

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting5th November 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Employee Survey 2008

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that provided feedback on the outcomes of the Employee Survey 2008 and sought endorsement of an action plan in response to those outcomes. A copy of that Action Plan was provided to Members. The report also provided findings coming from the Investors in People Assessment 2009.

It was explained that the survey had been distributed to 4,657 employees for completion on a voluntary basis either electronically or by hard copy. An overall response rate of 40% was achieved with 1,840 surveys returned. This compared to a 30 % response rate in 2005. The results became available in April 2009. The results were very positive and showed a high degree of employee engagement. Initial work was also undertaken in the development of the survey to allow for benchmarking. Stockton were placed in the upper quartile for 15 comparable questions, against public, private and voluntary sector organisations in areas such as volume of work, ways of working, employee motivation, clear expectations of job role, information to do the job effectively, and Stockton being a good place to work

The key messages from the questionnaire were as follows:

- 79.4% enjoy working for SBC
- 77.9% consider SBC as a good place to work
- 78.7% see themselves working for SCB in 12 months time
- 73% would recommend it as a good place to work
- 86.2% have good clear objectives for their job
- 85.2% are clear how their job contributes to the success of organisation.
- 82.9% receive effective support from managers
- 74.5% feel able to express concerns at work

The intended outcome of the focus groups was to provide comparable smart data alongside robust qualitative data that would explain any

issues and how they could be addressed. Service managers would then be equipped with enough information to be able to develop and implement realistic action plans for improvement, tailored to their individual service needs and issues to be tackled at a corporate level could be identified and addressed. All service groups had access to the information for their relevant areas as well as Council wide.

Subsequently the following focus groups were established:

- Staff groups
- Managers group
- Trade Unions

There were three corporate areas where the survey suggested that there were significant variances between those staff that agreed with a line of questioning and those that didn't

- Communication issues
- Learning and Development
- Bullying and Harassment

Representatives of individual service areas, staff, managers and Trade Unions were invited to focus groups to enable the Council to gain a better understanding of the issues raised in the three areas identified, obtain suggestions for improvement and ensure that the actions taken to address the less positive staff responses were the correct ones.

The detailed focused group responses were provided to Members

The Investors in People tool had long been acknowledged as an effective business improvement tool, which enabled organisations to improve performance in support of business objectives. It is a nationally recognised standard of good practice. The external assessment has been reviewed and is a tougher test than it was previously. The standard looks at how the organisation develops strategies to improve its performance, how it takes action and how it evaluates the impact of the actions on performance.

There were 10 criteria with a heavy emphasis on management capabilities to lead, manage and develop people. Importantly, it was no longer assessed via paper based evidence but relied upon employee interviews which measure how the standard is actually working in the workplace i.e. the true culture of the organisation.

A sample of 187 (3.9%) of the total staff employed were interviewed from across service areas and included members, managers, trade union

representatives and a range of employees of all disciplines.

In July, Stockton Borough Council became the first local authority in the region to achieve a Silver Award at the higher level of the improved 'Investors in People' Assessment. The Council was also assessed under the new 'Health and Wellbeing' standards and was commended for its commitment and delivery against its Workforce Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Whilst a Silver Award demonstrates exceptional achievement by an organisation showing best practice in many areas, there were some developmental areas, which would need to be addressed, should the Council wish to achieve the Gold Award upon reassessment in 2012.

Development areas for IIP were:

- More formalised planning in advance of training
- Consideration of individual learning styles
- Improve evaluation of training at individual and corporate levels
- Consistent application of feedback of actions by managers
- Develop a strategy that would identify recognition and reward
- Formalise the work/life balance strategy in a policy

A report had been received from the external assessors and a summary of key strengths and areas for development for the organisation was provided to Cabinet

Future action plans had been discussed with Assessment North East Ltd (the IIP Assessors) and this would help inform the People Strategy and Workforce

Development plans over the next three years.

It was evident through the analysis of both sets of findings that there was a similarity of issues that could be addressed through the formulation of a single action plan.

It was suggested that wording contained in the Action Plan was negative to older people and should be amended.

RESOLVED that the action plan be approved.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The Employee Survey is conducted every three years and counsels the

opinions of staff who work for Stockton Borough Council. The last survey was in November 2008. A two stranded approach was adopted to the employee consultation exercise. Stage one was to conduct a short employee survey. This was to be followed up by a series of focus groups which picked up any issues identified through the survey results, look for greater understanding and provide potential solutions. The results of the questionnaire were extremely positive, showing a high degree of employee engagement whilst the focus groups provided some useful ideas for further improvement.

The Investors in People tool had long been acknowledged as an effective business improvement tool, which enabled organisations to improve performance in support of business objectives. It is a nationally recognised standard of good practice. The external assessment has been reviewed and is a tougher test than it was previously. The standard looks at how the organisation develops strategies to improve its performance, how it takes action and how it evaluates the impact of the actions on performance.

In July, Stockton Borough Council became the first local authority in the region to achieve a Silver Award at the higher level of the improved 'Investors in People' Assessment. The Council was also assessed under the new 'Health and Wellbeing' standards and was commended for its commitment and delivery against its Workforce Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Whilst a Silver Award demonstrates exceptional achievement by an organisation showing best practice in many areas, there were some developmental areas, which would need to be addressed, should the Council wish to achieve the Gold Award upon reassessment in 2012.

It was evident through the analysis of both sets of findings that there was a similarity of issues that could be addressed through the formulation of a single action plan. This report included an action plan giving an overview of various activities that will address the issues raised in the Employee Survey and the IIP Assessment. Cabinet were asked to endorse the plan.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than Midnight on Friday 13th November 2009

Proper Officer
10 November 2009