



EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2019

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Summary

The report feeds back the findings of the Employee Engagement Survey 2019 and proposed actions

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 Consideration of the Employee Engagement Survey 2019 is a matter for this Committee.

2. Background

2.1 The annual employee engagement survey is one of the main industry accepted ways of measuring employee engagement.

2.2 It's widely recognised that involving employees in the decisions that affect their work has a number of key organisational benefits. These include lower sickness and turnover rates, improved customer and performance ratings, and enabling swifter organisational change through increasing staff buy-in and reducing resistance.

2.3 The survey not only sends a message to the workforce that the organisation wants to hear what they have to say about workplace matters that affect them, but also gives the organisation an annual benchmark on how it is doing in specific areas that impact on organisational performance such as leadership, motivation, career progression, health and wellbeing etc.

2.4 The survey is a key part of the *Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020*. This sets out five key goals (see below) designed to support and enhance effective communications and engagement within the workforce and supports transformation by creating a culture enabling innovation to thrive. Progress in achieving these goals are measured within the survey.

Goal one: Leadership - leadership that leads by example – with a strong strategic narrative ‘what we say is what we do’.

Goal two: Management - managers with developed communication skills who motivate, empower and support employees.

Goal three: Communication - a mix of effective communication channels that keep employees informed of plans and progress and re-enforces our purpose and vision.

Goal four: Engagement - increased employee engagement – creating a mix of two-way communication channels for involving employees in decision-making and matters that affect them.

Goal five: Workplace Community - developing a collaborative workforce culture where employees help each other, have a strong personal attachment to the organisation, care about its future and are proud to work here.

2.5 About the survey

- 2.6 The survey was designed and implemented in-house by the Internal Communications and Engagement Team.
- 2.7 The survey was completely anonymous and complied with GDPR rules.
- 2.8 Employees were encouraged to complete the survey electronically with additional options for online completion via laptop and mobile device. A limited supply of paper copies were provided to external sites where colleagues do not have regular access to a computer or electronic device.
- 2.9 The survey results were produced electronically using Power Bi, a business analytics tool, saving the organisation significant resource time. Using Power Bi the senior leadership team are able to access and filter their directorate and divisional results and make comparisons with the rest of the organisation.

3. Options

- 3.1 There are arguments for and against an annual staff survey, especially for organisations that are going through continual change. Current industry thinking suggests undertaking shorter, more frequent surveys to gauge the effectiveness of changes is more effective. A number of options were considered by Corporate Management Team prior to going ahead and it was agreed that a shorter annual survey, focussing on the key goals of the *Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy 2018-20* (and other topical areas) would be issued on an annual basis to be supplemented by ad-hoc mini pulse surveys during the year if needed.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1 Findings and observations:

A summary of the key results are attached as appendix one. Paragraph 4.2 highlights a number of observations from the results and paragraph 4.3 indicates next steps in terms of actions from the survey.

4.2 Observations

- (i) **Response rates:** the survey opened for four weeks in June and received a 48% response rate – achieving a 9% increase from the previous survey in 2017. Compared to the industry average for voluntary workplace surveys of 26% this is promising and reflects considerable efforts by management and internal communications to encourage colleagues to complete.
- (ii) **Motivation:** New questions relating to motivation revealed that 80% were enthusiastic when working, 70% saying time passes quickly at work and 58% say they look forward to coming to work.
- (iii) **Working in a team:** Historically team related findings scored highly and in 2019 this trend continues with 87% believing they have a good supportive team and 82% say their teams work together to find ways to improve the service.
- (iv) **Line managers:** Similar to teams, line managers have historically scored highly in terms of how their staff feel about them with 86% saying their manager is approachable and 75% say their manager recognises them for a job well done.
- (v) **Senior Leadership:** perhaps the most significant improvement related to senior leadership visibility seeing a 27% increase in those who believe senior leadership gave them enough opportunities to express their views to them. It is likely that the increase is a result of interventions introduced as part of the *Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy 2018-20* including *The Hot Seat*, regular CEO/Leader briefing sessions and local engagement activity within services such as open door sessions, regular briefings, focus groups and ‘walking the shop floor’.
- (vi) **Strategic priorities:** 66% agreed they clearly understand the strategic priorities and 66% understood how their role contributes to them. Both questions saw an increase from 2017.
- (vii) **Smart Medway:** Whilst 84% understood the need for the Council to provide more of its services digitally, just 54% believed they had the right skills to support digital transformation.
- (viii) **Managing change within services:** Staff were asked a series of questions relating to how their service manages change and engages with them during change. Results were predominantly below 50%.
- (ix) **Working at the Council:** In 2019, 54% felt proud to work here, that is a 12% increase since 2017, and 55% said they would recommend the Council as a place to work, increasing again by 12%. 79% said they cared about the future of the Council.
- (x) **Pay and reward:** Whilst 10% more staff were satisfied with the total reward package than in 2017, the figure remains low at 39%. Staff were asked to put in their own words suggestions for non-pay alternatives for recognition. A number of these can be found in appendix one. There were, however, some significant themes coming from the free text responses, these related to MEDPAY and the PDR process saying the process should be reviewed.

- (xi) **Communications and engagement:** 47% of staff are feeling well informed about corporate plans and progress compared to 34% in 2017. Staff are showing a clear preference for face-to-face engagement methods with senior manager briefings and focus groups being part of the top three preferred methods. In 2019 the organisational engagement level was 59%, increasing by 6% from 2017.
- (xii) **Mental health:** 85% said their mental health was either moderate, good or very good. However, less than half believed the Council supports those with mental health issues well.
- (xiii) **Work-life balance:** 70% said they achieved a good work-life balance.
- (xiv) **Inclusion:** 81% felt comfortable to come to work without fear of discrimination.
- (xv) **In their own words:** In total there were 1616 free text responses, indicating a positive level of engagement. The top three areas mentioned by staff related to pay and recognition, the recruitment process (linked to lack of resources, high turnover, slow approval process and the impact this has on morale) and facilities issues at Gun Wharf.

4.3 Actions

A number of corporate actions have been agreed:

- The survey results will be shared with staff in January by Carrie McKenzie, Assistant Director, Transformation who will be holding a series of presentations at Gun Wharf and Broadside.
- A number of focus groups will be held to explore some of the key results in greater starting with:
 - Supporting managers (recruitment processes)
 - Supporting staff (feeling valued – and what matters to them)
 - Asking staff why they did not complete the survey
- The implementation of an induction process and online resource for managers
- A corporate induction day for all new staff
- Review the feasibility of implementing an annual leave purchase scheme
- Review of Medway and the performance management process
- Replace the Hot Seat videos with the *Hot Seat Live* – an opportunity for staff to hear from senior leadership team at regular briefings during the year to ask questions and make suggestions.

- 4.4 Sandra Steel, Internal Communications and Engagement Manager has met with a number of the senior management team to review their own results and discuss ways of improving engagement within their own service areas.

5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
(i) Delays, obstruction and barriers to the change process. (ii) Increased sickness absence, turnover/attrition levels and low productivity and performance.	Failing to keep people informed and engage with the workforce at both a corporate and service level may result in the risks outlined in (i) and (ii).	<i>The Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy 2018-20</i> action plan sets out a number of key actions to mitigate these risks.	D3

6. Consultation

6.1 No specific consultation was undertaken when producing the survey, however requests were made from other service area to include questions relating to carers in the workplace, service in the armed forces and mental health and wellbeing. These requests were accommodated.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial implications.

8. Legal implications

8.1 Legal implications relate to the GDPR. Recommendations from the RCET Performance and Intelligence Team and the Information Governance Team in the development of the survey were taken on board to ensure anonymity.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Members are asked to note the report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – survey findings.

Background papers

The Medway Council Employee Engagement Survey 2019 and results
The Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020

Survey Findings

Key information about the survey:

- It was open between 3 June and 5 July 2019
- 48% response rate (39% 2017).
- Margin of error +/- 2.3% at a 95% confidence level
- Total number of free text responses 1616
- Organisational engagement level 59% (53% 2017)
- 67% responded from Gun Wharf: 33% satellite site

How people feel about their role

- 80% were enthusiastic when working
- 70% said time passes quickly when they're working
- 58% look forward to coming to work
- 73% felt empowered in their role
- 71% felt their work gave them a sense of personal accomplishment
- 38% believed there were opportunities to develop their career at the council
- 53% had the tools to do their job effectively (12% less than 2017)
- 75% had clear work objectives

Team work

- 87% said they worked in a good supportive team
- 82% said the people in their team work together to find ways to improve the service
- 75% said the people in their team are encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things

How people feel about their line managers

- 86% said their line manager was approachable
- 72% said their line manager does what they say they will do
- 75% said their line manager recognises them for a job well done
- 71% said their line manager takes their ideas and suggestions seriously
- 71% said their line manager keeps them information about changes in the service
- 68% received regular feedback on their performance (increased 5% from 2017)
- 66% said their line manager supports them to try our new ideas even if they may not work (dropped 6% since 2017)

PDR's and 1-2-1's

- 84% have had a PDR in the past year
- 67% have had a 1-2-1 or supervision session in the last month

Senior leadership visibility and accessibility

- 54% said senior leadership gave them enough opportunities to express their views to them, compared to 27% in 2017
- 48% said senior leaders had a clear vision for the future of the council (16% increase since 2017)

- 43% say senior leaders are sufficiently visible (13% increase since 2017)

Strategic Priorities

- 66% have a clear understanding of the strategic priorities (60% 2017)
- 66% understand how their role contributes to the strategic priorities (65% 2017)
- Colleagues were asked for their ideas on potential new strategic priorities, the top three suggestions were:
 - (i) Being a top employer/the 'employee experience/great place to work'
 - (ii) Greater emphasis on supporting Medway's people i.e. reducing health inequalities, improve life-long learning, helping residents get back into work etc
 - (iii) Improving implementation of existing priorities – backing up priorities with strong policy decisions – priorities are correct but funding disproportionate.

Smart Medway transformation

- 84% understood the need for the council to provide more of its services digitally
- 54% said they had the right skills to support digital transformation

Colleagues were asked for their Smart Medway ideas, these included:

- Make town centres traffic free
- Wifi and systems in satellite sites in line with modern expectations
- Contactless card payment functionality in council car parks
- Online payments for environmental health services
- Self-serve libraries as default model

There was also a consistent theme coming through as follows:

- (i) Improve change management
- (ii) Improve ICT
- (iii) Understand that not all service users are computer literate or have technology at home

Managing change

- 46% believed change was managed well within their service
- 45% said their service was good at asking for their views during change
- 42% said they had the opportunity to contribute their views before decisions are made that affect them personally
- 51% said their service tells them the reason for service-wide change

Working at Medway Council

- There has been a 12% increase in those who feel proud to work here (54%) and would recommend the council as a place to work (55%)
- 79% care about the future of the council
- 53% felt part of the council family and had good opportunities to connect with colleagues

Pay and reward

- 10% more were satisfied with the total reward package, an increase from 29% (2017).

When colleagues were asked how they would like to be rewarded/recognised apart from pay, suggestions included:

- more annual leave
- more development/training/opportunities for career progression
- more flexible working
- a simple thank you from senior managers
- health benefits
- time off for volunteering
- more employee benefits
- annual parking permits – free parking in Medway
- senior managers to visit satellite sites to see what they do

Communicating and keeping in touch

- 13% more felt well informed about council plans and progress (now 47%)
- The top three preferred ways of two-way communication were:
 - (i) senior manager briefings (54%)
 - (ii) MEDSPACE news comments (43%), and
 - (iii) at an engagement event e.g. focus group (39%)
- The top three internal news channels:
 - (i) *Our Medway* newsletter – now replaced by MEDSPACE weekly newsround
 - (ii) MEDSPACE news
 - (iii) *CMT Headlines*

Supporting wellbeing

- 90% of managers believe their mental health to be either moderate, good or very good (compared to 85% employees)
- 82% say their line manager is considerate of their life outside work
- 47% believe the council supports employees who experience mental health problems either fairly well or very well.

Inclusion and diversity

- 81% felt comfortable to be themselves at work without fear of discrimination.

Free text responses to ‘Tell us what you think’ – top three subjects:

- 19% related to pay and recognition
- 12% related to the recruitment process, lack of resources, high turnover and the impact this has on morale
- 9% related to facilities issues at Gun Wharf

Examples of positive free-text responses

- *I have never been happier in a job; I wish I found it sooner. I work with a great bunch of people who are always open to helping and supporting each other. I think this is only possible by working for a council who prioritises employees.*
- *I am impressed every day by the level of care and attention to detail from all my colleagues in C&A when dealing with the public and other professionals. Medway Council is a great place to work.*
- *The council is very supportive of flexible working practices, this is a big plus.*
- *Medway is overall a good place to work, it has a clear vision of where it wants to be in the future, and I know that the team I work with have that same view and want to be an integral part of its success.*
- *It has been great seeing how the council has transformed over the past two years and I look forward to seeing what happens over the next few years.*
- *I thoroughly enjoy working for Medway Council.*