of fully engaged and fully disengaged staff, as well as the overall engagement index score.
16. The council's engagement index has increased to 70%. This is a significant increase from the previous index score of 58% and is also a much larger increase than was seen between the previous surveys in 2014 (56%), 2012 (51%) and 2011 (43%).
17. In the 2018 survey results 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%.
18. The improvements in the structure of the 2018 survey mean that it is now possible to analyse staff engagement rates by work location (e.g. a main hub, leisure centre, mobile/peripatetic etc.). The results have identified that work location does appear to have some influence on the level of staff engagement.

19. Mobile/peripatetic respondents showed the highest engagement scores (but conversely the lowest actual number of responses), and leisure centre based respondents indicated that they are the least engaged areas.
20. 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.

Engagement enablers analysis

21. As this survey has been aligned to the Engage for Success model of the four enablers of staff engagement (strategic narrative, engaging managers, employee voice and integrity), the survey results have been categorised and analysed accordingly to establish a baseline score for each area. These give the council an initial position from which to consider new or revised priority areas and will also be used for comparison purposes for more frequent targeted surveys in the future.
22. Scores within each of the four enabler areas have been further divided into engagement sub-themes to allow for more detailed analysis, and to better support corporate and service-level action planning.
23. The highest scoring enabler was integrity (78% positive), and the lowest scoring enabler 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 / theme	Positive response 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

24. As these are new categories there is no comparison with previous survey results.

Reflecting on corporate priorities from 2016

25. 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.

26. 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

27. The results of the 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%

28. 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%

29. 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.

30. 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 which the comments in the 2016 survey suggested.

31. 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%

32. 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.
33. 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%

34. 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.
35. 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

36. The 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).
37. 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.
38. The 2018 survey gave us the opportunity to identify how effectively these values have become embedded in the organisation over the last two years and the results indicate that staff recognition and understanding of these values has improved consistently across all 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 ▼

39. These value 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.
40. 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 is taking effect.
41. 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.
42. The questions that saw significantly reduced positive responses can be grouped into three broad categories:
- Corporate priorities and goals;
 - Internal communications and information sharing;
 - Performance and feedback
43. 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.
44. 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

45. To continue building on the significant improvements in the council's staff engagement scores over the last two years, because of the staff survey 2018 results CLT have therefore agreed that the following areas will be 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.

46. CLT also agreed that we should measure our staff engagement index more frequently than every 2 years and therefore future staff engagement surveys will take the form of shorter, more frequent surveys based on the four enablers of engagement. This approach will support more timely and regular feedback from staff and will establish how effective corporate and service action plans are.

RECOMMENDATIONS

47. It is recommended that Cabinet notes the contents of the report.

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April 2019

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