

STAFF OPINION SURVEY 2005

Report By: Head of Human Resources

Wards Affected

None

Purpose

1. To provide an update on the initial findings of the Staff Opinion Survey 2005. A headline report with benchmark data will be available mid-late October 2005.

Financial Implications

None.

Considerations

2. The Staff Opinion Survey 2005 was run during July. In previous years the survey had been conducted in September. It was moved this year so that the results could be used as part of the corporate planning process.
3. The Staff Opinion Survey is one of a range of measures used within the Council to monitor and manage human resources performance. Other measures include Leaver Surveys, Corporate Health Best Value Performance Indicators (e.g. Sickness Absence, Ill Health and Early Retirements, Equalities) and local indicators (e.g. Staff Review and Development completion, labour turnover).
4. 40% (918) of employees took part in the survey compared to 38% in 2004 and a fifth returned the survey form electronically using this new way to give views. There is a 95% statistical probability that the results are within +/- 2.5 percentage points of the true proportions of opinions of all employees within the Council. For example, if 65% of respondents agreed with a statement, it means that there is a 95% probability that between 62.5% and 67.5% overall agreed with the statement.
5. The work the Council has done and is doing to improve has clearly made a difference to what employees think. In many areas of the survey the message from employees is that things are getting better. Some of the improvements over the past year which have led to the positive results have included
 - A Pay and Workforce Development Strategy is now in place, around the themes of Leadership, Organisation Development, Skills Development, Pay and Reward, Resourcing.
 - Job Evaluation and Single Status have now been implemented with a range of support mechanisms in place for employees.
 - Management Competencies are in place and are being rolled out.
 - Staff Review and Development has improved hugely – now well over three

Further information on the subject of this report is available from David Johnson Head of Human Resources on 01432 383055

quarters of employees have a review at least annually. The SRD process is firmly linked to the Council's performance management cycle.

- A Council-wide review of recruitment has been undertaken with a recruitment centre being planned for launch in April 2006.
- Improvements to communications have been implemented, for example, the Chief Executive and Leader now regularly hold Talking Point sessions for all employees. Further improvements are being planned.
- The Council has signed up to achieving the Investor in People Standard.
- A programme of Diversity awareness is in place.
- A new Directorate structure is taking shape, and is being fully communicated to employees as things progress.

6. Some of the areas where responses by employees are significantly more positive than in either of the last 2 years are:

- More employees think the Council is good to work for – 65% against 59% in 2004, and more agreed that morale in their work area is generally good.
- More employees think that their targets and standards are achievable – 67% against 61% in 2004 and improved over previous years.
- More people are confident that they will still be working for the Council in 12 months time – 61% in 2005 against 51% in 2004, and more agreed that the Council is committed to supporting employees through job evaluation implementation.
- More people agree communications in their service are working well - 63% in 2005 against 58% in 2004. Over two thirds agree that the organisation communicates with employees regularly when going through change, 69% against 63% in 2004.
- Confidence in immediate managers continues to be high. Confidence in senior management has improved with 40% stating they feel senior management decision making is fair compared to 31% in 2004.
- Over two thirds agreed they have a Staff Review and Development discussion annually, and the quality of the discussion has also improved. Employees were also far more confident that there were opportunities for development.
- More agreed that the Council takes into account the views and diverse needs of its service users, that the Council is open, honest, and accountable to all its customers and that customer/client relationships are well managed.

7. There were two main areas where employees said things had not improved:

- In 2004 62% felt that they could meet job requirements without working long hours, compared with 56% in 2005 (mostly in the mid/upper pay ranges).

- Fewer were satisfied with their physical work environment –70% in 2004, 65% in 2005.
8. Staff Opinion Surveys are carried out annually by many Local Authorities. To get a picture of how we fare by comparison, the results are checked annually against other Councils. We compare well against the average for local government in many areas, including:
- the Council being a good employer, and providing recognition for a job well done;
 - understanding about job priorities and objectives, being kept informed about plans and priorities and being involved in decisions and being consulted over changes;
 - training opportunities, having adequate resources for the job, and physical work conditions, work-life balance.
9. The areas where we do not seem to compare so well are:
- employees are not so inclined to tell people the Council is a good place to work;
 - equal treatment irrespective of gender;
 - opportunities for personal development within the Council, earnings levels, and intention to stay with the Council in 12 months time (though turnover at around 9% - significantly below the Unitary Council average of 15.2%).
10. A Core News Special was issued to employees at the end of September. A presentation on the main findings and priorities for improvement will be given to the Managers Forum on 12 October. Managers will again be asked to involve employees in giving ideas on how they think things can and should be improved. Managers will be asked to ensure output is fed into the Service Planning process, to shape and deliver improvements for service users, as part of *Action for a Better Herefordshire* summed up by the Ps and Qs - Putting people first, Providing for our communities, Promoting the County, Protecting our future, Quality life in a Quality County.

Risk Management

11. The Survey is a key management process, part of the Council's performance management. It contributes significantly to developing the Corporate Plan, Pay and Workforce Development Strategy and shaping priorities for management action. If the Survey contents are not noted and publicised, it may lead to employee's lack of confidence in the Survey (ie their views) not being taken seriously, and this may impact adversely on motivation, morale and consequently, performance.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the content of this report be noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Employers Organisation for Local Government, *People Skills Scoreboard 2005*.

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