Agenda Item	10
Report No	COM 57/15

The Highland Council

Community Services – 5 November 2015

Employee Survey 2015

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

This report summarises the key findings from the 2015 Employee Survey and outlines proposals for addressing areas of further improvement.

1. Background

1.2 The Employee Survey ran from the 20th to 27th April 2015.

1.3 Surveys were sent out to all staff in the Service. The response rate was 38% compared to the Council wide response of 36%.

1.4 Staff were given time in working hours to complete the survey. Staff who do not have access to email were sent paper copies. This staff group was also given the option to complete the survey on-line by logging on to a secure website using their own devices.

1.5 As with previous surveys the uptake by staff not on email was low.

Table 1 Responses

Community Services	Total Returns
Environmental and Regulatory Services	88
Roads and Transport	60
Housing	72
Service Performance and Building Maintenance	43
Caithness and Sutherland	48
Skye, Ross and Cromarty	46
Inverness	58
Lochaber, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey	53
Not provided	35
Total	503

1.6 Community Services was formed in April 2014. There is no comparable data available to measure against and therefore the 2015 survey will be a benchmark for future Employee Surveys results.

1.7 The 2015 survey is the first time analysis is available at Head of Service/Senior Manager level and this will prove beneficial in developing improvement actions in a more targeted way.

1.8 Because of the diverse nature of the staff groups in each function it is difficult to compare results for many of the questions across the Service, however elements of good practice can be identified and shared.

2. Survey Results

2.1 The survey asked 15 questions, some with sub sets of questions, under 5 categories:
1. Council as an Employer
2. Line Manager
3. Information
4. Training, Policies and Initiatives
5. Change

2.2 This report highlights the main findings for each category. Full details of the Community Service results can be found by clicking on this link. **Staff Survey Council wide June 2015\Top level results.xlsx**

2.3 Top level results indicate that Community Services is aligned to the rest of the Council in what it agrees the Council does well and could do better.

2.4 <u>What is Highland Council doing well?</u>

The following table lists the statements scoring most positively Council wide and this is reflected in the Community Services scores.

Table 2 What is Highland Council doing well?

Statement	2012 score Council wide	2015 score Council wide	Community Services score
Satisfied that job provides interesting work	81%	84%	71%
Line manager is always/usually approachable	76%	80%	75%
I support the Council's Organisational values	Not asked	79%	71%
Satisfied with supportive colleagues	74%	78%	62%
Line manager always/usually knows his or her job	73%	78%	68%

2.5 <u>What could Highland Council be doing better?</u>

The following table lists the statements scoring least positively in the Survey with the Community Services scores.

Table 3 What could Highland Council be doing better?

Statement	2012 score Council wide	2015 score Council wide	Community Services score
Change here is well managed	19%	25%	17%
I receive sufficient training and support when change takes place	22%	26%	20%
Change here is too fast	24%	27%	23%
Staff are consulted on management decisions which affect them and their work	22%	28%	20%
I would speak highly of the Council to people outside the organisation	25%	30%	29%

Betterment from the 2012 survey is seen across all statements.

3. The Council as an Employer

3.1 A variety of questions were asked to establish views of the Council as an employer. The figures are stated as Community Services listed first and Council wide listed second, in brackets.

3.2 Staff in Community Services reported overall job satisfaction as 57%. Council wide this is 70%, a 3% increase since the 2012 survey.

3.3 The highest scoring factors for this category are:
- Good employment benefits 81% (73%)
- Working hours 81% (76%)
- Interesting work 71% (84%)
- Personal safety at work 67% (75%)
- Supportive colleagues 62% (78%)

3.4 The lowest scoring factors for the category are:
- Receiving praise for good work 37% (50%)
- Working for a successful organisation 37% (50%)
- Feedback on your performance 33% (49%)
- Morale in your workplace 29% (46%)
- Career development 28% (40%)

3.5 It is clear from these results that Employee Engagement is an area for improvement.

3.6 Respondents were then asked to rank the 6 most important factors from the list of 22. Results varied across the different functions and between the Service and the Council wide results.

1. Pay 69% (58%)
2. Job Security 60% (51%)
3. Good Employment benefits 51% (37%)
4. Interesting work 46% (52%)
5. Working hours 38% (33%)
6. Morale in your workplace 36% (35%)

3.7 Overall, there was no decrease in satisfaction levels with any of the factors relating to job satisfaction when compared to 2012 results.

4. Stress and Workload

4.1 In relation to the questions on stress the Service compared favourably with Council wide responses:

- I have too much work to do 22% (26%)
- I have a heavy work load but can cope 37% (41%)
- I have the right amount of work to do 26% (24%)
- I could do more work 9% (6%)
- High/above average levels of stress 41% (44%)

4.2 Council wide, employees stating they have too much work to do tend to fall into the following categories:

1. They have permanent contracts (27%) rather than temporary contracts (12%)
2. They have a longer period of service. 33% of staff with over 20 years report this factor compared with 11% who have been with the Council up to 1 year.
3. 32% of staff at HC14-15 grades also report this compared to 13% of staff in HC1-3 grades

4.3 Respondents listed the following as causes of stress and the negative attitudes of colleagues and managers is highlighted as an area of concern.

- Too much work 39% (44%)
- Too much bureaucracy 38% (38%)
- Colleagues negative attitudes 38% (27%)
- Lack of resources 36% (39%)
- Management's negative attitudes 27% (15%)

5. Managers

5.1   Respondents were asked to consider 21 statements about their immediate line manager.   Community Services scored similar to Council wide responses, which show a positive increase across all questions.   The highest scoring statements are:
- Is approachable 75% (80%)
- Is committed to the Council 68% (70%)
- Knows his or her job 68% (78%)
- Is available to speak to when I need to 67% (71%)
- Is open and honest 64% (73%)

5.2   Council wide these scores have all increased since the 2012 survey.

5.3   The lowest scoring factors are:
- Keeps me in touch 50% (64%)
- Is consistent in applying personnel policy 50% (60%)
- Discusses my training and development needs 40% (54%)
- Acts on my ideas and suggestions 38% (52%)
- Does something about the pressure I come under 36% (48%)

5.4   Despite these scores, which can be categorised as Employee Engagement, Council wide improvement is seen when compared to the last survey.

5.5   In relation to statements about senior managers, there has been an improvement Council wide since 2012.

Table 4 Statements about Senior Managers

Statement	2012 score Council wide	2015 score Council wide	Community Services score
Senior managers in my Service keep employees informed of their views and decisions	37%	45%	33%
I have confidence in the senior manager in my Service	35%	43%	30%
Senior managers in my Service are not interested in listening to staff opinion	29%	27%	33%

6.   **Information**

6.1   Employees across the Service access information about the Council in many ways. The most frequently used methods are:
- Informal conversation with colleagues 60% (65%),
- Service newsletters 59% (44%)
- Email 59% (72%)

These results may reflect the wide geographical spread of staff and staff working remotely from their managers.

6.2   In line with other Services, respondents said they would prefer to receive information by:
- E-mail 43% (53%)
- Team Briefing 36% (30%)
- Personal contact with immediate line manager 35% (36%)

6.3   54% of Council staff say they feel fully or fairly well informed about what is going on in the Council. This drops to 48% in Community Services.   Likewise staff in the Service feel less informed about issues affecting their Service, 48% compared to 51% Council wide, and within their function, 46% compared to 60%.   The scores for the three statements have all increased since the 2012 survey.

6.4   The Service's own survey into communications found similar preferences. 65% of staff receive updates via email and that was their preferred method of communication with team meetings being the next preferred method and receiving information/communication directly from managers in a 1-1 situation being third.

6.5   Staff who have received an ERD in the last 12 months feel more informed than those who have not had an ERD in the past 12 months.   The Service is committed to every employee having an ERD and this is stated in the Workforce Action Plan as well as being an objective for the Senior Management team.

7.   Training, Policies and Initiatives

7.1   Staff were asked to consider statements in relation to training, policies and initiatives.
- I support the Council's values 71% (79%)
- I am aware of the Council's values 56% (57%)
- I have received induction training 59% (50%)
- I receive the right amount of training to do my job well 48% (52%)
- I am supportive of the Council's promotion of the Gaelic language and culture 47% (56)

7.2   47% (62%) of staff agreed they had received an ERD but only 34% (52%) said

it had been in the last 12 months.

7.3 47% of Service staff agree that they are treated with dignity, an outcome of the Fairer Highland Plan, compared to 57% Council wide. There has been a marked increase in this since 2012, up 13 points. Employees who have been with Council for over 20 years are less likely to agree with this statement (54%) than those who have been with the Council for up to 1 year (76%).

8. Change

8.1 A number of statements were made about change. Respondents were most positive about the following statements:
- I understand the need for change 77% (77%)
- I support the need for change 53% (56%)
- I look forward to change as a challenge 42% (48%)

8.2 The lowest scoring statements were:
- I find the process of change causes me worry 51% (43%)
- The reasons for change are well communicated to me 32% (32%)
- Staff are consulted on management decisions which affect them and their work 20% (28%)
- I receive sufficient training and support when change takes place 20% (26%)
- Change here is well managed 17% (25%)

8.3 Fewer staff in Community service agree with the statement "Change here is too fast", 23%, compared to 27% Council wide.

8.4 The Service's own survey into communications found that 64% of staff felt well informed about the changes that are taking place in the new Community Services and 75% found the information they receive to be useful.

9. Indices

9.1 Sets of questions were grouped together and analysed to measure overall responses to 3 categories.

Table 5 Indices

Category	Council	Community Services
Employee Engagement	59%	49%
Health and Well being	55%	49%
Fairer Highland	71%	60%

10. At the end of the survey staff were asked to make one suggestion to improve Highland Council as an employer.

- More communication including between departments 8%
- Better pay, terms and conditions 7%
- Listen to Staff 6%
- Support/value/recognise/reward staff for what they do 6%
- Improve performance management 6%
- Provide enough resources/IT/computer equipment 4%

11   Areas for Improvement

11.1   Council wide the survey reports positive changes since the 2012 survey particularly in relation to managers and change.

11.2   There are areas for improvement identified for Community Services across all categories of the survey.   It is to be expected that staff will be unsettled during periods of change and the results provide managers with a focus for their efforts in implementing improvements.

11.3   Employee engagement (includes job satisfaction, communication, consultation and change) and health and wellbeing (includes working environment, benefits, pressure and training) are areas that require attention.

11.4   The results are reported to Head of Service/Area Manager level and this will assist greatly in enabling staff and managers to work together for change.

12.   Next Steps

12.1   Staff involvement in making improvements is essential.   Senior managers are sharing the results of the survey with their teams through the team briefing method.   TU colleagues were briefed on the 23rd October through the Service TU group.

12.2   The Service has undertaken a considerable amount of work relating to Workforce Planning, budget savings requirements and proposals, its own Communication Survey and the 2015 Employee Survey.

12.3   A clear outcome from these activities is the need for better staff engagement. Involving staff will ensure the Service is run as effectively as efficiently as possible and help address concerns staff have about their involvement in change, as reflected by the 2015 survey.

12.4   The Service plans to set up a Working Group made up of a cross section of employees and TU reps who will work together in considering and resolving the challenges the Service faces including those raised through employee surveys.   A role description is being developed and will be circulated to staff inviting them to note interest in being part of the Working Group.

12.5   Key themes and actions will be identified and reported to Community Services Committee in February 2016. Further detailed work will be on-going and after communication with the wider staff group we will be better able to form a more detailed Service Improvement Plan.

12.6   The Plan will be monitored through the Performance and Risk management system.

13.   Implications

13.1   **Gaelic**
         47% of respondents support the Councils promotion of the Gaelic language and culture. The Service supports the actions in the Gaelic Language Plan

13.2   **Equalities**
         Responses to the questionnaire are analysed by most of the equality strands and the responses can be analysed to identify whether there are specific actions required to address any specific equalities area.

13.3   **Other**
         There are no risks, resource, legal, climate change, carbon clever or rural implications from this report.

Recommendation

Community Services Committee is invited to:

Note the results of the survey for Community Services and the timescale for the development of the Service Improvement Plan.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 8 October 2015

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Background Papers: [Employee Survey 2015 Final Results]