

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 7th FEBRUARY 2013

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

Access and Communities – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor David Coleman
Corporate Management and Finance – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor David Harrington

EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2012 – HEADLINE AND BENCHMARKING RESULTS

Summary

1. This report presents a summary of the Employee Survey 2012 headline results. It also offers a planned way forward for working with Service Groups and Service Areas, reports on benchmarking our results against other public sector organisations and private businesses and a plan for communicating the results to all relevant stakeholders. The report and the Appendices illustrate that despite the current environment in which we are working the results remain positive overall both in terms of our own performance over time and comparatively with others. An important aspect to note when reading the results was that there was a significantly higher proportion of respondents who stated they neither agreed nor disagreed with the questions than in 2010 i.e. they took the middle road this has been taken into account in analysis and reasons for this are being explored via focus groups.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Receive this report and note its content.
2. Note the benchmarking results.
3. Note the suggested actions with regard to communication and action planning.
4. Agree to receive a further report following focus group work at a corporate level and within service groupings.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

The recommendations and subsequent actions will ensure that Council services can be improved by using the information contained in the report and that produced through further analysis. It will also inform communications on key issues.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Receive this report and note its content.
- b) Note the benchmarking results.
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DETAIL

1. The Employee Survey took place between 1st October and 2nd November 2012.
2. It was sent to all employees (3,719) excluding:
 - Schools staff
 - TVU staff
 - Xentrall staff
 - Supply staff
3. In total, 2,513 responses were received, giving a response rate of 67.6% (equal to a 7.6% improvement on 2010 and a 23.6% improvement on 2008), 75.6% of all responses were made online.

4. It is important to bear in mind when reading the results that the survey took place against a backdrop of huge economic uncertainty and significant, exponential and unprecedented changes within the Local Government sector in general and the Council.
5. Two important aspects to note when reading the results was that there were a large proportion of respondents who stated they neither agreed nor disagreed with the questions i.e. they took the middle road, which disproportionately affects the results. In addition to this there was a large decrease in those actively disagreeing with the statements.
6. Analysis has been undertaken on a principle of “active selections of agree/disagree. We will explore the reasons for the high numbers selecting the middle options through the follow-up group work.
7. Paragraphs 9 to 23 give a summary of the results for each section and give the overall picture. They identify areas that stand out from the rest, either because they have increased or because they have decreased.
8. In the section **You and Your job**, overall the areas that had improved were around the question ‘At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day’ (+4%) and ‘I understand the results expected of me in my job’ (+2%). The areas where there has been the greatest decline in agreement in SBC overall is ‘Where I work unnecessary procedures are kept to a minimum’ (-12%) with all Service Groups reporting this as the largest decline. This was followed by ‘I am satisfied with the level of challenge in my work’ (-7%) in all Service Groupings.
9. In the section **‘Bullying’** there has been positive results across SBC as a whole for the questions ‘I have been bullied by a member of the public in the last year’ (-13%) and ‘I have been bullied by another employee in the last year’ (-15%).
10. Whilst there have been improvements in the reduction of number of incidences of bullying there appears to be some work to be done around the tackling bullying and harassment policy and processes as the question ‘I have confidence in that the tackling bullying and harassment policy would work if I needed it’ has declined (-9%) across all Service Groups.
11. The question ‘I understand the processes in place for dealing with bullying and harassment’ has also decreased across SBC overall (-4%) and in all Service Groups. When you link paras 11 and 12 there is an indication that where bullying has taken place there is confidence that the policy has been effective.
12. There are positive results in the **Learning and Development** section for SBC overall with (+8%) improvement in the question ‘Before I go on any training I agree with my line manager / supervisor what I can expect to learn’ and (+4%) improvement in ‘I have opportunities to learn from the people I work with’ with a (+1%) increase in ‘I have the opportunity to learn new skills and develop new talents at work’.
13. This does differ slightly across the Service Groups and Service Areas and particular aspects of this section are being picked up through the appropriate Head of Service. The differences however are marginal and it may be that as a result of the economic climate there are less opportunities for formal learning and development which has impacted on the responses to these questions.
14. The question in this section that has shown the greatest decline across SBC is the question ‘The policies for promotion are fair’ with (-11%) decline. Again this may be a reflection of the lack of progression opportunities as a result of reduction in staff turnover. This is being explored as part of the focus group work.

15. Positives within **Relationships and Resources** are around the question 'I receive effective support from my colleagues' which has seen a (+1%) increase and 'Poor performance is not accepted where I work' which has seen a (+12%) increase, which is pleasing as this was an area of focus after the 2010 Employee Survey.
16. In the SBC overall results there is a decrease in agreements with questions around 'I am comfortable with the amount of work I am expected to do' (-6%) and 'I have enough time to perform the tasks expected of me in my job' (-5%). It is suggested that this could be a direct impact from the EIT reviews alongside additional burdens on the Authority as a result of national legislative and policy changes. There are some variations within service groups which are being explored by the relevant Head of Service.
17. Positive messages from the **Communication** section show increases in SBC overall in the questions 'I am kept informed about matters that affect me' (+3%) and 'The organisation keeps employees informed' (+5%). Where there has been a decrease overall in agreement are around the questions 'Communication between departments is good in the organisation' (-2%).
18. Within **Leadership and Management** there are a number of positives that are worthy of note in SBC overall results. 'Our leaders are working together effectively to make the organisation successful' has seen an increase of 8% on the previous survey. The question 'Departments (i.e. Service Groups) work well together in this organisation' has an increase of (+11%). This is reflected throughout the Service Groups. This is interesting when compared to the responses in the Communication section on inter-department communication and needs further exploration. The question 'My Manager treats me with respect as an individual' received an increase of (+2%) for SBC overall again this is reflected in all Service Groups.
19. There is a general confidence from the employees that responded about how the Authority is dealing with public spending cuts. The question 'I am confident that this Authority has effective plans in place to manage the public sector spending cuts' has the greatest increase (+23%), followed by a 20% increase in the agreement with the question 'I am confident that this Authority will act in the best interests of employees when managing public sector spending cuts'. This is also reflected in the question 'I am confident that this Authority will act in the best interest of residents when managing public sector spending cuts' with a 15% increase. These views are reflected across all of the Service Groups.
20. The areas where there has been a decrease in SBC overall is the question 'I find my appraisal useful' (-23%) and the question 'I have had an appraisal in the last year' (-17%). This was reflected across the Service Groups. A revised approach to appraisals is already being developed.
21. With **Change Management** the only question that increased for SBC overall was 'I feel able to express concerns I may have at work' (+2%). Although employees feel that they are able to express concerns there were decreases in SBC overall in the questions 'My opinions seem to count' (-25%) and 'When change is being considered my views are listened to' (-19%) which is reflected in the Service Groups. This indicates that there is some additional work to do with letting people see how their views have influenced the changes that have, and will, take place. This is an area that is being looked at through focus groups with employees.
22. Employees still feel positive in general about **the Council** with all questions in this section showing increases. The greatest increases are with the questions 'There is support at work for employees to balance their work and personal life' and 'The organisation takes a genuine interest in the well-being of employees' both show an increase of 9%. Closely followed by 'This organisation's services are delivered effectively' (+8%) and 'I am confident with the way the Council runs things' (+7%) and 'I enjoy working for Stockton-on-Tees

Borough Council' and 'Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is a good place to work' both with 5% increases. These views are generally reflected across the Service Groups.

CONCLUSIONS

23. The results show for the Council as a whole our staff are clear how their job contributes to the success of the organisation and understand their objectives and what results are expected from them. They are less likely than in 2010 to be bullied by either the public or other employees, however, if they were they would need further understanding of the processes in place for dealing with all aspects of bullying.
24. Our staff feel that they have the opportunities to learn from the people they work with and the training that they receive. They feel that they have access to the tools, equipment and information to do their jobs but are uncomfortable with the volume of work and the time they have to do their jobs. They also feel that the policies for promotion are not fair. Factors potentially influencing this are being explored further.
25. Our staff feel supported and respected by their immediate manager. Whilst they feel that they are able to express concerns they feel less confident that their views and opinions are taken into account. This is being explored further
26. They feel that communication needs to be improved, within their Service Groups and between Service Groups, however they feel they are kept informed, especially about issues that affect them and that departments work well together.
27. Our staff believe that the Council is an equal opportunity employer, it is a good place to work and they enjoy working for us. Finally they feel confident that the leadership and management within the Authority have effective plans to manage public sector cuts and will act in the best interests of employees and residents when managing public spending cuts

COMPARISONS

28. As with the 2008 Employee Survey we undertook benchmarking work with ORC International to better understand how our results compared with other Local Authorities, other public sector and private sector organisations. As all organisations will be working in the same economic climate this piece of work was seen as essential to ascertain the integrity and validity of our results. We were able to benchmark 25% of our questions.
29. The work from the benchmarking exercise shows that we compare very favourably against our comparators. Where we can benchmark against particular groups, we perform better than the local government group as a whole in all of the questions, we perform better than Public Sector UK in all of the questions except one and better than Private Sector UK in 11 out of the 15 questions.
30. The benchmarking compared our Employee Survey 2012 results with results for the same questions from the following groups/sectors:
 - 'Perspectives UK' (ORC International's database of organisations and companies from across the UK who have shared their Employee Survey data with ORC)
 - Private Sector UK
 - Local Government.
 - Housing Associations
 - Public Sector UK
 - Charities/Not For Profit.

31. To complete benchmarking work, a median score (the middle score in the range of all available scores) must be achieved from all results available. ORC identify this is possible only when there are at least 7 contributing organisations for the questions.

32. Taking the above into account, ten of our Employee Survey 2012 questions were 'benchmarkable'. Of these, six were more than 5% points above the benchmark median score and four were within 5% points of the benchmark median score.

33. Results above the benchmark median score were as follows:

- **I am kept informed about matters that affect me (19% points above the benchmark score).** For this question, we performed better than the following benchmarking groups: Local Government with a result which was 19% points lower than ours; Public Sector UK which achieved a result which was 12% points below ours; and, Perspectives UK which achieved a result which was 9% points below ours. By contrast, we performed marginally less well than the Private Sector UK benchmarking group which achieved a result that was 20% points above the median score.
- **I receive the training I need to do my job (14% points above the benchmark score).** For this question, we performed better than all benchmarking groups. Private Sector UK was however closest to us with a result which was 11% points lower than ours. Local Government and Perspectives UK achieved results 14% points below ours. Public Sector UK meanwhile achieved a result which was 17% points below ours.
- **I understand the results expected of me in my job (10% above the benchmark score).** We were in the upper quartile and outperformed all benchmarking groups for this question. Closest to us again was Private Sector UK and Charities/Not for Profit which both had results that were 5% below ours. Housing Associations had results which were 6% points below ours. Perspectives UK had results which were 7% points below ours. Public Sector UK had results 8% points below ours. Lastly, Local Government had results 10% points below ours.
- **I am clear how my job contributes to the success of this organisation (7% above the benchmark score).** Again, we outperformed all benchmarking groups for this question. Housing Associations achieved a result which was 1% point lower than ours. Private Sector UK had results which were 2% points below ours. Charities/Not for Profit results were 4% points below ours. Perspectives UK had results which were 5% below ours. Local Government results were 7% below ours and Public Sector UK results were 8% points below ours.
- **I have the information I need to do my job effectively (7% points above the benchmark score).** We outperformed all benchmarking groups for this question. Private Sector UK achieved results which were 4% points below ours, Local Government results were 7% points lower than ours, Housing Association and Perspectives UK results were both 9% lower than ours and Public Sector UK and Charities/Not for Profit results were both 10% less than ours.
- **I believe that this company/organisation is an equal opportunity employer (6% points above the benchmark score).** We performed better than Charities/Not for Profit which had results 3% points lower than ours and also Local Government which had results that were 6% points lower than ours. By contrast, Housing Associations achieved results that were 8% points above ours and Public Sector UK, Perspectives UK and Private Sector UK each achieved results that were 1% point above ours.

- **My job makes good use of my skills and abilities (3% above the benchmark score).** Housing Associations and Charities/Not for Profit benchmarking groups achieved results which were respectively 5% points and 3% points above ours for this question. We performed as well as the Public Sector UK benchmarking group. We outperformed the Perspectives UK, Private Sector UK and Local Government benchmarking groups by 1% point, 2% points and 3% points respectively.
- **My job provides me with the opportunity to experience a sense of personal accomplishment (2% points above the benchmark score).** Housing Associations and Charities/Not for Profit benchmarking groups achieved results which were respectively 4% points and 3% points above ours for this question. We performed as well as the Perspectives UK and Public Sector UK benchmarking groups. We outperformed (each by 2% points) the Local Government and Private Sector UK benchmarking groups.

34. Results broadly in line with the benchmark median score were as follows:

- **I receive regular and helpful feedback on how well I am doing (equal to the benchmark score).** We performed less well than two benchmarking groups on this question: Housing Associations (whose results were 3% points above ours); and, Charities/Not for Profit (whose results were 2% points above ours). We were on a par with the Local Government benchmarking group, Private Sector UK, Perspectives UK and also Public Sector UK.
- **My manager treats me with respect as an individual (equal to the benchmark score).** We performed as well as the highest achieving benchmarking group (Local Government) on this question and achieved a result which was 1% point greater than the results for Public Sector UK, Perspectives UK and 2% points greater than for the Private Sector UK group.

35. Results against which it was not possible for ORC to establish a median score are as follows:

- **I am comfortable with the amount of work I am expected to do.** We achieved a result of 67% which was higher than the results achieved by Perspectives UK (65%), Public Sector UK (64%) and also Housing Associations (62%). It was however 5% points lower than the results for the Private Sector UK benchmarking group.
- **I have enough time to do my job effectively.** We achieved a result of 56% which was 2% points greater than for the Private Sector UK (54%) benchmarking group and 1% point greater than the results for the Perspectives UK (55%) benchmarking group. There was no local government benchmark available.
- **I have a clear set of performance objectives for my job.** With a result of 80% we outperformed each of the following benchmarking groups: Public Sector UK and Perspectives UK (each by 5% points); Charities/Not for Profit (by 6% points); Private Sector UK (by 7% points); and, Housing Associations (by 8% points). There was no local government benchmark available.
- **When I do a good job I receive recognition.** We achieved a results of 63% and were outperformed (by 11% points) only by the Charities/Not for Profit benchmarking group. By comparison, we outperformed the following benchmarking groups Public Sector UK and Housing Associations (each by 8% points); Perspectives UK (by 7% points); and, Private Sector UK (by 4% points). There was no local government benchmark available.
- **I am satisfied with how interesting my work is.** We achieved a result of 78% which was lower than the 89% achieved by both the Public Sector UK and Perspectives UK benchmarking groups. There was no local government benchmark available.

36. Benchmarking results for a selection of questions from the Employee Survey 2012 clearly show that we are currently performing better than or as well as all of the other benchmarking groups managed by ORC International. Notably, we are performing better than the Local Government, Public Sector UK and Private Sector UK benchmarking groups in many areas.
37. The Employee Survey 2012 results with the benchmarking results will be shared with members via a members seminar on the 20th of May 2013.
38. The headline results will be shared with staff via KYIT and detailed results have been sent to each of Head of Service to share in team meetings in January 2013. The information packs identified possible areas for further work within Service Areas, which is currently underway..
39. Focus groups are arranged on Change Management and the Appraisal system. From these sessions action plans will be developed identifying areas which require further work.
40. Service Areas will be able to identify their own issues from the individual Head of Service packs and it is expected that some service specific focus groups will be run during February - April 2013. From the Focus groups action plans will be developed in May / June 2013 and shared with members and staff in Summer 2013.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Employee Survey was conducted in house.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications

RISK ASSESSMENT

The risk for this activity is low.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment because it included all employees of the Council. Analysis of the survey across the protected characteristics did not highlight any specific issues relating to Equality and Diversity.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

Consultation of the results and associated actions will be a subject of a Members Seminar 20th May 2013.

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Education related? No

Background Papers none

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property (<http://sbcintranet/library/64521/RES/Capital.doc?view=Display>)