

**REPORT TO:** Employment and Staffing  
Committee

12 September 2019

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER:** Cllr John Williams

**LEAD OFFICER:** Susan Gardner-Craig, Interim Corporate Director

---

## Employee Survey 2019

### Executive Summary

1. A survey is one of the simplest and cost-effective ways of measuring Staff engagement. Staff engagement is reported by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to deliver improved business performance, positive employee relationships, improved customer satisfaction, improved staff retention and employees with higher levels of engagement will be stronger advocates of their organisation.
2. The Council regularly undertakes staff surveys and other means of collecting feedback such as workshops and exit interviews. The Council has also utilised the findings of Investor in People reviews to inform management about the levels of staff satisfaction across the organisation.
3. The Employment and Staffing Committee requested that a full employee survey should be undertaken in 2019. Envisia Learning were selected to assist and support the Council and, following work undertaken by the committee and officers, the survey was launched during July 2019. Envisia Learning collated the feedback from employees and have provided reports on question responses and comments provided by staff.
4. The survey report from Envisia provides feedback over a range of criteria. Responses received provide an overall impression that, generally speaking, South Cambridgeshire District Council is regarded by staff as a good place to work. There is quite a high proportion of responses to questions scoring at 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree'. For the most part the 'strongly disagree' option is not used much at all.
5. There are areas which require attention and improvement and Members of the Committee and Executive Management Team are recommended to identify key priorities which need to be addressed to improve staff satisfaction levels across all areas of the Council.
6. This is not a key decision.

## Recommendations

7. It is recommended that:
  - a) The Committee notes the Staff Survey report and the conclusions drawn from the results
  - b) Agrees to formulate a costed action plan to address priority areas
  - c) To repeat the survey in 2020 to measure progress.

## Reasons for Recommendations

8. The area where there are identified lower levels of staff satisfaction are a cause for concern and risk for the Council. Staff satisfaction and engagement is key to attracting and retaining our valued staff.

## Details

9. A full staff survey was conducted by Ipsos Mori in November 2009, staff were asked to complete a 12-page questionnaire and to score the Council and make comments on a wide range of topics including management, training communications and benefit and reward.
10. Headline results from the 2009 Survey were:
  - Majority of employees satisfied with their job (67%).
  - One of the best authorities to work for (33%).
  - Speak highly of SCDC as an employer (40%).
  - Speak highly of SCDC as a service provider (44%).
  - Good at communicating with employees (45%).
  - Equal opportunities employer (73%).
  - Employees treated with fairness and respect (70%).Areas that required attention:
  - Employees not consulted on decisions that affect them and their work (41%)
  - Want to be more involved in the change that takes place at work (40%)
  - Career development (37%)
  - PDRs are not useful in terms of career development (51%)
  - Unaware of learning and development opportunities in SCDC (22%)
  - Dissatisfied with Job security (32%)

An action plan was developed and delivered which resulted in the Council achieving Gold standard Investor in People status.

11. Since then the Council has adopted a different approach by using shorter, themed surveys every two months during the course of the year. Themes have included:
  - Learning and Development
  - Communications
  - Management and Leadership
  - Benefits
12. Results have shown varying levels of satisfaction but generally this is around 62 - 68%.

13. Survey results and comments made by our employees provide important feedback on the Council as an employer. The feedback received from staff is used to develop action plans and inform policies. Previous staff comments and suggestions have resulted in a number of changes such as a review of flexitime, introduction of wellbeing initiatives, review of the appraisal scheme, review of recruitment, reintroduction of payment of professional fees, changes to vending and drinks choices.
14. The Employment and Staffing Committee requested that an employee survey, to be conducted by an independent company, should be undertaken in 2019. The Head of People and Organisational Development, following a procurement exercise, commissioned Envisia Learning to assist with this. The committee agreed the questions and format of the questionnaire and following a series of communications to staff, the survey was launched in July 2019 and was open for three weeks.
15. Envisia Learning were provided with email addresses for all office based employees. Emails were sent which included secure links to the survey and instructions for completion. During the survey period reminder emails were sent to staff which were aimed at ensuring a good completion rate. Paper versions of the questionnaire were provided to Waste Service staff.
16. Envisia Learning collated the questionnaires and feedback and provided the Council with a report which contained data on the responses. 46% of Council staff completed and submitted responses to the questionnaire. A copy of the Survey Report is at Appendix 1.

## Key Headlines and Observations

17. The following are identified as the key headlines and observations from the 2019 survey results:

- Total number of responses = 261 (46%) of the establishment. Waste Service accounted for 18 (6.9%). Rest of organisation = 243 (93.1%)
- 58% responses were from females, 32% males, 10% staff preferred not to say
- 87% of respondents are in their substantive post, 13% either in seconded posts or acting up
- 47% of staff have been at SCDC over 5 years
- Of the total responses 5.4% were from staff stating they have a disability, 8% of staff preferred not to say
- Planning Service has scored consistently low in all areas – not unexpected due to the uncertainty and change programme
- Chief Execs, Corporate, Housing and Health & Env have all scored well in most survey areas

In terms of scores against competency questions\*:

- Purpose and belonging (understanding of the organisations vision, role, being kept informed, doing meaningful work) – 76.1% tend to agree or strongly agree. Highest score was in Chief Execs at 90.8%, lowest was in Planning at 75%
- Culture (mutual respect, welcome new ideas, learning by mistakes, feel supported) – 71.8% tend to agree or strongly agree

- Reward and recognition (appreciated, given credit) – 63.3% tend to agree or strongly agree
- Retention (intention to stay at SCDC) – highest in Housing at 85.2%, lowest in Planning at 63.2%
- Performance Appraisal - Chief Execs, Corporate, Housing and Health & Env all scored above 75%. Waste service was 66% and Planning lowest with 52%
- I am recognised for good work and appreciated by my manager - Chief Execs, Corporate, Housing and Health & Env all scored between 86% and 76%, Planning and Waste scored below 60%
- Benefits (what do you value) - Flexitime, Flexible working, car parking, pension are the most highly valued benefits
- Most staff felt that diversity was welcomed and valued in the organisation and people were given equality of opportunity
- Tools, working environment and resources – highest satisfaction score was recorded in the Waste service at 80% , remainder of organisation much lower at between 54% – 67% (issues with IT)
- Stress and balancing work life balance is seen as an area of concern
- A feeling of purpose and belonging is a strength
- Most staff reported having a good relationship with their manager
- Managers tackling poor performance, lack of opportunities for career progression and development are seen as areas for improvement particularly in Planning although the remainder of the response from the organisation felt that they were offered training and development to do their job well

18. Envisia Learning had identified and highlighted the Top 5 Behaviours and Bottom 5 Behaviours from the overall results, these can be found on pages 25 and 26 of the report.

19. Having considered the survey report from Envisia, the overall impression is that, generally speaking, South Cambridgeshire District Council is regarded by staff as a good place to work. There is quite a high proportion of responses to questions scoring at 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree'. For the most part the 'strongly disagree' option is not used much at all.

20. Service areas responses across all aspects of the survey were positive, the stand-out exception to this is the Greater Cambridge Planning Service. This is not unexpected as the service is going through a significant change and restructuring programme and at the time of the survey staff had recently been consulted on changes to structures resulting in a number of employees being at risk of redundancy. This combined with high workloads, a challenging housing and business growth agenda and high vacancy rates has meant that staff responses are scored lower than the rest of the organisation. The new structure has been approved and staff have received confirmation of their new roles in the structure. Recruitment processes to vacant and new posts is underway.

21. One area which would benefit from further analysis and probing is staff views on personal and professional development. This area did not always score very highly across each service. Further work can be undertaken to establish the reasons for this.

22. Management and Leadership has also been highlighted as a development area for the Council particularly the completion of appraisals, performance management and managers approach to tackling inappropriate attitudes and behaviours.

## Options

23. Members could choose to note the results and feedback from the recent Staff survey but take no further action. This is not recommended.
24. Members could note the report findings and agree to undertaken further work to establish priority areas and actions to be taken.

## Implications

Another aspect which I thought might be worth looking at across the board is professional development. I think that perhaps did not always score very highly. Is this because there are not enough opportunities, or people don't necessarily catch on to them, or that opportunities offered are not attractive. I would be interested in your views.

25. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

### Financial

26. There is a small cost associated with commissioning the survey however, this can be found from within existing budgets.
27. Depending on the recommendations from the Committee and any actions to be taken forward there may be the need for additional expenditure to address the priority areas highlighted for improvement by staff and managers.

### Legal

28. None at this stage

### Staffing

29. Our people – every one of our staff- are important to us. They are vital to the Council being able to deliver excellent services to our Communities. It is recognised that the Greater Cambridge area is growing rapidly and new and existing employers are competing for talent. The Council wants to be an employer of choice which can provide its employees with the environment to learn, develop and feel valued.

## **Risks/Opportunities**

30. Any area where there are identified lower levels of staff satisfaction are a cause for concern and risk for the Council. Staff satisfaction and engagement is key to attracting and retaining our valued staff. This is documented on the Council's Risk Register.

## **Equality and Diversity**

31. See body of report in terms of demographic information collected from respondees.

32. See report feedback from staff on areas such as Valuing Diversity and Equality of Opportunity.

## **Climate Change**

33. None identified.

## **Consultation responses**

34. Trade Unions, staff and managers will be consulted on the next stage including action plans.

## **Effect on Council Priority Areas**

### **Growing local businesses and economies**

### **Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in**

### **Being green to our core**

### **A modern and caring Council**

35. High levels of staff satisfaction and engagement are the key to recruiting and retaining the skilled workforce that the Council needs to deliver excellent services to our communities and achievement of its priority objectives.

## **Background Papers**

- a) CIPD research on staff engagement and job satisfaction
- b) Engagement Survey report compiled by Envisia Learning

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Engagement Survey Report

### **Report Author:**

Susan Gardner-Craig, Interim Corporate Director  
Telephone: (01954) 713285