

HR Committee

16 December 2021



Report of: Director: Workforce & Change

Title: 2021 employee engagement surveys

Ward: N/A

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Recommendation

The Committee notes the report.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the results of the employee surveys and engagement during 2021, and the actions taken as a result.

The significant issues in the report are:

During the last 18 months, the issues affecting our workforce have changed, and their needs continue to evolve. This year, instead of our usual annual survey, we have undertaken short pulse surveys on topical issues, which have enabled us to respond quickly to put the appropriate support in place.

We have responded to colleagues' feedback and introduced a range of new support and guidance.

Alongside this, we have maintained an open and regular dialogue with the workforce on a range of topical issues such as our Covid response, changes to the workplace, the draft corporate strategy and the council's financial position.

A recent internal audit on workforce management provided an overall opinion of reasonable assurance, and a substantial level of assurance in respect of employee engagement.

Policy

1. The Corporate Strategy describes the aspirations for the future organisation, one where we innovate and improve where we need to, ensuring the council is one that people are proud of and which delivers its priorities to high standards.
2. The Workforce Strategy outlines our commitment to engaging regularly with the workforce to measure the impact of our actions and help shape the future plans. Our employee survey focuses on measuring engagement which will drive performance across the organisation.

Consultation

3. Internal

The survey designs have been shared with staff led groups and trade unions, the results of each survey and actions taken in response have been shared with all staff and managers.

4. External

Not required because this report is for information only.

Context

5. Background to 2021 survey programme

Each year we undertake an employee survey to gauge the level of workforce engagement and understand the employee experience. The results of the survey are used to create organisation-wide and local action plans to address areas that need improvement.

During the last 18 months, the issues affecting our workforce have changed, and their needs continue to evolve. In 2020, we carried out two shorter interim surveys to find out what support staff needed to adapt to a new way of working. This approach was welcomed and it enabled us to respond quickly to put the appropriate support in place.

This year we have continued with this flexible approach, and instead of our usual annual staff survey, we have been undertaking short pulse surveys to ask about topical issues so that we can continue to respond quickly with appropriate changes.

These pulse surveys were designed to be quick and easy to complete, either from a council device or colleagues' personal devices for those without regular access to the council network. This approach gave us greater flexibility on the topics we could ask about and meant we could launch at the most relevant time. These shorter surveys also meant it has been quicker to analyse and implement actions as a result.

The results of these surveys helped us shape the most appropriate package of support for colleagues and guide the plans for the return to the workplace - once government guidelines allowed.

To complement the surveys, we have kept an open and continuous dialogue with the workforce during the year. This included drop-ins, discussion toolkits and feedback opportunities on strategic priorities and our transition to new ways of working in response to changing Covid guidance.

6. Survey results and actions taken

The analysis of the survey results is shown in Appendix A.

Each survey is in two parts. The first question is designed to gather views on the employee's experience over the past year and the second question presents a series of options for how their experience can be improved in the future.

The key findings of the surveys are:

I. Mental and physical wellbeing – support during the pandemic

Colleagues reported the most useful tools over the past year included being able to hold virtual meetings to connect with colleagues, enhanced carers' leave and the provision of wellbeing resources such as webinars.

In terms of what would be most helpful for the future, the most popular option was for additional guidance to help colleagues get the best from working remotely. In response, we launched a series of special bulletins with practical guidance on a healthy home-working environment, tips for looking after your physical and mental wellbeing, and building and maintaining resilience.

These bulletins brought together existing resources, introduced new videos and advice, and provided team exercises and conversation topics.

II. Performance and development – quality of conversations between employee and manager

Most respondents have reported that despite the challenges of the pandemic, they have had regular discussions and feedback on their performance with their manager. One area identified for improvement was having more conversations about learning and talent development.

When asked what would be most helpful for making these conversations more useful, the most popular option was a need for more help and advice on career development.

In response we have launched a new 'grow your career' hub with advice and guidance on identifying aspirations and strengths, improving confidence, preparing a career development plan and interview and application guidance.

III. Resilience – the impact of the work environment on wellbeing and resilience

This survey is currently live. It recognises how colleagues have shown great resilience and commitment during the pandemic, even in the face of many challenges. Questions focus on the factors that have been helpful over the last year and what additional support will have the most positive impact. The response will be used to tailor our wellbeing support and learning programmes.

7. Staff engagement

Throughout the year, we have also maintained an open and regular dialogue with the workforce on a number of other topical issues, including:

- The future workplace
- Draft Corporate Strategy and priorities
- Financial position
- Covid response

Engagement opportunities have included discussion toolkits, workshops, and a series of drop-in sessions with opportunities for dialogue with both the Mayor and the Chief Executive.

A recent internal audit of workforce management provided an overall audit opinion of reasonable assurance, and in respect of employee engagement, provided a substantial level of assurance.

Proposal

8. That Committee notes the report

Other Options Considered

9. None.

Risk Assessment

8. Not required because this report is for information only.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 11a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
 - i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

11b) Not required because this report is for information only.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Not required because this report is for information only.

Financial

(a) Revenue

Not required because this report is for information only.

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

Not required because this report is for information only.

Appendices:

A – 2021 pulse survey results and actions taken

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None.