
REPORT TO: Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder
AUTHOR/S: Ian Cawthra, HR Officer

16th December 2009

EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2009

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Portfolio Holder of the key findings from the Employee Survey 2009
2. This is not a key decision and is provided for information only.

Executive Summary

3. The findings from the employee survey 2009 were positive for the Council. Several key strengths were identified and areas for attention recognised. A number of actions are now required to build on this success.

Background

4. Employees are crucial to the on-going success of the Council. Understanding how they feel, what motivates them, what issues they face etc. is fundamental to ensuring continuing customer satisfaction. Those organisations that look after their staff and listen to what they say are those that tend to be the leaders in their field. Such organisations feature regularly in the list of “Best Councils to Work For”, achieve excellent Comprehensive Performance Assessment ratings and are expected to top the table under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment framework.
5. In order to check the “pulse” of the organisation, a survey of employees was undertaken between 14th September and 9th October 2009. The aim of the survey was to assess the thoughts, feelings and opinions of employees about their working life and their attitudes towards South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) as an employer. This will allow the Council to identify areas that are doing well, and also those that may need attention.
6. The survey was designed and carried out with the assistance of IpsosMORI and covered the following areas:
 - Working at SCDC
 - Attitudes towards Management (line management and senior management)
 - Performance Management, Training and Development
 - Communications
 - Health, Safety and Equality issues
 - External Focus and Change
 - Making the Council a better place to work
7. Where appropriate, results were compared with IpsosMORI normative data, which provides comparable findings for IpsosMORI’s overall norm, top ten performing companies, other local authorities and public sector organisations surveyed by IpsosMORI in the last five years. These comparisons are intended to provide a context in which to place our results and to help with the interpretation.

8. Employees were able to take part using two different methods. Paper questionnaires were distributed to employees without on-line access at work, while employees on-line were sent an electronic version of the questionnaire. In total **494** employees were invited to take part and **356** completed questionnaires were received, giving a very high overall response rate of **72%**. The IpsosMORI local authority average response rate is below **50%**

Findings

9. The results of the 2009 survey are very positive for SCDC at a time of change and upheaval, and in many cases, compare favourably against IpsosMORI's normative trend data.
10. **Key Strengths:**
- Majority of staff satisfied with their jobs (67%). LA Norm 62%
 - One of the best authorities's to work for (33%). LA Norm 27%
 - Advocacy of SCDC as an employer (40%). LA Norm 33%
 - Advocacy of SCDC as a service provider (44%) LA Norm 30%
 - Good at communicating with employees (45%) No Norm
 - Equal opportunities employer (73%) LA Norm 68%
 - Treated with fairness and respect (70%) LA Norm 59%
11. Focusing on the specific aspects of working for the Council, one of the biggest strengths is that employees feel that they are doing something worthwhile in their jobs. A sizeable proportion of employees also feel that there is a strong sense of teamwork within the organisation.
12. Employees are also positive about many aspects of line management and senior managers. Most employees feel that their line manager is approachable, open and honest. This also links with Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs). Most employees (87%) say they have had a PDR within the last 12 months, and of these, most say it was used to set objectives with line managers (82%) and conducted in a constructive manner (81%).
13. **Areas for Attention:**
- Not consulted on decisions that affect them and their work (41%)
 - Want to be more involved in the changes that take place at work (40%)
 - Career development (37%). The Council does not provide much guidance
 - PDRs are not useful in terms of career development (51%)
 - Raise awareness of learning and development opportunities (22%)
 - Job Security (42%) LA Norm 58%
14. There is a clear link between career development and learning and development opportunities. The lack of career guidance was also an issue raised in our Investors in People feedback report in February. Career guidance is a specialist subject and the Council clearly lacks expertise in this area. Similarly, learning and development is managed on a part-time basis as part of one HR Officer's job. Most organisations of our size have a specialist learning and development advisor in place.

Next Steps

15. Consider the results and determine which findings are in line with expectations, and which are surprising. Challenging ourselves will stimulate debate and target action to help ensure that the organisation keeps in touch with employees.
16. Challenge the results and think about where attitudes appear to be based on a fair assessment of the issue, and also look at those areas where employee perceptions may be based on imperfect knowledge or misunderstanding
17. Link the survey findings to other data and information. The IpsosMORI normative data is a useful starting point. Also the findings from the Investors in People assessment.
18. Analyse the sub-category information to check for differences across service area, gender, age etc. where particular attention may be required.

Implications

19.	Financial	The cost of the survey was met from existing budget allocations. There may be a cost to implementing some of the findings, but these have yet to be determined.
	Legal	There are no legal implications
	Staffing	Increased employee satisfaction improves staff morale and productivity
	Risk Management	Not informing staff of the outcome of the survey and failure to act on the findings will decrease staff satisfaction, morale and engagement
	Equal Opportunities	All staff should have the opportunity of further input

Consultations

20. Further work in relation to the findings will be required probably through a series of focus groups.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

21.	Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
	N/A
	Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
	Motivated staff are more able to provide the services required by residents
	Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
	Addressing the areas for attention will enhance the quality of working life for employees

Recommendations

22. The Portfolio Holder is:
 - a) asked to note the report;
 - b) recommended to agree to undertake the next survey in two years

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: None

Contact Officer: Ian Cawthra – HR Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713452