



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 21 September 2023

Findings of the 2023 Employee Survey

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Nathan England - Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services & Governance
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
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Wards Affected:	Not applicable
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	SMT – 23 September 2023 Business Briefing – 7 September 2023 Cabinet – 21 September 2023

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet :-

- 1.1 Notes the results from the 2023 Employee Survey;
- 1.2 Endorses the progress made on addressing issues raised in the survey.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To provide an overview of the results of the 2023 Employee Survey and set out progress in response to issues identified from the survey.

3.0 Background

3.1 In 2020, the Council undertook an Employee Survey to understand views and experiences of working for the Council. Despite the challenges of working in the pandemic, the results of this survey were overall very positive and demonstrated that the Council benefited from a dedicated and committed workforce who understood how their work contributes to the delivery of the organisation's priorities.

3.2 Informed by the results of the survey, the Council developed and adopted a new Workforce Strategy to support the continued development of the workforce. Central to this strategy was the need to address specific challenges relating to an aging workforce, recruitment and retention, and financial reward when compared to private sector employers. The overarching objective of the strategy is for the Council to be recognised as an "employer of choice" through the development of employment policies and practices across four themes:

- Our workforce will have the skills and abilities to deliver our priorities and will have the opportunity to further develop.
- Our managers will be leaders and will empower staff to deliver our priorities.
- Our organisation will be more diverse and inclusive offering a voice and fair treatment for all.
- Our workplace will be healthy and we will support our employees' wellbeing.

3.3 To deliver these priorities a programme of work was implemented, examples of which included the:

- launch a new Employee Awards scheme to celebrate the hard work and commitment of our workforce;
- roll-out of a new management and leadership programme; and,
- implementation of a new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion policy that is focussed on ensuring we become a more diverse and inclusive employer.

3.4 To understand the impact of this work and to understand whether there had been any changes as to how employees view and experience working for the Council, with particular reference to the introduction of hybrid working, an Employee Survey was undertaken early this year.

3.5 The survey targeted all employees on a permanent or temporary contract and was administered through an online questionnaire, with a paper option for those that could not access the questionnaire online.

4.0 Headline Results

4.1 At close of the survey period, the response rate to the 2023 survey was 61% with a total of 1,748 surveys being completed. This represented an increase from the 2020 survey response rate of 56%. The 2023 response rate once again demonstrates our workforce is committed to the organisation and understands that their views and feedback are valued in making the Council an "employer of choice". However, recognising that not all employees responded to the survey, the

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organisation is committed to ensuring that effective engagement mechanisms exist for all employees wherever they work and through a mechanism that meets their needs, for example earlier this year a new Armed Forces Community Staff Network was established.

- 4.2 Overall, results from the 2023 survey remained very positive and results held up from the previous survey. The headline results from the key sections of the survey are set out below. For each of these questions, respondents could choose to “agree”, “neither agree or disagree” or “disagree”. The results presented here are the percentage of respondents that chose “agree”. For the other responses to each of these questions, these were a mix of “disagree” and “neither agree nor disagree”. However, the percentage of of respondents that answered “neither agree nor disagree” was greater than the percentage that answered “disagree”.
- 4.3 ‘My work’:
- 91% understand how their work contributes to the Council’s priorities
 - 90% feel sufficiently challenged by their work
 - 94% are interested in their work
- 4.4 ‘My team and line manager’:
- 90% feel informed about what is happening in the Council
 - 90% can rely on colleagues to pull together
 - 88% feel their team work together to find ways to improve the service
- 4.5 ‘Inclusion and fair treatment’:
- 93% feel respected by the people they work with
 - 90% feel that the Council is committed to equality, diversity & inclusion
 - 90% feel that the Council respects employees regardless of their ethnicity, sexuality, religion or disabilities.
- 4.6 ‘Wellbeing’:
- 87% have some say over the way they work
 - 86% feel confident raising issues of bullying or harassment with their manager
 - 82% feel trusted to deliver and work when they want to
 - 80% feel that their manager deals with wellbeing issues appropriately
- 4.7 ‘Hybrid working’:
- 88% are positive about hybrid working
 - 96% feel trusted by their line manager to get on with their job
 - 88% have the equipment they need to work at home/office
- 4.9 A robust analytical tool when summarising survey results are net agreement scores. The score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of disagree/strongly disagree responses from the percentage of agree/strongly agree. The maximum net score is 100 and the minimum -100). Net agreement scores have been used to compare the results of the 2020 Employee Survey with the 2023 survey and the greatest improvements were for the following questions:
- I am given opportunities to learn and develop (+7 points)

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- I feel valued for my work (+6 points)
- I am trusted to deliver and work when I want to (+6 points)
- My manager helps me to manage my workload (+6 points)

- 4.10 Continuous improvement is a core ethos of this organisation and to support our drive to be an “employer of choice”, respondents were asked, ‘if you had a magic wand, what one thing would you do to change the organisation’. Comments were received from 785 (44.9%) respondents. Key themes from this question were:
- For all work to be recognised and valued
 - More collaborative working across services and the wider organisation
 - More opportunities to progress
 - Consistency in management practice

5.0 Responding to the employee survey

- 5.1 Directors have been provided with detailed survey results for their services which highlight where results are significantly better or worse than the Council average and are identifying service specific actions to address concerns. Organisational Development will support Directors to include these actions in refreshed service-level workforce plans. In addition to this, a corporate response to the survey has commenced and has included the actions set out below.

- 5.2 In response to feeling recognised and valued, the Council has:
- Become a “Real Living Wage” employer.
 - Increased the rate of pay for all Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices.
 - Developed and delivered cost of living sessions that were available to all employees to attend, showcasing the huge amount of support, both locally and internally, available to them.
 - Held our popular annual awards recognising the work of our employees. Over 300 submissions have been received for the awards this year alone.
 - Continued to offer and promote training to support the wellbeing and resilience of employees.
 - Continued to advertise and offer our employee Counselling service and Employee Assistance Programme – a platform of useful advice and guidance to support individuals’ wellbeing.
 - Updated the new starter induction to provide face to face sessions which include meeting the Leader and Chief Executive attend.

- 5.3 In response to more collaborative working across services and the wider organisation, more opportunities to progress and consistency in management practice, the Council has:
- Developed and launched a new leadership and management programme for approx. 250 managers and team leaders with line management responsibilities with the objective of ensuring that all employees have the same experience of working for the Council whichever service they work in.
 - Continued to deliver leadership and management programmes for senior managers.
 - Provided quarterly “Annual Personal Performance Discussion” (APPD) training sessions for both managers and employees.

- Introduced a new Learning and Development newsletter advertising upcoming training courses available to employees.

5.4 Further consultation on how the organisation should respond to the Employee Survey findings has been undertaken with managers through the Leadership Forum and with the Employee Panel. The Panel is made up of officers from across the organisation and provides a forum for employees to feedback on issue of concern and policy development. Feedback is being used to inform the development of the refreshed Workforce Strategy. In terms of next steps, the revised Workforce Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in November for review and approval.

6.0 Alternative Options

6.1 Whilst the organisation could choose not to undertake activity in response to the employee survey, this would not support the recruitment and retention of staff.

7.0 Key Risks

7.1 It is essential that the Council continues to develop its employment policies and practices and the support provided to employees in response to the Employee Survey findings to ensure that the organisation is viewed as an employer of choice. Recruitment of staff within the local government environment is challenging, particularly in some professional roles. Without taking steps to develop the Council's employee offer, there is a direct risk that the Council will not be able to recruit and retain staff to drive delivery of the Council's priorities.

8.0 Council Priorities

8.1 The development of the Council's workforce is essential to the delivery of each of the organisation's priorities. Responding to the findings of the Employee Survey and refreshing the Council's workforce strategy is essential to this objective.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 The costs of administering the employee survey were mainly from officer time which was met from existing budgets. The costs of the actions outlined in section 5 of this report in responding to the survey will be met from existing budgets and resources.

10.0 Legal and HR Implications

10.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report. Whenever the Council introduces or updates its policies and procedures, it needs to ensure that it does so in a way which treats all staff equally and does not, inadvertently, discriminate against those staff with protected characteristics. Legal advice is provided in respect of such policies and procedures to ensure that they are implemented fairly and equally across the organisation.

10.2 This report goes to the heart of the relationship between the Council and its workforce. Over the last few years, and particularly since the pandemic, the organisation has faced challenges in recruitment, particularly in certain sectors. This has been due, in part, to the increase in the availability of home-working posts which has opened up the job market nationally in a way that has not been seen previously. The Council has responded to these pressures by reviewing and updating its offer to employee so that it can be seen as an employer of choice.

11.0 Ward Implications

11.1 There are no direct ward implications arising from this report

12.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

12.1 There are no direct health, social and economic implications arising from this report

13.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

13.1 The Employee Survey findings will inform the development of the organisation's workforce strategy which sets the framework for all employee policies and practices and shapes the organisation's ambition to be an "employer of choice" to both existing and future employees. This is a key driver of our ability to meet the organisation's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objective of "working proactively to ensure that our workforce reflects the communities we serve, and that all employees are supported to achieve their full potential". The areas of focus of the plan are:

- Becoming a more diverse and inclusive employer
- Ensuring all our employees have opportunities to be heard and inform what we do as an organisation
- Ensuring our learning and development offer supports our workforce to have the awareness, knowledge and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion.

14.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

14.1 There are no direct climate change and environmental implications from this report

15.0 Background Papers

15.1 None

16.0 Appendices

None

17.0 Report Sign Off

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Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	16/08/2023	16/08/2023	MLB
Legal	16/08/2023	17/08/2023	ACL