

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 7 March 2019

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook

EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2018

Summary

This report provides Members with a summary of the 2018 Employee Survey results. In overview the results continue to be extremely positive with 34 of the 36 questions yielding a positive agreement rate of 50% or more and 22 questions scoring an agreement rate over 70%. Results for 32 of the 36 questions are either up or level with the 2016 results. Whilst of course there are areas which are identified for improvement, these results should be celebrated, particularly when they are read in the context of ongoing significant change and continually rising work pressures. The 21% reduction in the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees over the last eight years continues to put a pressure on staff to deliver more and in new ways and these results demonstrate that we have a workforce that remain committed and proud to serve the people of the borough and continue to believe that this is great place to work.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to note the positive results of the 2018 Employee Survey and to support the actions set out in paragraph 17.

Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, 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 and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

7th March 2019

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2018

SUMMARY

Stockton Borough Council is a successful and award winning organisation which is **ambitious, effective and proud to serve the people of the borough**. Working closely with the elected Members the workforce of 3,195 people strive to deliver the very best services across the borough in the face of the ongoing challenges arising from reductions in funding and increased demand for services.

As an organisation we pride ourselves that we value, care for and invest in our employees and want to continue to do so because we are ambitious and want to continue to deliver our services well. This investment in employees has been a long standing commitment and is encapsulated in the "Shaping a Brighter Future" programme and underpinned by our comprehensive package of employee support, development and engagement work. As with any investment we make, we review it periodically to ensure that it is delivering a good return. It is for this reason that we carry out an employee survey every two years to understand how our employees are feeling about the council as an employer and as a place to work and to ensure that the investment in them is addressing their needs, challenges and ambitions. The Survey provides valuable information to help us refine our employee support and development programme and ensure that we continue to recruit, support and retain the very best employees who can deliver excellent services across the borough.

This report provides Members with a summary of the 2018 Employee Survey results. In overview we continue to see extremely positive results with 34 of the 36 questions yielding a positive agreement rate of 50% or more and 22 questions scoring an agreement rate over 70%. Results for 32 of the 36 questions are either up or level with the 2016 results. Whilst of course there are areas which are identified for improvement, these results should be celebrated, particularly when they are read in the context of ongoing significant change and continually rising work pressures. The 21% reduction in the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees over the last eight years continues to put a pressure on staff to deliver more and in new ways and these results demonstrate that we have a workforce that remain committed and proud to serve the people of the borough and continue to believe that this is great place to work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet is recommended to note the positive results of the 2018 Employee Survey and to support the actions set out in paragraph 17.

BACKGROUND

1. The Council has conducted bi-annual Employee Surveys since 2010. The most recent survey was undertaken between 1st October - 5th November 2018.
2. Before considering the results, it is important to set the context for the survey.

Context – ongoing work pressures

3. The survey was, once again, undertaken during a period of significant organisational change relating to the ongoing service reviews being undertaken to address the MFTP challenge. The 21% reduction in the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees over the last eight years and the 25% reduction in headcount is a pressure in itself and also gives rise to particular pressures relating to the loss of a number of experienced and long-serving officers.
4. The survey also took place during a period of change in leadership of the organisation and during a period impacted by the ongoing challenges arising from rising demand for social care services and the ambitious regeneration programme.
5. Members will also be aware from separate reports that we continue to work hard to address sickness absence at the Council and that there continues to be an upward trend of absence across the sector generally and specifically in relation to absence related to stress, depression, mental health and fatigue. This continues to be the single biggest cause of illness amongst employees and whilst this is often not related to work-place stress it is important context for the survey.

Context – employee support arrangements

6. In recognition of the challenge facing the Council and its employees Cabinet approved, in January 2014, the development of the Shaping a Brighter Future (SBF) programme which was designed to create more capacity and resilience within the organisation by developing employees and growing our own talent. The SBF programme, which has just entered it's sixth year, has had a huge impact on the culture of the organisation. The SBF workstreams have driven change in recruitment, in partnership and team working and in personal development programmes. The Talent Network has been created to provide opportunities for employees to apply and develop their skills beyond their main roles at the Council and the Inspirational Speakers programme, the Headway and Mindfulness programmes have all helped build resilience across the workforce.
7. It is also important context to reflect that the Council continues to invest in the Health & Wellbeing of its employees through a comprehensive package of support including an in-house Occupational Health provision, the Mind Counselling services and Body2Fit physiotherapy services. A year round programme of health promotions takes place driven by the health ambassadors and this is recognised in the Council's achievement of the Better Health at Work Award's highest accolade of Continuing Excellence. The Council's commitment to the health and wellbeing of it's employees is further evidenced in the recent signing of the Dying to Work Charter in support of employees with terminal illnesses.
8. The SBF and Health and Wellbeing programmes sit alongside the wide ranging and long term investment in the support and development of our employees. The formal induction and training and development programmes are continually updated and reviewed. The appraisal and Customer Service Excellence staff awards are thriving and are supported by a comprehensive programme of employee engagement and communication. The Council-wide "Hive" fortnightly surveys and peer recognition scheme and the Ask Neil, Bright Ideas, Setting the Standard events and programme of Chief Executive visits all supplement the individual team and directorate commitment to staff engagement.
9. The Council's employees continue to benefit from the strong and positive commitment from the unions. Relationships with the unions continue to be collaborative and healthy and

liaison takes place at regular Trade Union Liaison Group meetings and with Councillor and Officers at the regular Local Joint Consultative Panels. Most recently the Council's commitment to employees has been further strengthened through the commitment to the Great Jobs Agenda.

DETAIL

- 10. 1,758 employees responded to the 2018 Employee Survey. This is a response rate of 59%. The response rate is lower than in 2016 (2,133 responses and 69%), however it is still a good response rate and statistically valid and reportable results were achieved for 70 individual team groupings across the organisation. The approach to collection of results was changed in 2018 to make more use of the online portal and visits by the consultation team to non-office based employees rather than relying on posting paper copies of surveys to employees' home addresses. This approach has still ensured a good coverage of all teams and can be built on in future years.



Consultation visits to all work locations

- 11. A copy of the full results including a comparison with the 2016 results is attached as *Appendix 1*. The full survey incorporates 36 questions for which employees are asked to rate their agreement on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Employees were also asked to score of a scale of 1-10 how strongly they agree with the 8 elements of the culture statement.
- 12. Overall the picture is very positive. The survey highlights a number of areas of strength:

Job roles are clear and employees have the skills, abilities and authority to deliver:

% Agree/Strongly Agree	2018
I am clear about what I'm expected to achieve in my job	89% (+2)
My job makes good use of my skills & abilities	81% (+2)
I have enough authority to do my job effectively	82% (+5)
The people in my team are committed to doing quality work	86% (-)

Employees feel a strong connection to the overall aims of the Council and to serving the people of the borough:

% Agree/Strongly Agree	2018
I understand the ambitions and priorities of the council as a	83% (+7)

whole	
I understand how my work contributes to the success of the organisation	81% (+2)
We act on feedback we receive from customers	77% (-)

Employees feel they are treated well:

% Agree/Strongly Agree	2018
My immediate manager/supervisor communicates effectively	82% (+9)
I would recommend this organisation as a great place to work	77% (+11)
I am treated with fairness and respect in this organisation	78% (+1)
My immediate manager/supervisor treats me with respect as an individual	88% (+6)
I am able to strike the right balance between my work and home life	77% (+1)

There is a culture which is open to new ideas and trying new ways of working and is supportive of learning and development:

% Agree/Strongly Agree	2018
My immediate manager/supervisor encourages us to come up with new or better ways of doing things	80% (+7)
In the last year my team has tried out a new idea or way of working	80% (+5)
I have taken the opportunity to learn something new at work this year	86% (+13)
In the last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and develop	76% (+6)
I believe that one of my responsibilities is to continually look for new ways to improve the way we work	88% (+1)

13. It is also clear from the scoring of the elements of the culture statement that employees continue to score a high performance in the areas of focus and drive:

Mean Average (out of 10)	2018	2016
We work hard	9.07	8.86
We never lose sight of the fact that we are here to serve the people of the Borough	8.51	8.34
We make a positive contribution at work for the whole council	8.31	8.19
We take responsibility for our own development	8.28	7.95
We are not afraid to try something new	8.05	8.16
We belong	7.20	7.16
We are valued, trusted and supported	7.14	7.07
We are heard	6.84	6.83

14. The survey does highlight areas where improvement can be made. The following tables show areas where we would wish to see higher agreement rates:

We can do more to ensure that employees feel heard:

% Agree/Strongly agree	2018	2016
I have the opportunity to contribute my views before changes are made which affect my job	57%	60%
At work my opinion counts	63%	64%
I believe that action will be taken on problems identified in this survey	55%	50%

We can do more to ensure that we have effective and fair change management:

% Agree/Strongly Agree	2018	2016
I feel change is managed in a fair way	60%	55%
I have the opportunity to contribute my views before changes are made which affect my job	57%	60%
The reasons for change are well communicated to me	67%	58%
This organisation manages change effectively	61%	54%

We can do more to forge stronger working links between Directorates

% Agree/Strongly Agree	2018	2016
Communication with other Directorates is good	40%	43%
There is a strong feeling of cooperation and teams working together in this organisation	63%	61%

We can get better at managing poor performance:

% Agree/Strongly Agree	2018	2016
Poor performance is dealt with effectively in the organisation	46%	57%*
Poor performance is dealt with effectively in my team	58%	57%*

* Both questions benchmarked vs. the single poor performance question used in 2016

15. The survey results have also been analysed across a number of demographic groups. Analysis has been prepared for the BME, Young Staff, and Disability Staff Forums. This information will be analysed in further detail in these groups however in headline terms there are no significant variations from the full Council results. The only significant variance noted from the demographic analysis was for the staff group who identified as having carer responsibilities other than caring for children. 288 responses were received from employees with caring responsibilities and it is notable that their responses were more negative than the overall Council average response in 29 of the 36 questions. In particular a wide variation was noted in two questions:

% Agree/Strongly Agree	Other Carer	Council Average
I am able to strike the right balance between work and home life	69%*	77%
At work my opinion counts	56%*	63%

16. The results of the survey have been benchmarked where possible. Unfortunately full employee surveys are no longer carried out by many Local Authorities. However the annual Civil Service People Survey continues and the 2018 survey results have recently been published by the Cabinet Office with results from 302,170 respondents from 102 public Sector organisations. The survey provides an extremely useful comparison as it took place over almost exactly the same time period, it has the same categories of agreement, and uses the same combination of “agree” and “strongly agree” in the headline responses. A number of the questions map easily to our own survey and these cover the range of areas covered by the Council Survey. A summary of the results for the comparable questions is included at *Appendix 2*. This comparison highlights the ongoing strength of the Council position.
17. Action is already underway to make use of the results:
- a. Council-wide results have been shared with employees through KYIT and team briefings and an ongoing programme of communication on action taken on the survey will continue.
 - b. Directorate and team results have been shared with Directors and individual action plans are being developed to address specific concerns or areas for development.
 - c. A Council-wide action plan is under development with input from the 420 employees who attended the February Setting the Standard sessions. Employees were asked to identify and vote for specific improvement initiatives and to describe further why they recommend the Council as a great place to work. Volunteers also signed up to share these thoughts in a film to be produced for recruitment purposes.
 - d. Demographic analysis has been shared with the staff forums for further analysis.
 - e. The results have been shared with the Trade Unions and will be discussed in more detail at the next Local Joint Consultative Panel.
 - f. Talent Network team will be established to explore the management of poor performance in the organisation and to look for ways this can be improved.
 - g. Further work will be undertaken with employees to explore how more support can be provided those with caring responsibilities. The option of establishing a Carers Staff Forum will be tested.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

18. The recruitment, development and retention of a strong workforce has impact for the whole community

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

19. The employee survey and actions arising from it can be met through existing services and budgets.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

21. The delivery of the Employee Survey is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce the risk.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

22. The Employee Survey directly supports the Your Council theme within the Council Plan contributes to the delivery of all services and policy principles

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

23. The Leader has been consulted on the approach to the Employee Survey.

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