



HEREFORDSHIRE
COUNCIL

Preliminary Report

2003 Staff Opinion Survey

November 2003

Herefordshire Council Research Team

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Response Rate	4
Profile of Respondents	4
Culture	6
Leadership and Vision	11
Communications	15
Resources	16
Information Security	18
Benchmarking against other Authorities	19
Performance against selected targets of the HR Strategy	21

Executive Summary

- 2725 questionnaires distributed by internal and external post end August 2003.
- 1125 returned by the closing date 10th October 2003.
- Response rate of 41%, down from 48% in 2002.
- High proportion (87%) generally enjoy their jobs, down from 91% last year.
- 60% agree that Council is good to work for, down from 79% in 2002.
- Morale and motivation have fallen. 37% now feel morale is good in their work area compared to 45% last year.
- Currently 46% agree that they feel motivated to perform their job well compared with 48% who disagree. Last year, 72% felt very or fairly motivated.
- Most (55%) of comments on “What do you think about Herefordshire Council?” were about Job Evaluation, virtually all negative and mostly about a) poorly handled process b) employees made to feel less valued or c) a detrimental impact on morale/motivation.
- In general, the opinions on leadership have fallen back.
- More respondents (44%) feel that the survey results will be taken seriously in their area than those who do not (35%)
- Nearly half the respondents did not agree that senior management would take actions on problems identified by the survey compared to 28% who believed they would.
- Relations between senior management and employees have deteriorated with 23% now feeling that they are good compared with 45% in 2002.
- A minority, 18%, of respondents agree things are getting better compared to 61% who do not.
- Satisfaction with communications has fallen, though still better than 2001.
- Slight improvement is seen in the area of resources where 61% now feel targets set are achievable and most respondents feel they can do their job without working excessive hours.
- About half the respondents handle confidential information daily and 15% rarely or never do so.
- Overwhelming majority of respondents (>80%) agree that they understand what is meant by the terms Information Security and Confidentiality and that they know and are able to follow what is expected of them to protect it.
- The Council’s performance is substantially better than the average of 15 local authorities as reported by the ORC in August 2002 for nearly all of the 11 cases where comparable questions were asked. These include questions such as adequacy of training and recognition by manager and colleagues for doing a good job.
- Performance against most of the HR Strategy targets measured by the survey has slipped back especially on employees feeling valued and communications.
- There have been improvements in some of the HR targets, especially employees knowing they’ve done a good job and in flexibility to meet home and work commitments.

Introduction

This report presents a summary of the responses to a subset of questions from the 2003 Staff Opinion Survey, together with those of the 2001 and 2002 surveys where similar questions were asked.

The topics covered by the results reported here are: Culture, Leadership and Vision, Communications and Resources. In addition, a summary of the findings of the newly introduced section on Information Security is included.

A table is included which shows the results of this and the two previous staff opinion surveys against the relevant targets in the HR strategy.

The survey was conducted by posting questionnaires to either the office addresses or the home addresses of all employees of the Council. Employees received the questionnaires at the end of August and were initially asked to return them by 30th September, though this date was later extended to 10th October to give more time for responses to be returned.

Response Rate

A total of 2725 survey were posted out and 1125 were returned giving a response rate of 41%.

Profile of Respondents

The survey asked a limited number of biographical questions which enable a profile of the respondents to be determined. The table on the next page shows the number and proportions of respondents for each of these biographical factors.

The profile of respondents is broadly the same as last year, though the rate of “Not Answered” has fallen several percentage points for each of these biographical questions except for Age. There is a slight increase in the proportion of respondents in the lower age groups with 38% of respondents in the range 20-39 years compared with 34% last year.

Biographical Breakdown of Council Employees Responding to Survey

Factor	Category	Number of responses	Percentage of all responses
Gender	Male	290	26%
	Female	761	68%
	Not answered	74	7%
Age Group	Up to 19	8	1%
	20 - 29	153	14%
	30 - 39	272	24%
	40 - 49	288	26%
	50 - 59	261	23%
	Over 60	53	5%
	Not answered	90	8%
Pay Band	Less than £13,335 pa	296	26%
	£13,581 - £16,515pa	230	20%
	£16,944 - £20,469pa	181	16%
	£21,282 - £24,726pa	130	12%
	More than £25,245pa	186	17%
	Not answered	102	9%
Length of service in Local Government	Less than 1 year	125	11%
	1 - 5 years	363	32%
	6 - 10 years	179	16%
	More than 10 years	398	35%
	Not answered	60	5%
Work Pattern (Employees may be in more than 1 category)	Full time	693	62%
	Part time	317	28%
	Jobshare	46	4%
	Shift / Rota	48	4%
	Not answered	64	6%
	Contract of Employment	Permanent	882
Temporary		76	7%
Casual / Relief		47	4%
Time limited contract		51	5%
Term time / Annual hours		4	0%
Not answered		65	6%
Ethnic Group	British	1027	91%
	Irish	13	1%
	Other White background	15	1%
	Other Ethnic Groups	12	1%
	Not answered	58	5%
Disability Status	With Disability	23	2%
	Without Disability	1030	92%
	Not answered	72	6%

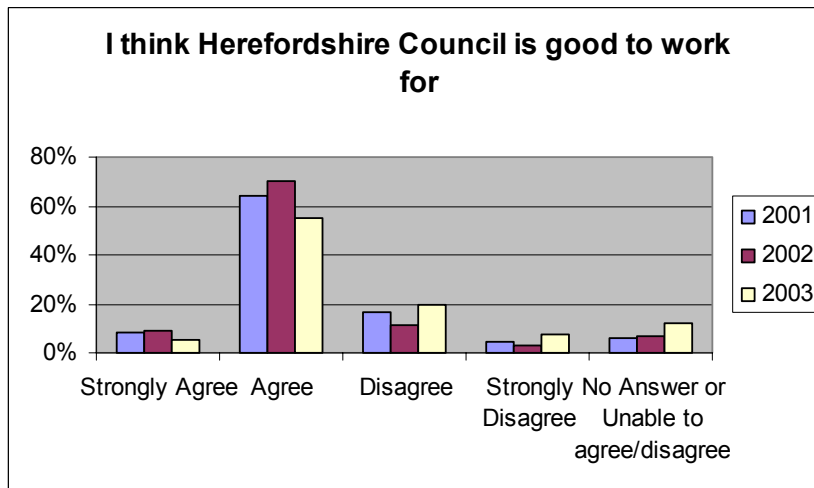
Culture

The responses to seven questions were analysed and compared with those of 2001 and 2002 where appropriate.

Statement: I think Herefordshire Council is good to work for - Q1.1

The chart below shows the extent of agreement and disagreement with the above statement.

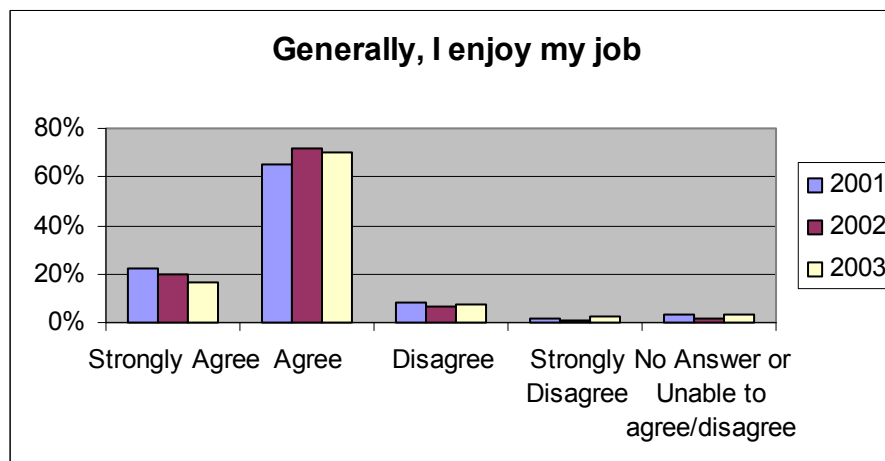
Whilst the majority (60%) of respondents currently agree or strongly agree with the statement, this figure has fallen markedly since last year when 79% of respondents answered this way and also below the 2001 level of 72%. The number of respondents who strongly disagree has increased from 3% in 2002 to 8% this year indicating a large increase in the number of respondents who feel strongly that it is not a good place to work. There is also a significant increase in the respondents who are unable to agree or disagree or who did not answer which rose from 7% last year to 12% this



year.

Statement: Generally, I enjoy my job – Q1.2

Analysis of the responses to this question shows that a large majority of respondents generally enjoy their job, with 17% strongly agreeing and a further 70% agreeing



with the statement.

This figure has reversed last year's improvement with the total agreeing now at 87% compared with 91% last year, a drop of 4 percentage points or approximately 4% and now about the same as 2001.

The following table compares the responses to this statement with those reported by the ORC in August 2002 to the statement: *"Considering everything, I am satisfied with the job I do"*.

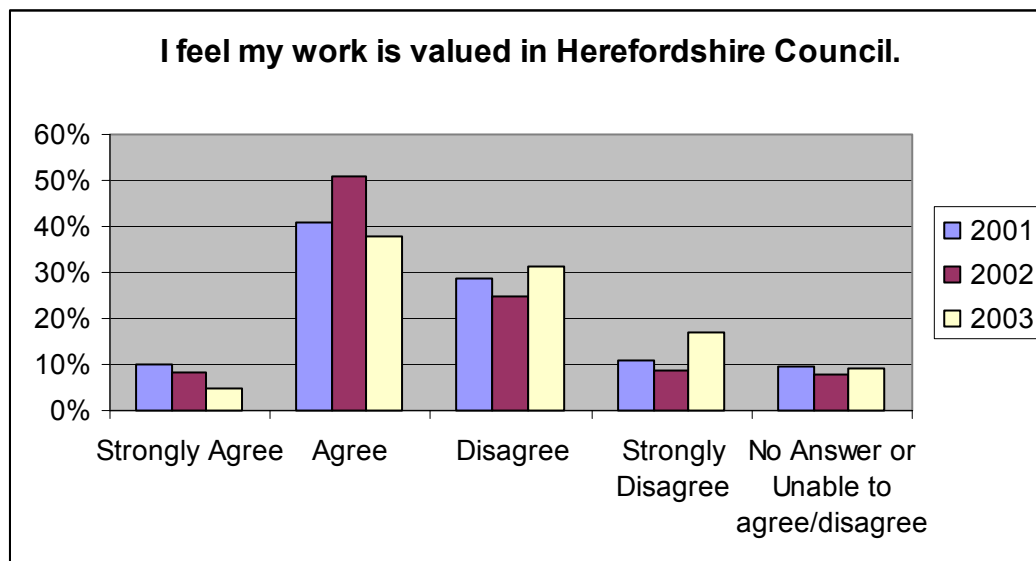
Local Gov't average 2002	Local Gov't range 2002	HC Response 2001	HC Response 2002	HC Response 2003
71%	40% - 80%	88%	91%	87%

As can be seen despite the fall, the HC response remains well above the local government average and in fact higher than the top end of the range from the 15 contributing authorities.

Statement: *I feel my work is valued in Herefordshire Council – Q1.3*

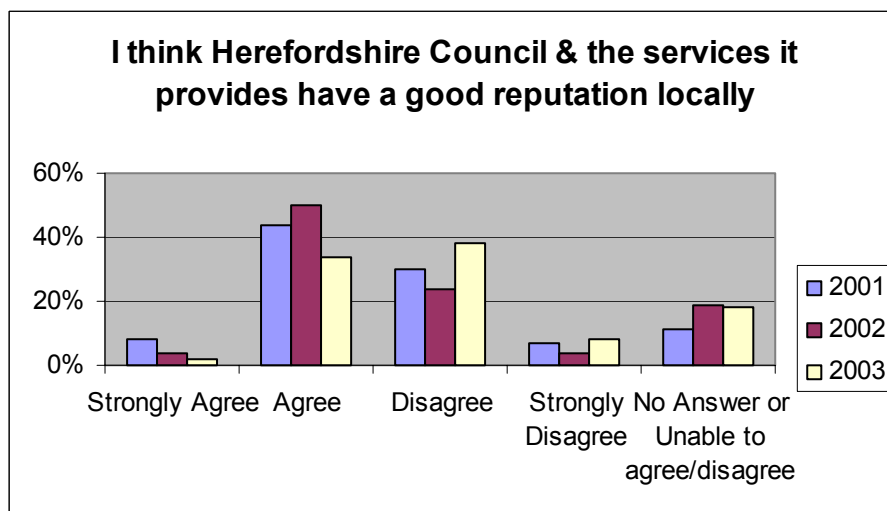
Currently a minority, 43%, of respondents agree that their work is valued, including 5% who strongly agree. This compares with 48% who disagree, a third of whom strongly disagree.

The level of agreement has fallen 16 percentage points or 27% since last year when a majority (59%) of respondents felt that their work was valued compared to 34% who did not. At 43%, the proportion of respondents now feeling that their work is valued is below the level of 2001 which was 51%, thus more than offsetting the improvement seen in 2002.



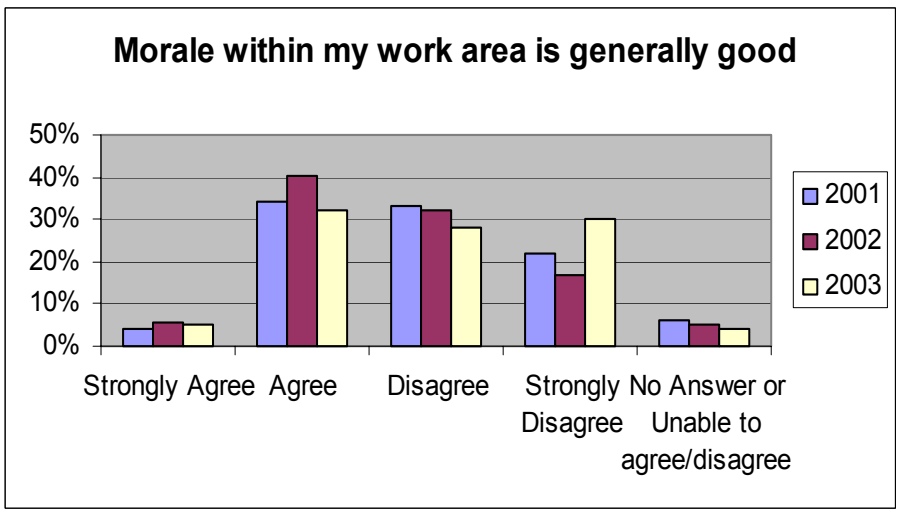
Statement: I think Herefordshire Council and the services it provides have a good reputation locally – Q1.5.

Currently, a little over a third (36%) of respondents think the Council and its services have a good reputation locally. As was seen last year, only 82% of respondents expressed an opinion with regard to this statement. Those that did, show a marked decline in their view of the reputation of the Council and its services, far exceeding the improvement seen between 2001 and 2002. This year 34% of respondents agree and a further 2% strongly agree with the statement, this compares with 50% and 4% respectively for 2002. When adding the “agree” and “strongly agree” categories together, it shows a fall over the year from 54% to 36% or 18 percentage points (33%). There are now more respondents who feel that the reputation is bad (46%) than there are those who feel it is good (36%).



Statement: Morale within my work area is generally good – Q1.8.

As the chart below shows, currently only 37% of respondents feel that morale is good within their work area. The responses to this statement show a marked decline of morale over the last 12 months, more than offsetting the annual improvement seen in 2002. The largest change was in the proportion of respondents who strongly disagree with the statement. This has increased from 17% in 2002 to 30% currently, representing an increase of 13 percentage points and demonstrating a high strength of feeling about morale not being good. (No other positive question in the survey received such a high proportion of strong disagreement). However, the number of respondents who disagree with the statement has fallen from 32% last year to 28% this year. The number of respondents who strongly agree with the statement was unchanged since 2002 at 5% and still slightly higher than the 4% seen in 2001. In total in 2002, 45% agree or strongly agree with the statement compared to 37% this year. These figures show a substantial increase of the proportion of respondents believing that morale is not good in their work area and of the strength of their views.

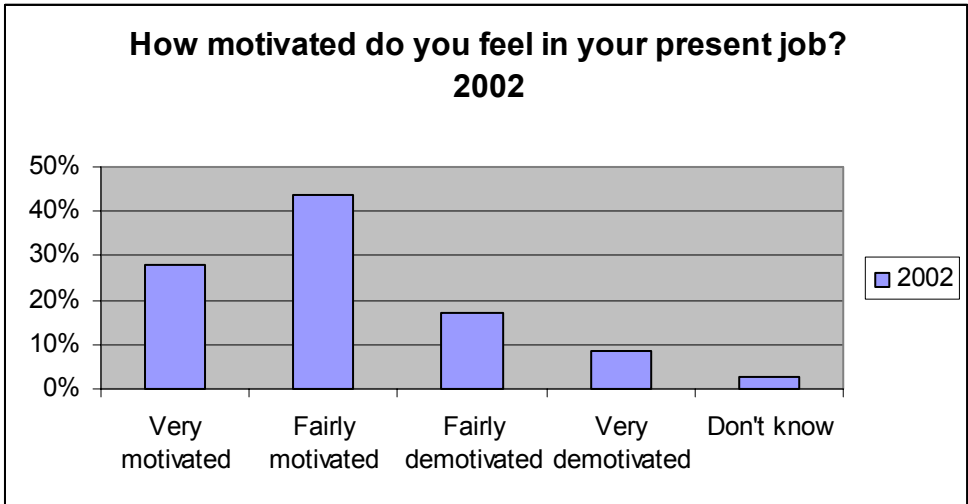


Statement: I feel motivated to perform well in my current job – Q 1.19

At 46%, the proportion of respondents who agree that they feel motivated is slightly less than those who disagree which is 48%. However, the strength of disagreement is stronger as shown by the 18% of respondents who strongly disagree compared to the 8% who strongly agree.



A similar, but not identical, question was asked in 2002 and the responses are summarised in the chart below.



Most respondents, 72%, felt very or fairly motivated in 2002 compared with the 25% who felt fairly or very de-motivated. This suggests a major fall of motivation level over the year to the current 46% level.

Comments on: *What do you think about Herefordshire Council? - Q1.24*

The responses to question 1.24 which invited comments on issues raised in section 1, “What do you think about Herefordshire Council?” were reviewed.

This question is considered here because it generated a high proportion of responses with a very dominant theme.

There were 374 responses, representing about one third of the questionnaires returned. The issue of Job Evaluation was cited in 206 of the responses, representing 18% of all survey responses and 55% of responses to this question. The responses, which were virtually all negative, had three predominant themes: a) the process was poorly handled/managed. b) Job Evaluation had led to staff feeling either not valued or less valued and c) the issue had had a detrimental impact on morale and/or motivation. A few typical examples are shown in the table below.

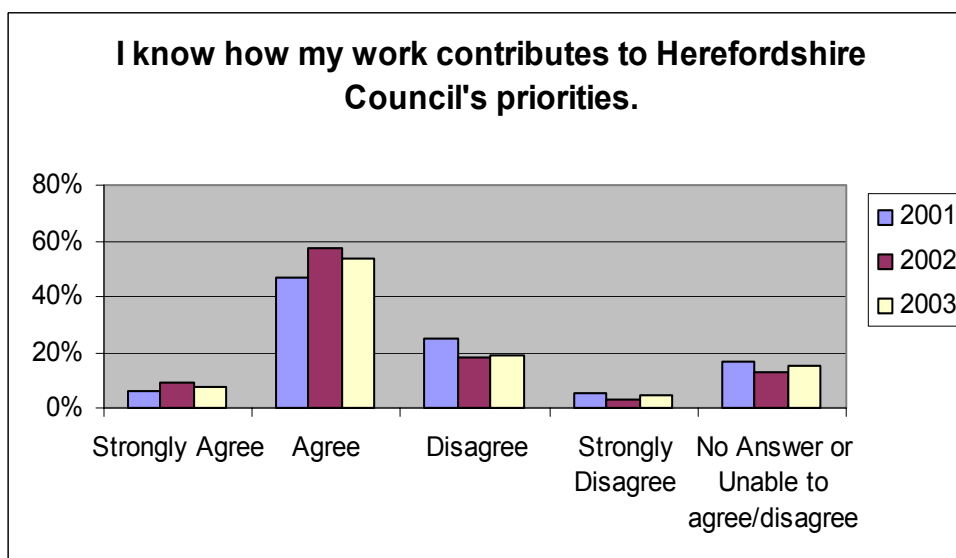
A selection of typical responses to: Comments on Section 1 – What do you think about Herefordshire Council?
The Job Evaluation process has been handled extremely badly. The whole process needs looking at properly before it goes any further.
Generally H.C is good to work for. However, some major exceptions to this make it impossible to have complete faith. e.g. Job evaluation has been managed/handled /communicated appallingly from start to finish.
Job evaluation is the single biggest issue affecting my answers (negatively). This has been very poorly managed and implemented. Bureaucratic workload gets bigger every day without more resources to meet demands.
I used to think the council was good to work for but I cannot understand how it managed to get job evaluation so wrong if it was well managed. How did management expect the staff to react with so many of the lower paid losing out and with senior management gaining?
Due to job evaluation, as an employee I feel that as Council employees we are not valued in our jobs, I don't feel that the Council are standing up for their staff, leaving staff with no motivation or morale at all.
Feel let down now after job evaluation. People used to say a job for life at the council, but now no loyalty as I feel I am not valued in my post. Worried about my future, but like my job and so don't want to leave.
As a result of Herefordshire Council's Job Evaluation, morale is at an all time low. Even though it has been shelved for the time being, staff have read how little they are thought of which has done nothing for motivation.
Job evaluation has caused morale to drop, as I feel undervalued for the work I do. Things will not improve until JE & SS are resolved

Leadership and Vision

The responses to six questions which reflect the views on leadership and vision were analysed and the findings summarised in this section.

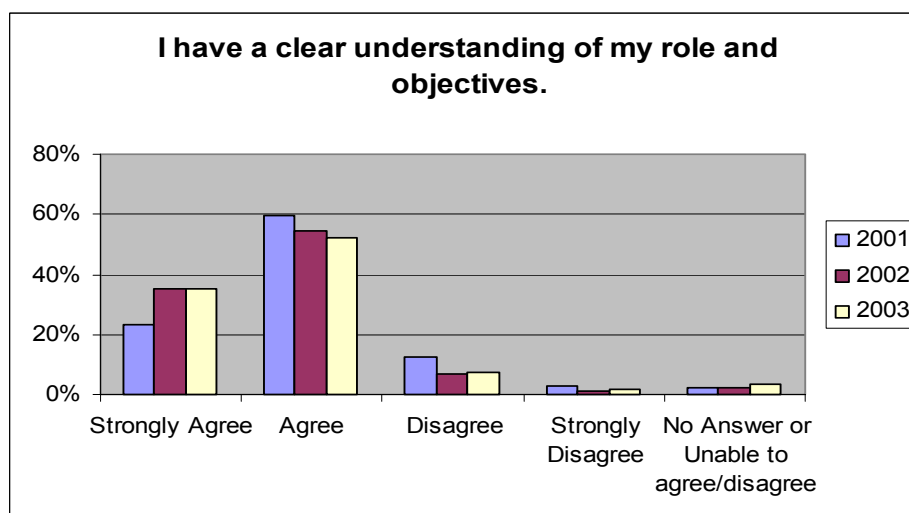
Statement: I know how my work contributes to Herefordshire Council's priorities - Q1.16

The chart shows the extent of agreement and disagreement with this statement. At present, a majority (62%) of the respondents agree or strongly agree that they know how their work contributes to the organisational priorities compared to 24% who disagree or strongly disagree. This level of agreement has fallen over the year by 4 percentage points from 66% in 2002. Similarly, the level of disagreement has risen by 3 percentage points from 21% in 2002. This has partially offset the improvement seen in 2002, though at 62% the level of agreement in 2003 remains significantly higher than the 52% seen in 2001.



Statement: I have a clear understanding of my role and objectives – Q4.3

As the chart shows, there is an overwhelming majority of respondents (87%) who agree that they have a clear understanding of their role, including the 35% who

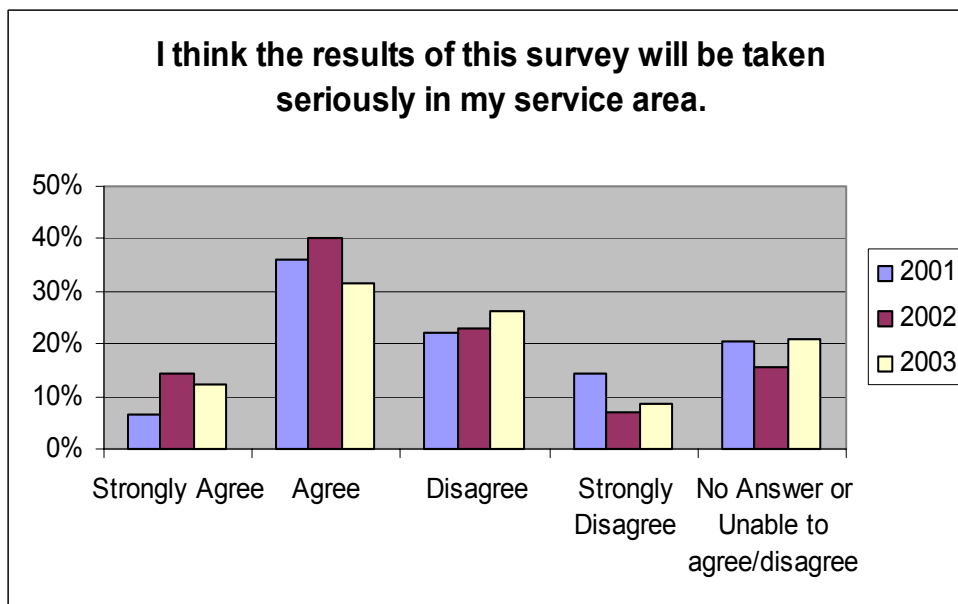


strongly agree with the statement. A small minority (9%) disagrees. This shows a small decline in the level of agreement since last year down from 89% to 87% but remains higher than 2001 (83%). Only a very small percentage (3%) of respondents were either unable to agree or disagree or didn't answer.

Statement: I think the results of this survey will be taken seriously in my service area - Q4.4

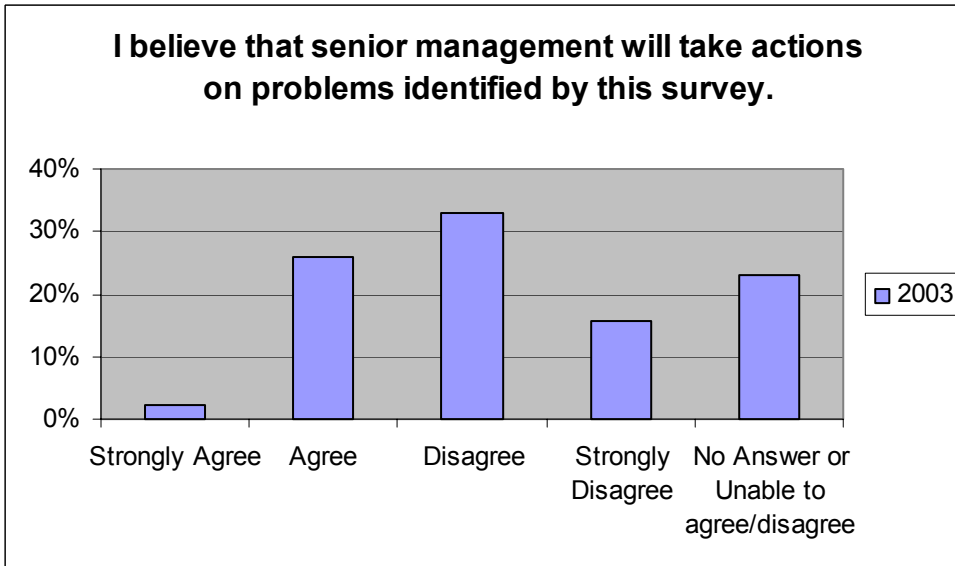
44% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the results of this survey will be taken seriously in their service area which is higher than the 35% who disagree or strongly disagree. 21% didn't answer or were unable to agree or disagree.

The extent of agreement has fallen by 11 percentage points or 20% since 2002 and is back at the 2001 level. Whilst the total levels of agreement and disagreement are each very similar for 2001 and 2003, the proportion who strongly agree is higher in 2003, whilst the proportion who strongly disagree was higher in 2001.



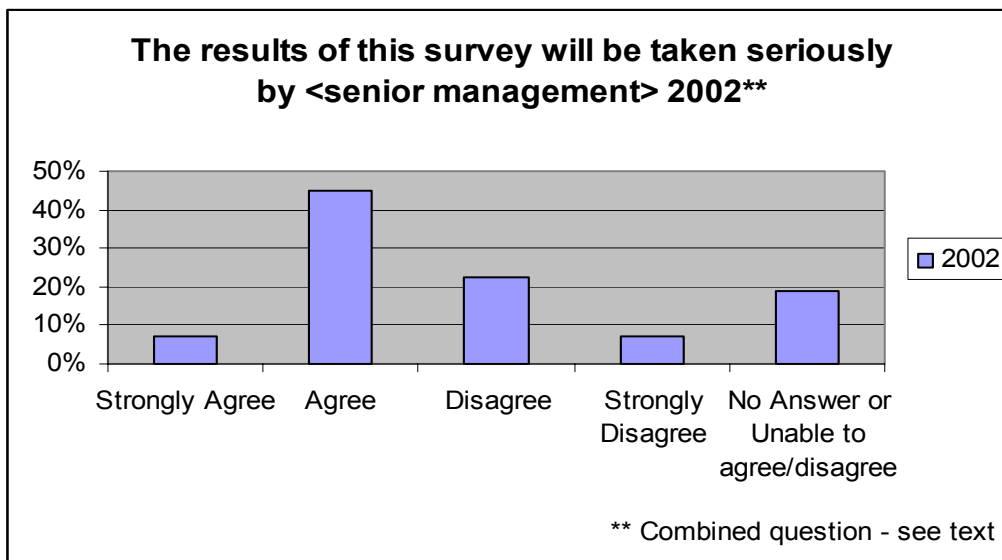
Statement: I believe that senior management will take actions on problems identified by this survey (Q3.1)

Nearly half (49%) of respondents disagreed with this statement including 16% who strongly disagreed. There was a large proportion of those who didn't answer or who were unable to agree or disagree, leaving only 28% agreeing that senior management would take actions on problems identified – a low number indicating a high degree of scepticism. It is also likely that this is a factor in the lower response rate compared to last year.



There was no directly equivalent question asked in the previous surveys, but for comparison the chart below shows the averaged response to two questions which asked for agreement with the statements:

- a) *The results of this survey will be taken seriously by the Chief Executive and heads of directorates/departments (Q52a)*
- b) *The results of this survey will be taken seriously by heads of services (Q52b)*

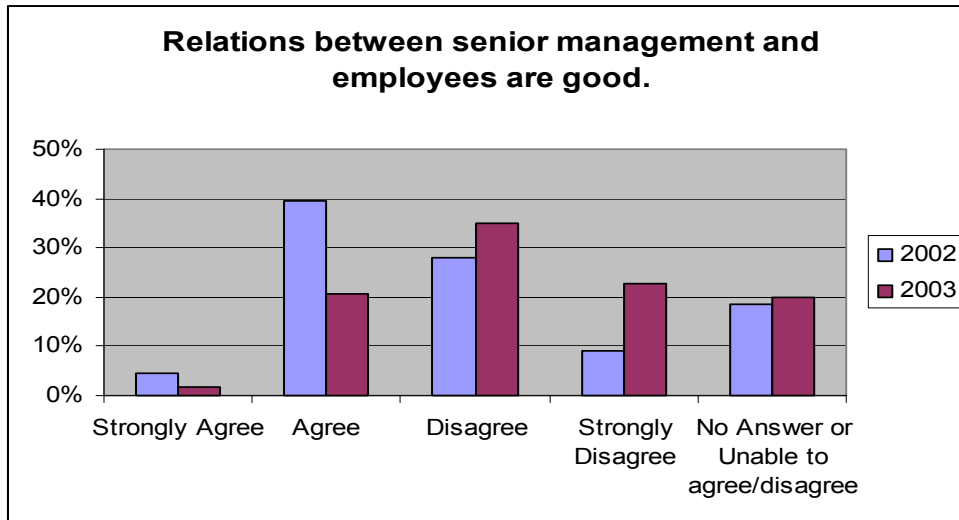


Due to the difference of the questions, no direct comparison can be made between the responses shown in the two charts above. However, the fact that only 28% of responses in 2003 agree that senior management would take action to address the problems identified, is a much lower proportion than the 45% of responses in 2002 who agree that the results would be taken seriously by senior management.

Statement: Relations between senior management and employees are good – Q3.5

Most of the respondents do not agree that relations between employees and senior management are good. Only 23% of respondents agree while 58% disagree, including 23% who strongly disagree. A further 20% were either unable to agree/disagree (17%) or gave no answer (3%).

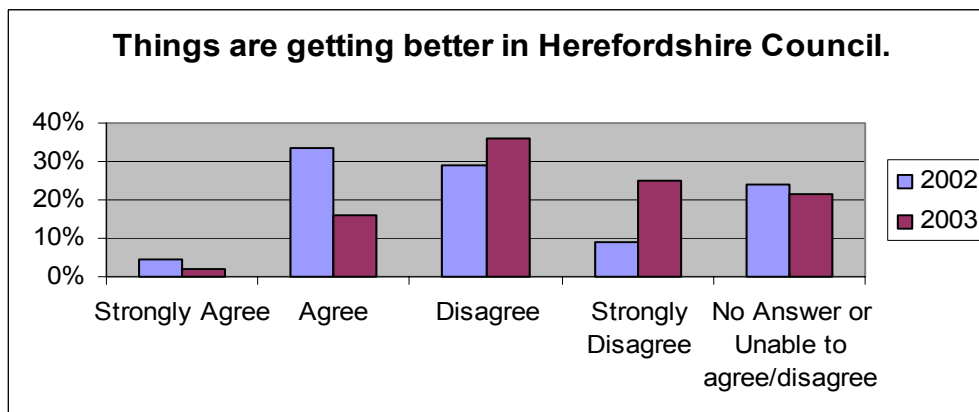
The level of agreement has fallen by 22 percentage points or 49% since last year when more respondents (45%) agreed than disagreed (37%). The level of strong disagreement has risen from 9% to 23% over the same period.



Statement: Things are getting better in Herefordshire Council - Q1.18

The chart below shows the responses to the above question in 2002 and 2003. The responses this year show only a minority (18%) of respondents agree that things are getting better at the Council, compared to a large majority of respondents (61%) who disagree. In 2002 the level of agreement and disagreement were approximately balanced with 39% agreeing and 38% disagreeing. This shows a dramatic fall of 54% or 21 percentage points of the respondents agreeing that there is a trend whereby “things are getting better”.

In 2003, 20% of respondents answered that they were unable to agree or disagree; only 1% didn’t answer the question.

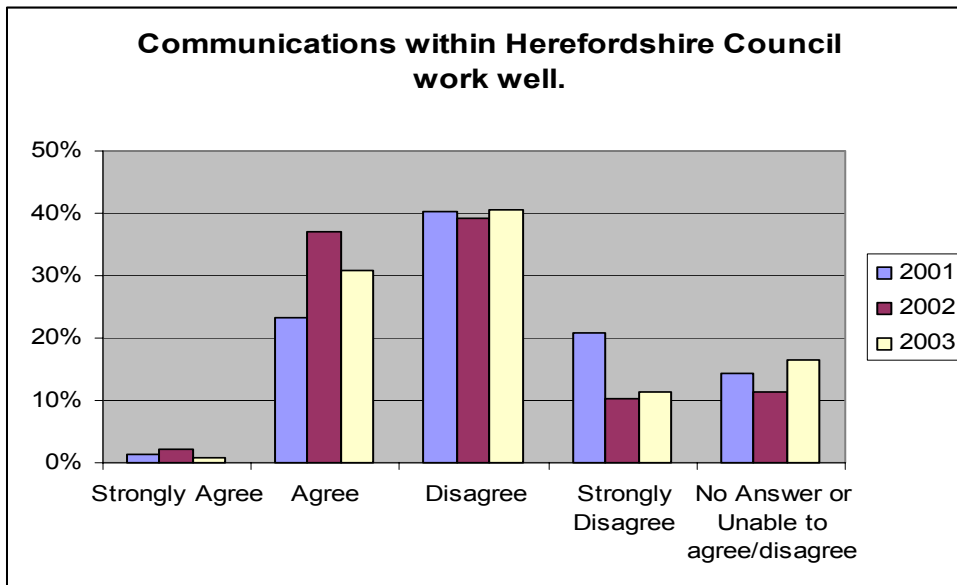


Communications

The responses to two communications related questions were analysed.

Statement: *Communications within Herefordshire Council work well – Q2.1a*

Over half (52%) of the respondents feel that communications do not work well within the Council, including the 11% of respondents who strongly feel this way. This contrasts with less than a third (32%) who feel communications work well including just 1% who strongly agree. The remaining 16% were mostly unable to agree or disagree (15%) or didn't answer (1%).

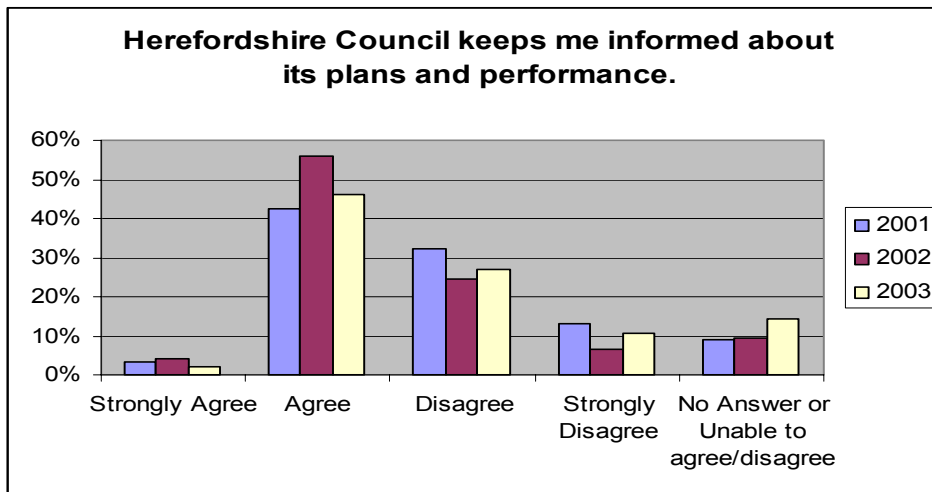


The 32% agreement this year is a fall of 7 percentage points or 18% from 39% in 2002, though still well above the 24% seen in 2001. The other major shift compared to last year is the increase in the proportion of respondents who were unable to agree or disagree or who didn't answer – this is up from 11% in 2002 to 17% this year.

Statement: *Herefordshire Council keeps me informed about its plans and performance – Q2.3a*

Slightly under half (48%) of the respondents agree or strongly agree that the Council keeps them informed about its plans and performance, this compares with 37% who disagree including 10% who strongly do so. A further 14% are either unable to agree or disagree (13%) or gave no answer (1%).

The level of agreement has fallen 12 percentage points or 20% from the 60% seen in 2002, but remains higher than the 45% figure in 2001.



The response can also be compared with the ORC local government benchmark response to the statement “*I am kept well informed about what the “Company” is doing*” as is shown in the table below.

Local Gov't average 2002	Local Gov't range 2002	HC Response 2001	HC Response 2002	HC Response 2003
37%	15% - 65%	46%	60%	48%

It can be seen that despite the large fall since last year, the Herefordshire Council figure remains well above the average for the 15 local authorities in the ORC report.

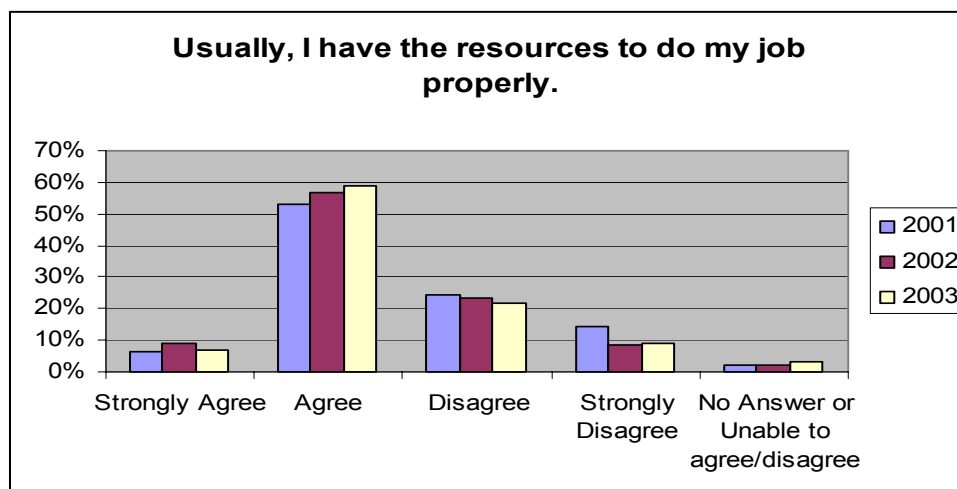
Resources

This section analyses the responses to four statements about resources available.

Statement: Usually, I have the resources to do my job properly – Q1.9

Nearly two thirds of respondents (66%) agree or strongly agree that they have the resources to do their job properly, compared with just under a third (31%) who disagree and only very few (3%) either didn't answer or are unable to agree or disagree.

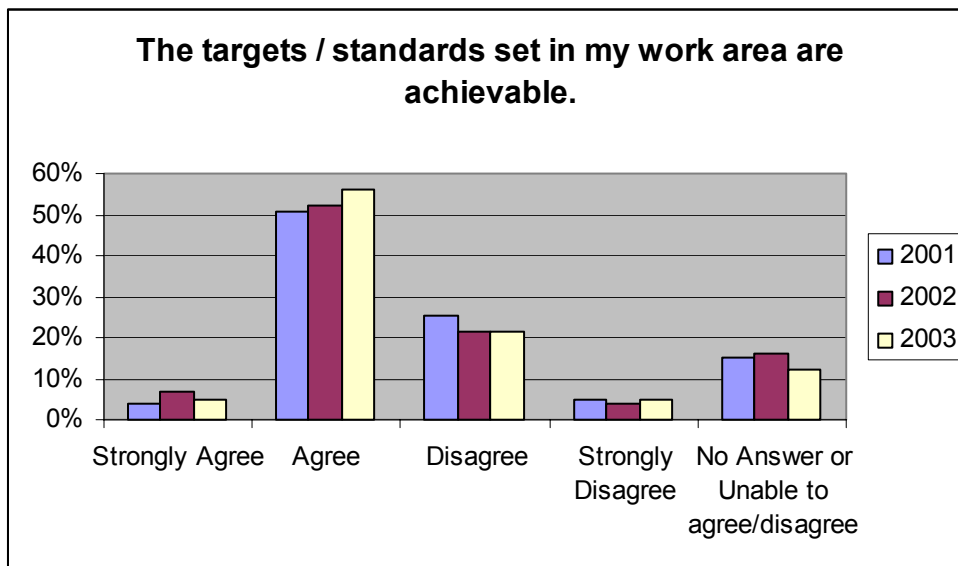
The proportion of respondents who strongly agree (7%) is slightly down from last year (9%), but the proportion agreeing (59%) is slightly up from last year (57%)



meaning that the total proportion of respondents who agree is unchanged since last year. The improved level seen in 2002 from the year before has been maintained but not increased.

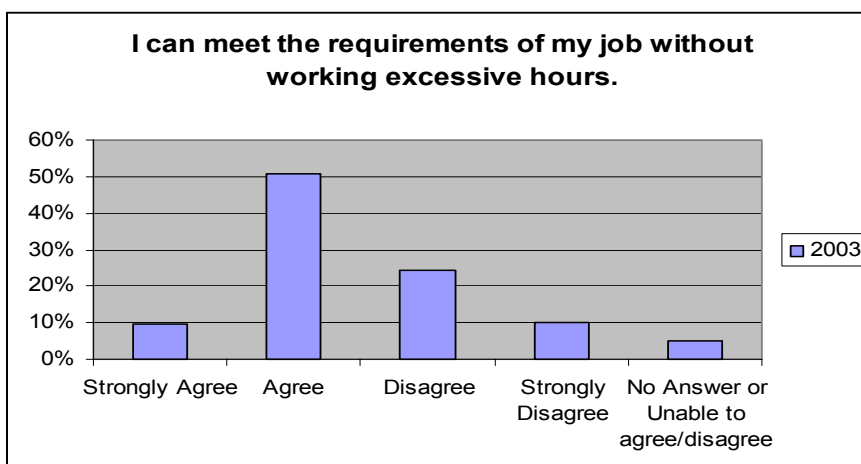
Statement: *The targets / standards set in my work area are achievable – Q1.15*

This indicator has improved since last year. Currently, 61% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the above statement, a much larger proportion than the 27% who disagree or strongly disagree. This level of agreement is up 2 percentage points or 3% from last year’s figure of 59% and is a further improvement over the 55% seen in 2001.



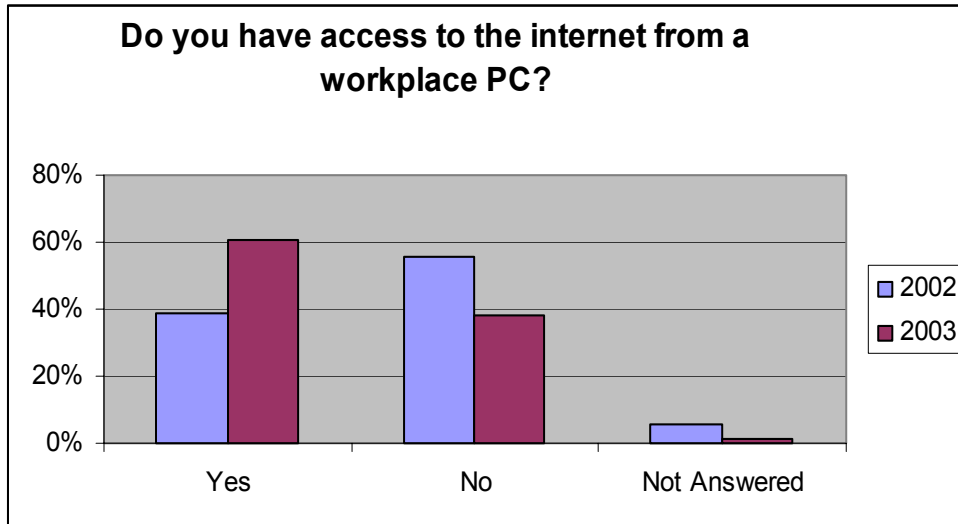
Statement: *I can meet the requirements of my job without working excessive hours. – Q6.7*

Most respondents (61%) expressed the view that they do not need to work excessive hours to meet the requirements of their job compared to 35% who disagree including 10% who strongly disagree. There has been no equivalent question in previous years.



Statement: Do you have access to the internet from a workplace PC – Q2.3a?

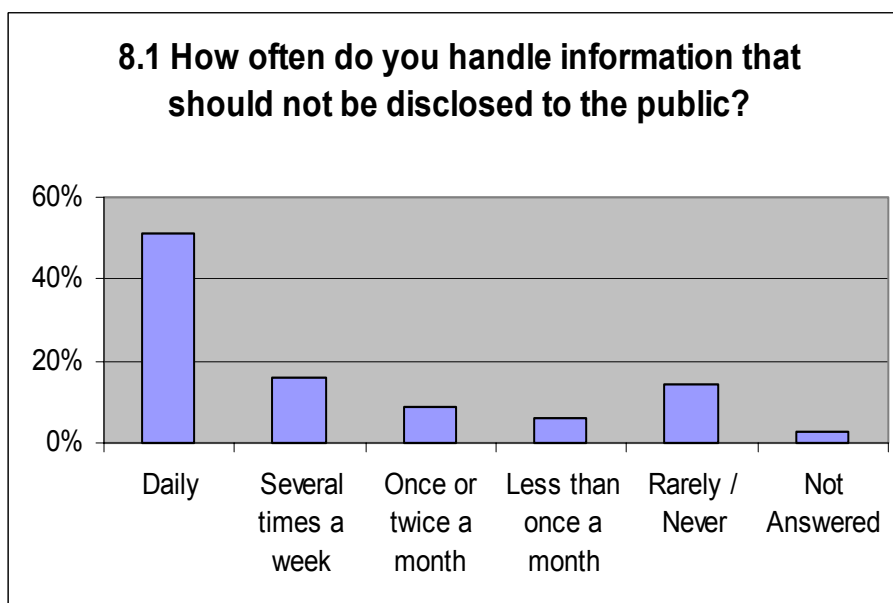
Currently, 60% of respondents have access to the internet from a workplace PC, compared to 39% in 2002 representing a growth of 21 percentage points or 54% over the year.



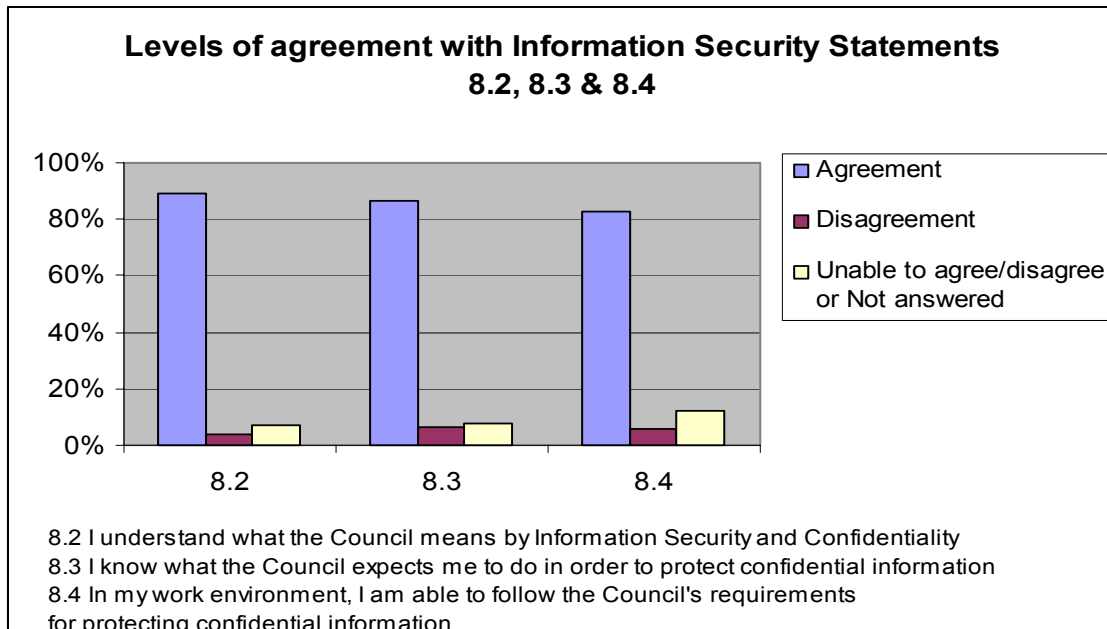
Information Security

This year the survey included a section on Information Security for the first time.

The chart below shows that about half of the respondents reported that they handled confidential information on a daily basis and only 15% rarely or never did so.



Three Information Security related statements have been analysed and the levels of agreement with the statements are shown in the chart below. The three statements 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 respectively indicate the extent to which the respondents understand what is meant by Information Security and Confidentiality, know what is expected in order to protect it and their ability to meet these expectations. In all three questions the level of agreement of the respondents is extremely high, ranging from 83% for statement 8.4 up to 90% for statement 8.2.



Benchmarking against other Authorities

A number of questions from the Council survey can be compared with the averaged results from 15 other Local Authorities which are reported by the ORC local authorities benchmarking group dated August 2002. Note that the questions asked are not identical but are similar enough to give an indication of relative performance. More recent data will be used when available to us.

As can be seen from the table below, for the 11 comparable questions the Council's performance in 2003 exceeds that of the benchmark group average in 9 cases and is close to the average in the remaining two. In many cases the performance is substantially better.

For example, 61% of respondents agree that they can meet the requirements of their job without working excessive hours compares with the ORC benchmark figure of 40% of respondents agree that they have enough time to do their job effectively. Also, 73% of respondents in the Council survey agree that they have adequate training for their job compares positively with the benchmark 51% who are satisfied with the training they have received for their present job.

ORC Local Government Benchmarking Group August 2002

ORC Question 2002	Local Gov Range	Local Gov Ave	Herefordshire Council Response			Herefordshire Council Question
			2003	2002	2001	
I have the opportunity to contribute my views before changes are made which affect my job	31-63%	49%	58%	56%	47%	I am invited to be involved in decisions within the directorate / department
I am kept well informed about what the "company" is doing	15-65%	37%	48%	60%	46%	The Council keeps me informed about its plans and performance
I am aware of the company / organisation's long term goals	23-48%	38%	37%	40%	31%	I know what the long term plan for my service area is
I believe that the quality of service to customers is improving	41-68%	53%	na	57%	38%	The Council steadily improves its activities
			na	62%	48%	My directorate / department steadily improves its activities
Considering everything, I am satisfied with the job I do.	40-80%	71%	87%	91%	88%	Generally, I enjoy my job
The people I work with co-operate to get the work done	51-89%	77%	76%	75%	68%	Team work is encouraged in my directorate / department
How satisfied are you with the recognition that you are doing a good job	27-51%	39%	74%	72%	58%	My line mgr, supervisor & senior colleagues let me know when I have done a good job.
How satisfied are you with your physical working conditions	34-84%	58%	na	68%	63%	I am satisfied with my physical work environment
I believe that action will be taken on problems identified in this survey	21-44%	35%	na	50%	43%	I think the results of this survey will be taken seriously
I am proud to work for this organisation	34-69%	50%	na	62%	60%	I am proud to be working in the Council
How satisfied are you with the total benefits package	27-79%	47%	61%	72%	63%	I am satisfied with my terms and conditions of employment
How satisfied are you with the training you received for your present job	32-72%	51%	73%	75%	67%	I have adequate training for the work I do
I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in this company	25-59%	46%	59%	N/A	60%	I can develop my skills and potential in my current job
I believe I have the opportunity for personal development and growth in this company	24-65%	46%	54%	62%	48%	2003: I consider that opportunities for developing and keeping my job interesting are good. 2002: Opportunities are available for my development
I have enough time to do my job effectively	28-47%	40%	61%	61%*	61%*	2003: I can meet the requirements of my job without working excessive hours. 2002: I regularly work late / take work home to keep up *
I am comfortable with the pressure placed upon me in my job	19-55%	44%	na	55%*	48%	I often worry about not doing my job satisfactorily because my workload is excessive *

* Questions posed in a negative manner in Herefordshire Council Staff Opinion Survey in 2001 and 2002, response shows percentage NOT agreeing.

When looking at benefits or terms and conditions, it is important to look carefully at the appropriate question. On average, 47% of respondents in the ORC benchmark are satisfied with their total benefits package while 61% of Herefordshire Council respondents agree that they are satisfied with their terms and conditions of employment. However, this

Herefordshire Council figure falls to just 39% for the question which asks if they were satisfied with their earnings considering their duties and responsibilities.

The Council performance was also substantially better in terms of respondents who felt their line manager, supervisor and senior colleagues let them know when they have done a good job. Here the Council figure is 74% compared to the ORC response of 39% of respondents who are satisfied with the recognition that they are doing a good job.

Performance against selected targets of the HR Strategy

Performance Indicator	2001 Survey Actual	2002 Survey Actual	2003 Survey Actual	Target	By When
% employees saying they feel their work is valued in the organisation;	51%	59%	43%	50%	End 2003
% saying they know how their work contributes to organisational priorities	51%	60%	62%	55%	End 2003
% report that they are treated equally and fairly whatever their religion	84%	80%	75%	90%	End 2005
% report that they are treated equally and fairly whatever their race	81%	78%	73%	90%	End 2005
% report that they are treated equally and fairly whatever their gender	76%	75%	73%	85%	End 2005
% report that they are treated equally and fairly whatever their sexual orientation	73%	71%	67%	75%	By end 2005
% report that they are treated equally and fairly whatever their age	N/A	N/A	68%	Not set	Not set
% employees satisfied with terms and conditions	63%	73%	61%	63%	End 2002
% employees agreeing communications in the organisation work well	27%	39%	32%	60%	End 2005
% employees agreeing managers communicate well	48%	55%	48%	60%	End 2005
% employees agree they can develop their skills and potential in their current job	48%	61%	59%	75%	End 2005
% employees agree opportunities for developing and keeping job interesting are good	48%	60%	54%	75%	End 2005
% employees agreeing there is flexibility to help meet home/work commitments	65%	68%	73%	80%	End 2005
% employees agreeing they are supported in achieving a healthy home/work balance	54%	63%	N/A	75%	End 2005
% employees agreeing they are able to work flexibly	N/A	82%	82%	75%	End 2005
% employees agreeing that their contribution is recognised	43%	51%	N/A	60%	End 2005
% employees agree they know when they have done a good job	58%	59%	74%	70%	End 2005
% of employees agree their manager takes steps to reduce H&S risks	70%	80%	72%	90%	End 2005

Performance Indicator	2001 Survey Actual	2002 Survey Actual	2003 Survey Actual	Target	By When
% employees reporting they sometimes feel bullied/harassed by members	11%	12%	13%	0%	By 2005 and beyond
% employees reporting they sometimes feel bullied/harassed by managers	19%	17%	17%	0%	By 2005 and beyond
% employees reporting they sometimes feel bullied/harassed by colleagues	13%	12%	11%	0%	By 2005 and beyond
% employees reporting they sometimes feel bullied/harassed by clients/service users	38%	37%	41%	0%	By 2005 and beyond