

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 15 JULY 2009

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

8. STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS AND ACTION PLAN

WARD(S) AFFECTED:     *none specific*

'D' RECOMMENDATION - that (A) the key findings of the staff survey be reviewed;

(B) the actions and the management response as outlined in the Action Plan (Appendix 'A') be agreed; and

(C) the actions of the SMG Sub Group as set out in Appendix 'C' be agreed.

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1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 This report outlines the findings of the recent staff survey. It includes an action plan detailing the management response to any themes arising from the survey that need to be addressed.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 **Fit for purpose, services fit for you**

*Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.*

3.0 Background

3.1 Three staff surveys have been undertaken at East Herts Council (2004, 2006 and 2008). This is the first East Herts Council staff survey to be undertaken by Opinion Research Services and was carried out among staff in November/December 2008. This was the first time that East Herts Council had undertaken an online survey rather than a paper questionnaire. 267 members of staff (74%) completed that online survey compared with 2006 when 66% of staff returned their paper questionnaire. This return rate should be commended as it is a good indication that we are engaging with our staff.

3.2 The previous staff survey was undertaken by Mori in 2006. As a result of the findings of this survey 6 improvement actions were identified. The actions and details of how these have improved certain areas in East Herts Council are outlined in Appendix 'B' (Pages 8.12 - 8.13)

#### 4.0 Report

4.1 This report gives an overview of the results and outlines an action plan on how to maintain the good results and where improvements can be made. While Strategic Direction will lead on the action plan, it will require input and clear leadership and management by all senior managers in the organisation.

4.2 At the outset it is important to stress that the survey results are extremely welcome. In certain areas we have improved on the 2006 results.

4.3 This report recommends capitalising on those good results but not being complacent about them. For East Herts it is not enough that we are now "better than we were" – our ambition is to be as good as we can possibly be, and that is about challenging ourselves and looking at ways that we can be even better.

4.4 The objective is that (by the next survey), all staff ought to be able to identify what has happened as a result of us listening to them. We therefore look forward to the next staff survey which is due in December 2010. The Action Plan (Appendix 'A', pages 8.10 - 8.11) outlines the key actions resulting from the survey. It focuses on specific actions that are clear and specific can be reported back to staff therefore it does not cover all the possible areas for improvement. There is also a separate action plan which aims to increase confidence in Senior Management (Appendix 'C', pages 8.14 - 8.15).

#### 5.0 Findings

5.1 The survey found that East Herts Council is a good place to work. The top five things important to staff at work all recorded very high levels of satisfaction or showed consistent improvement since the surveys began. Overall staff are satisfied with their present jobs.

Certain trends and issues are evident throughout the report and actions have been identified as a result of these;

- Those working in Internal Services and/ or Bishops Stortford are significantly more likely than average to record a negative

response to questions

- Staff are not engaged with the PDR process
- Satisfaction needs to be increased with senior management and communications between different sections.

## 5.2 Working at East Herts Council

5.3 For all four years of the survey, employees have been asked to rate satisfaction with their present jobs:

- In 2008 76% said that they are very or fairly satisfied with their present jobs; a significant increase of 11 percentage points over the results for 1006 and 17 percentage points higher than in 2004.
- Younger employees (aged 40 or less) are more likely to record a positive response.

5.4 Respondents were asked to identify a phrase that best describes the way they would speak about East Herts Council to people outside the organisation as an employee:

- The percentage of staff who responded positively remains constant since the 2006 survey at 42%.
- The proportion saying they would speak highly 'without being asked' is 4% higher than in 2006 and 10% higher than the first survey in 2002.

Areas for improvement: 49% would speak highly to people outside the organisation about the services the Council provides.

- 39% would be neutral when speaking to people outside the organisation about the services the Council provides.

5.5 Respondents were asked their opinions on a number of statements about their jobs:

- 85% are clear about their roles and responsibilities
- 84% agree they are able to cope with the demands of the job
- 81% get the support and help they need from colleagues
- 80% believe they have some say over the way they work

5.6 Respondents were asked whether they felt relationships at work were strained:

- 60% disagreed that their relationships at work are strained
- However a significant minority (23%) agreed

**Areas for improvement:** Those in internal services and located in Bishop's Stortford are significantly more likely than average to agree

that relationships at work are strained. This will be addressed through action 3.

Examples of staff comments:

ALL DEPARTMENTS SHOULD HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES

BY WORKING EVEN MORE AS A TEAM AND INVOLVING OTHER PARTNERSHIPS EAST HERTS COUNCIL COULD BE A WHOLE NEW COUNCIL

5.7 Respondents were asked whether their roles are relevant in delivering East Herts Council's priorities:

- 73% said their roles are relevant in delivering these priorities.
- 11% said that their roles are irrelevant to delivering the priorities

5.8 Respondents were asked for their views on their direct line management (i.e the person they report to on a day to day basis):

- Significant positive changes in respondent opinions about line management were recorded between 2006 and 2008. These include 'appreciates the pressure I come under in my job' (11 percentage points)
- 88% said that their line managers were usually or always approachable
- 80% said that their line managers were open and honest
- 78% said they were consulted on matters where they could contribute
- 76% said their line managers were supportive

**Areas for improvement:** The findings were very positive in this area. We shall continue to invest in line management, which will include improving how managers assist staff with applying any training they had received recently.

5.9 Respondents were asked about senior management, i.e. Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service:

- 26% of staff agreed they have confidence in the senior management.
- The proportion agreeing that they have confidence in senior management fell in 2008 by 4%.
- 39% of staff agreed that senior management are approachable and listen to staff

- The proportion agreeing that senior management are good at delivering information to staff has significantly increased by 22 percentage points since 2002.
- Those in service for up to two years; in Grades 10+; in Customer and Community Services and based in Hertford are more likely to agree that they have confidence in senior management.
- Those based in Bishop's Stortford are most likely to disagree that they have confidence in senior management.

**Areas for improvement:** The findings of the questions relating to senior management can be linked to the general dissatisfaction of particular staff with regards to aspects of the C3W programme. However more work needs to be undertaken to find out why staff are not satisfied with senior management. See actions 2 and 3 in the Action Plan.

Examples of staff comments:

SENIOR MANAGEMENT NEED TO COMMUNICATE, LISTEN MORE

SENIOR MANAGEMENT NEED TO CONCENTRATE ON GIVING TEAMS THE FACILITIES AND RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN A GOOD LEVEL OF SERVICE TO CUSTOMERS

5.10 Respondents were invited to rate their satisfaction with a range of aspects concerning their jobs and to identify the six most important factors to them:

- As in previous years the highest levels of satisfaction were recorded for 'friendly colleagues' with 89% satisfied.
- 83% stated that 'interesting work' was important to them.
- 88% were satisfied with their working hours.
- 23% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction at opportunities for career progression.

**Areas for improvement:** Line managers should ensure that all staff are aware of opportunities for career progression through regular 121s and the new PDR process. See action 4 in the action plan.

## 6.0 Communications

6.1 Respondents were asked to rate the Council in terms of the information which it gives employees about the organisation.

- In 2008 55% say they are fully or fairly well informed compared to 49% in 2006 and 24% in 2002.

- Those working in Bishop's Stortford, in employment for 15 or more years and those working in Internal Services are significantly less likely to say that the Council keeps them well informed

Examples of staff comments:

ALL STAFF SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO AN ESTABLISHMENT LIST.

AN E-BULLETIN NEWSLETTER TO STAFF WOULD BE A MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES THAN THE CURRENT HARD COPY OF TEAM UPDATE WHICH IS CIRCULATED.

- 6.2 Respondents were presented with a number of statements concerning communications within East Herts Council:
- 78% agree that communications are good within their sections
  - 23% agree that communications are good between different sections
  - It is possible to compare the results for two of the statements 'communications within my section' and 'between different sections'. For both statements the proportions agreeing has increased reasonably steadily between 2002 and 2008.
  - Despite steady improvements 42% of staff still disagreed that communications are good between different sections.
- 6.3 Respondents were asked to indicate how they currently find out information about East Herts Council and how they would like to find out information in the future:
- 78% chose email as the most popular form of provision and 71% chose Team Brief.
  - There has been a significant decline in the proportion gaining their information through the grapevine or rumour (59% in 2008 compared to 75% in 2002)
  - The use of email and the Council Intranet and Website are increasingly popular sources of information. Four times as many respondents in 2008 as in 2002 use the Intranet as a source of information.
  - The popularity of Team update has fallen from 83% in 2003 to 69% in 2008. This can be most likely attributed to the introduction of the Intranet and other e-communication tools since 2003.

**Areas for improvement:** Use the information gained through the staff survey on staff preferences for communication methods to

ensure that all key messages are being delivered to the appropriate audiences. See action 2 in the action plan.

## 7.0 Training and Development

7.1 Respondents were asked to rate a number of statements about their own training and development:

- For all three statements the proportions giving neutral responses was relatively high.
- 52% agreed they can develop their career potential through training and development
- 31% agreed that the PDR process is of value, 36 disagreed and 30% were neutral.

**Areas for improvement:** Make PDR process of value to all staff. See action 4 in the action plan.

Examples of staff comments:

REVIEW TRAINING BUDGETS

IMPROVED CAREER PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

7.2 Respondents were asked to rate a number of statements concerning partnership working:

- 81% agree that they understand the benefits of working in partnership
- 66% are involved in working with other organisations
- 58% agree that the Council could and should explore more opportunities for partnership working

**Areas for improvement:** Explore further the benefits of partnership working throughout the organisation.

7.3 Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with five statements about the C3W programme:

- The highest level of agreement at 49% was for ' I know who my user group delegate is'.
- 47% stated that they were kept up to date on the progress of the C3W programme
- Over half the respondents (53%) disagree that the C3W programme will be effective, 15% agree and 25% answered in the neutral.

- 27% are unsure of how to access information on C3W and 53% disagree that the programme will be effective.

**Areas for improvement:** Ensure staff are informed and are kept up to date with developments regarding C3W. See action 3 in the action plan.

Examples of staff comments:

THERE ARE WASTED RESOURCES IN THE OFFICES AND A MORE JOINED UP APPROACH WOULD HELP LIMITED BUDGETS AND RESOURCES. SERVICES WORK AS INDIVIDUAL GROUPS INSTEAD OF PART OF ONE LARGER GROUP.

THE ORGANISATION NEEDS TO USE THE BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE SERVICE EFFICIENCY AND INFORMATION TO THE CUSTOMERS.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT SHOULD VISIT DIFFERENT SECTIONS WITHIN THE AUTHORITY TO GET AN IDEA OF HOW WE WORK, THE CONDITIONS THAT SOME PEOPLE WORK IN AND THE PRESSURES THAT THEY ARE UNDER ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS.

## 9.0 Consultation

9.1 Details of the survey can be found in paragraph 3.1. Details of how the findings are to be communicated can be found in paragraph 8.0.

## 10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 N/A

## 11.0 Financial Implications

11.1 Actions arising from the results may have cost implications although none have been formally identified as yet.

## 12.0 Human Resource Implications

12.1 Actions arising from the results may have human resource implications although none have been formally identified as yet.



## 13.0 Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 The survey is our key measure of staff satisfaction within the authority and therefore sits under the priority 'Fit for purpose'. Failure to report back on key actions could affect our ability to be a 'well managed' organisation and could therefore affect our judgements in external assessments

### Background Papers

The ORS report detailing all the findings is available on request from the Performance Team

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