

The Highland Council
Community Services Committee
20 August 2015

Agenda Item	10
Report No	COM 38/15

Communications Survey Outcomes

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

As part of a proactive change management process for the integration of TECs and Housing and Property Service (in 2014), Community Services Senior Management Team developed a Staff Communication and Consultation Plan. As part of that plan the Service undertook a survey to help improve two-way communications throughout the Service. This report provides an analysis of the results of the survey which will be used as part of continued Service development along with the Services Workforce Action Plan and the action plan developed to address results of the corporate Employee Survey. This will help ensure that Community Services has a workforce that feel able to engage with management for the betterment of the new service.

1. Background

- 1.1 With the integration of the former two Services, there was an identified need to ensure that communications for all staff within the new Community Services was given a high priority.
- 1.2 As part of the Consultation and Communication Plan the Director has carried out two area visits and a regular newsletter was instigated with issue number 4 going out in August.
- 1.3 The service has 1309 staff. The questionnaire had 10 questions. 729 hard copies of the questionnaire were issued to staff with brown envelopes to aid anonymity for those who do not have access to computers for completion. A total of 294 were returned (both pc and paper) which is a 24% return.

2. Objective

- 2.1 The objective of the survey was to ask staff directly and anonymously how management could affect an improved two way communication process that would help management communicate the continued development of the Service as well as provide staff with the opportunity of feeding back, and have a direct input on how the Service could improve in the future.
- 2.2 To ensure confidence in the process of anonymity HR and management worked with Trade Union representatives to provide options for the completion and feeding back of survey. It was also agreed and communicated directly to staff that the analysis would be done by independent HR staff and reported

back to management and staff.

3. Survey

3.1 There were 10 questions ranging from how well staff felt informed on changes to direct questions relating to what they would like to hear more off. Ideas on how the service could improve and how staff would like to be able to provide ideas to meet that objective. Information was also sought in relation to geographical location and sections that the respondents worked in to provide management with a better insight into areas of good practice and areas requiring developed improvement.

4. Outcome

4.1 The analysis of responses can be grouped into 'Ideas on how to improve the service'; 'Ideas on how to improve communication'; and 'What employees would like to hear more about'.

4.2 Ideas on how to improve the Service: these centred around more face to face communication and site visits by management; improved absence management; employing fewer agency staff; providing forums/workshops or suggestion boxes to allow staff the opportunity to put forward ideas to senior management; reducing administrative work undertaken by managers as a result of the introduction of Business Support to allow managers to affect their role with the workforce; providing information on TECS and Housing to staff to encourage closer working relationships within the Service.

4.3 Ideas on how to improve communication: anonymity arose as a concern when providing information and communicating with management; providing consistent messages to all areas through team meetings; reference made to all areas/sections at team meetings as staff felt that everyone's work should be recognised; increased use of technology; communicating positive news; providing staff with regular updates regarding changes even if the update was no progress; start and continue with regular Employment Review and Development (ERD's) with staff.

4.4 What employees wanted to hear more about: Good news stories ; early notification if their jobs were directly affected by budget cuts; information for whole Service, not just to specific areas/sections; changes to policies and procedures; organisational structural changes /where services and teams are based; career opportunities within the Service; short and long-term plans and how these will impact on the Service; budget proposals; feedback on performance from line managers; regular updates on current status of recruitment within the Service; feedback following committee meetings; methods to improve service delivery; how staff can help with budget savings; positive feedback from customers directly through feedback and through newsletter.

4.5 General responses from staff were:

- 64% felt well informed about the changes that are taking place within

new Community Services and 75% found the information they do receive to be useful

- 36% claim to receive little or no information relating to changes within the service
- 65% received updates via email and this was the preferred method of communication with team meetings being second preferred method and information/communication directly from managers in a 1-2-1 situation being third.
- 62% felt that there were good lines of communication within their teams in terms of receiving and providing information and that the site visits by the Director have improved communication with staff feeling more information about changes that are taking place.
- There appears to be a common theme with regards to lack of consultation and communication between senior managers and operational/front line staff
- Suggestions of more frequent and positive communication would improve morale
- Common feelings that managers are too busy to meet with staff which impacts on flow of communication and trust within the workplace
- Team meetings taking place at short notice is difficult especially in rural areas
- Lack of resources, budget restraints and increasing workloads is a common concern among all respondents
- 68% of staff is invited to team meetings however it is felt that the meetings aren't frequent enough and more team meetings are required.

5. Next Steps

5.1 As a result of the analysis of the internal Communication Survey and the recent Corporate Employee Survey results, the Service will provide one comprehensive and focused action plan to pull together information gathered to address issues raised and continue to work on good practice highlighted. This will be reported to the November Community Services Committee.

6. There are no resource; legal; equalities; climate change/carbon clever; Gaelic; rural implications and no risks highlighted for note.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:-

- (i) note the work of the Service to engage with staff and provide for effective communication and consultation with staff; and
- (ii) note that a report will be presented to the November Community Services Committee on the results of the Corporate Employee Survey that will include an Action Plan to address the key issues from the Employee Survey and the Services own internal communications survey.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 6 August 2015

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Background Papers: