

**The Highland Council**  
**Resources Committee - 28 May 2014**

Agenda Item	<b>13</b>
Report No	<b>RES/11/14</b>

**Finance Service: Update on Employee Survey Actions**

**Report by Director of Finance**

**Summary**

This report provides Members with an update of the key improvement actions identified for the Finance Service in response to the views expressed by staff in the sixth Highland Council Employee Survey

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The 6<sup>th</sup> Employee Survey was conducted during the week 3<sup>rd</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and the findings reported to the Finance, Housing and Resources Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013. It was agreed at that time that a progress update against the improvement action plan would be reported to this Committee in April/May 2014.

**2. Improvement Actions and Monitoring**

- 2.1 The Business Support restructuring process was completed in September 2012. This survey was the first in which the Council was able to separately identify results for Business Support. To enable comparisons with prior years, the results reported in April 2013 showed Finance and Business Support separately; hence updates against each of the action plans are reported separately.
- 2.2 The agreed improvement actions, with updates, for the Finance Service and Business Support are shown in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.
- 2.3 The action plans are both summarised under three headings:
- Information & Communication
  - Knowledge & Training
  - Resource Management
- 2.4 Updates on any ongoing commitments are summarised in sections 3, 4 and 5 below.

**3. Information & Communication**

- 3.1 Heads of Service attend, or are scheduled to attend team meetings within their sections; in addition the Director of Finance has undertaken (and completed in

13/14) a commitment to visit all locations to meet staff informally at least once a year.

- 3.2 Change management issues are discussed at team meetings, and all staff are encouraged to use video/tele conferencing and office communicator as an alternative to travel where possible.
- 3.3 Business Support continues to work with Fujitsu Services, ICT Services and the Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP) to improve the quality of information contained within the Council's global address list, on the intranet and internet.
- 3.4 During 13/14, access to a number of Business Support functions were improved through greater use of IT such as SharePoint and further improving lines of communication by utilising single points of contact for the Travel Desk; Small Schools Purchasing and Payment (schools with a roll of under 70); HR recruitment and the Electronic Processing Centre (EPC). The EPC now handles all scanning and indexing documentation for Planning, Council Tax, Benefits, Complaints and paper (job) applications.
- 3.5 As part of the Head of Business Support's presentations on the Business Support review to Members at Ward Business Meetings, a single Business Support contact list was provided, at ward level, and can be found at:  
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/BBDCCE5F-653A-4F32-AFCB-6ED769880561/0/BusinessSupportContacts080114Update.pdf>
- 3.6 Working closely with Services, a targeted suite of performance indicators continues to be established with a number now being reported to the Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive at the Service's Quarterly Performance Review. In addition to the Invoice Payments (within 10 days and 30 days), other Business Support Performance Indicators will be included in the Finance Service's Quarterly Performance reports to Resources Committee during 2014/15, and beyond.
- 3.7 Customer Satisfaction surveys have been undertaken in respect of the changes / new ways of working arising from the implementation of the National Recruitment Portal (customers being able to submit job applications on-line) and the Small Schools Purchasing and Payment review. For NRP, the satisfaction rate was 84%; for Small Schools Purchasing and Payment, 96%. Further customer surveys will take place as appropriate.
- 3.8 Regular team meetings occur across the Service at both strategic and operational levels; ensuring consistent two way communication.

#### **4. Knowledge & Training**

- 4.1 The ResourceLink Project (HR and Payroll), led by the CIP includes the review of the user request process. Utilising both ResourceLink and SharePoint IT systems, staff from Services including Business Support have redesigned processes which will enable more effective user request processes to be

implemented when the new IT is rolled out.

## **5. Resource Management**

- 5.1 Over 96% of the staff in the Service had an ERD (formerly PDPs) in 2013/14. In addition to supporting staff through delivery of ERDs and internal training; we also have a number of individuals studying towards professional qualifications including undergraduate and postgraduate certificates. Specialist courses have taken place focusing on both personal and professional development such as "Discovery Insights". Work shadowing and mentoring is also encouraged and secondments supported wherever this is possible.
- 5.2 The Finance service has recently completed a survey of their staff on matters in relation to Mobile and Flexible working; this included gathering views on homeworking, flexible-working, compressed hours and hot-desking. A response rate of nearly 50% was achieved and a cross-service working group is being established to progress opportunities for both our staff and the Council.

## **6 Implications**

- 6.1 There are no implications arising from this report or attached action plans.

### **Recommendation**

The Resources Committee is asked to :

- (a) Note progress made against the agreed actions

Designation: Director of Finance

Date: 16 May 2014

Author: Caroline Urquhart, Development Officer (01463) 702034

APPENDIX 1

<b>Finance Service Improvement Action Plan</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Improvement Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Information & Communication	<i>Staff wishing to attend Change Management training course supported to attend.</i>	<i>Complete</i>
	Finance Management Team to attend team meetings at least annually. Frequency of some section management meetings to be more regular.	Ongoing
	Improve Change Management communication to all relevant staff using variety of communication including, but not limited to, face-to-face, e-mail, Office Communicator and video-conferencing	Ongoing
<i>Knowledge &amp; Training</i>	<i>Processes and procedures effectively documented for the new ways of working arising from Welfare Reform.</i>	<i>Complete</i>
	<i>Deliver effective training to all relevant staff</i>	<i>Complete</i>
Resources Management	<i>Staff to receive annual PDP</i>	<i>Complete</i>
	Support staff on learning, CPD and career development opportunities and taking advantage of benefits offered from techniques such as work shadowing and mentoring.	Ongoing
	<i>Staff wishing to attend Stress Management/Stress Awareness training are supported to attend.</i>	<i>Complete</i>
	<i>Support Flexible working requests where possible.</i>	<i>Complete</i>

APPENDIX 2

Business Support Improvement Action Plan		
Theme	Improvement Action	Progress
Information & Communication	Improve accessibility and availability of information about staff and systems.	Ongoing
	Continue to work with Council Services to reaffirm roles, and clarify and define performance information and mutual expectations.	Ongoing
	<i>Continue to improve communication including frequency, consistency and variety of content within Business Support communication.</i>	<i>Complete</i>
Knowledge & Training	Work with Services to develop comprehensive training and support materials including on IT systems which Services own.	Ongoing
	Work with system and process owners to standardise and simplify new user request process.	Ongoing
Resources Management	<i>Staff to receive annual PDP.</i>	<i>Complete</i>
	Support staff on learning, CPD and career development opportunities and taking advantage of benefits offered from techniques such as work shadowing and mentoring.	Ongoing
	<i>Staff wishing to attend Stress Management/Stress Awareness training are supported to attend.</i>	<i>Complete</i>
	<i>Work with staff and Services to identify and remove any remaining barriers to cross-boundary and shared working.</i>	<i>Complete</i>