

EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY 2006

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

CABINET

28TH SEPTEMBER, 2006

Wards Affected

No Wards are affected

Purpose

To note the contents of this report.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation

THAT the report be noted.

Reasons

The Employee Opinion Survey is carried out annually, and this report is for information on the key findings of the 2006 Survey.

Considerations

1. The Employee Opinion Survey 2006 was run during July. This was to ensure that, as in 2005, the results could be used as part of the corporate planning process. 48.4% of employees took part in the survey compared with 40% in 2005 and 38% in 2004. 21% returned the survey form electronically; just over the fifth who used this new way to give their views in 2005.
2. The work the Council has done and is doing to improve has clearly made a difference to what employees think. This year, in response to a number of Survey questions, more respondents have felt able to agree or disagree. In many areas of the survey the message from employees is that there have been improvements. Some of the actions over the past year which have led to the positive results have included:
 - The Council-wide Transformation Programme which is underway.
 - Staff Review and Development (SRD) has improved – now the vast majority of employees have a review at least annually. The SRD process is firmly linked to the Council's performance management cycle. The Council's 94% out-turn of SRD completion is reflected in Survey responses.

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

- The introduction of the Council's Central Recruitment Centre in April 2006 has improved the speed and efficiency of recruitment to Council posts.
 - Improvements to communications continue with, for example, the Chief Executive and Leader's Talking Point sessions for all employees, the introduction of the monthly First Press and First Press Online information bulletins and the improved team brief system – News and Views, now with publicised responses to employee questions.
 - The Council has committed to achieving the Investors in People Standard, with a target date for assessment of September/October 2007.
 - An ongoing programme of Diversity awareness is in place; the positive impact of this is reflected in the Survey responses.
 - New Directorate structures have been implemented, and were fully communicated to employees as they have progressed, as part of the Council's management of the change.
 - Support arrangements following implementation of Single Status and Job Evaluation were put in place and carried out.
 - The Senior Management Team is in place.
3. Actions taken during 2005-06 have clearly made a positive difference to employees and are mirrored by some significantly more positive differences in responses to the Survey. Some of the areas where Survey 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 – 69% against 65% in 2005 and 59% in 2004. In addition, 55% agree that morale in their work area is good, compared with 41% last year.
 - More people are confident that they will still be working for the Council in 12 months time – 64%; up from 61% in 2005 and 51% in 2004.
 - Around two thirds of respondents now agree that they get recognition for a job well done – a significant increase over the previous 2 years.
 - Three quarters agree that the organisation communicates with employees regularly when going through change, against 69% in 2005.
 - Confidence in immediate managers continues to be high, as does the proportion of employees having a clear understanding of their job objectives and priorities. More people are also feeling valued by senior management, and feel that relations between senior management and employees are good.
 - More people are finding their annual Staff Review and Development discussions worthwhile and 48% agree that opportunities for development within the Council are good, compared with 43% in 2005.
 - More agree 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 employees are treated fairly regardless of race, sexual orientation, age and position.

- The proportion who sometimes feel bullied or harassed by customers or service users has fallen from 39% in 2005, to 35%.
4. The main areas where levels of disagreement amongst employees have arisen are:
- In 2005, 31% disagreed that plans, processes and policies were understandable, whereas 40% disagree this year.
 - 4% more than last year disagree that they usually have the resources to do their jobs properly.
 - This year, 38% disagree that action will be taken on problems identified in the survey, compared with 29% last year and 34% in 2004.
 - There is a rise in disagreement that that people are encouraged to use their initiative and creativity, and to share learning and best practice.
 - Disagreement that people are satisfied with their physical work environment – from 30% in 2005, to 35% this year.
 - The level of disagreement has increased to 56% from 51% in 2005, regarding good understanding and co-operation between the Council's different service areas.
 - Disagreement about having opportunities for flexible working, has risen from 15% in 2004, to 16% last year and to 19% currently.
5. 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:
- Morale within work areas is up to 55% from 41% last year and 35% in 2004; compared with a 46% average for local government;
 - The proportion of employees feeling that they have the resources needed to do their jobs properly - 64%; the local government average being 55%;
 - Opportunities for flexible working that allow people to avoid problems in meeting home and work commitments is at 73% this year, compared with the local government average of 68%.
6. The areas where we do not seem to compare so well are:
- Our employees are not as inclined to speak highly of the Council to others outside – 47%; against the average of 56%;
 - The level of satisfaction with earnings here is at 42% as against a 44% average; and 64% intend to be working here in 12 months time against a 75% average (although our turnover is significantly below the Local Government average).
 - That it's possible to meet job requirements without working excessive hours - 56% against an average of 61%.
7. There will be a presentation on the main findings and priorities for improvement to

the October Leadership Forum (formerly Managers Forum). The Headline Report of the Survey will be made generally available concurrently with the issue of this report. Information in First Press will be issued with employees' payslips on September 25th. Heads of Service will be asked to take the lead in ensuring that actions for improvements are delivered as a result of Survey feedback. Managers will again be tasked with involving employees in giving ideas on how they think things can and should be improved to inform Service Planning to shape and deliver improvements for service users.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

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 to shaping priorities for management action. If the Survey contents are not noted and publicised, employees may feel the Survey is not taken seriously and this may negatively impact motivation and performance.

Consultees

All employees were offered the opportunity to participate in the Survey. The Opinion Research Company is used (at no cost to the Council) for ideas in Survey construction, cross-fertilisation of improvement ideas with other Councils and to benchmark findings in key areas.

Background Papers

None identified.