

The Highland Council
Re-Design Board – 23.5.16

Agenda Item	4
Report No	RDB/7/16

Developing a Staff Panel

Report by Acting Head of Policy

Summary

This report sets out the background and options for developing a staff panel.

1. Background

1.1 It was agreed at the last Re-design Board meeting to create a staff panel, to operate in a similar way to the Citizens' Panel, in order to gather staff views confidentially through surveys and for the Panel to be statistically representative of staff views. This report sets out options for taking this forward.

2. Proposed Criteria and Sampling Approach

2.1 At the Board meeting on 10 May 2016, three key criteria were identified by Members on which to develop a staff panel. These were:

- Service representation
- Area representation
- Balance across staff with Union membership and those not Union members

2.2 Following the Board meeting, clarification was sought regarding accessing data around Union membership. Advice received from HR notes that the vast majority of Union membership is now paid by direct debit therefore it is not possible to identify Union membership amongst the current staff group. Whilst it will not be possible to invite staff to participate using Union membership as criteria, we can ask whether they are Union members during the recruitment process, thereby providing an understanding of this across the panel that is developed.

2.3 Having considered the variety of information that is available on which to base any panel, in addition to service and area representation, it is recommended that staff grade is also taken into account to ensure a spread of views across the staff group and also gender. In relation to staff grade, it is recommended that senior officials - any officer at HC13 and above – is excluded from the staff panel on the basis that there is a process for consulting that particular staff grouping separately. The figures provided below are excluding this group.

2.4 When conducting surveys, it is important to ensure that the sample responding is large enough for it to be said to be representative of the population it is from. In this case, it is important to ensure that the number of staff responding is representative of the total staff group and that we can be confident that this is the case. We therefore need to ensure that the staff panel has sufficient membership that will provide this sample, taking into account that not all panel

members will respond to every survey.

- 2.5 Excluding senior officials, we have a total staff group of 9,612. For the staff panel to be representative of the staff population in general then we would require 961 staff to respond to surveys. At this level we would be able to be 95% confident that the views are representative of the total staff population +/- 3%. Based on previous experience, advice from HR would suggest that we should estimate a 40% response rate from staff panel members, therefore on that basis we would need a panel with a minimum membership of **2403**.

3. Potential Options for Panel Creation

- 3.1 Members have identified that they wish the panel to reflect both service and area representation. The following provides some options around ways in which to achieve this.

3.2 Option 1 - Service Representation as the Primary Factor

Representation by service as the primary factor undertaken on a proportional basis – e.g. Development and Infrastructure make up 4% of the staff population and would therefore have 4% of their staff group of the panel. The total panel would comprise of **2403** staff as outlined above and service representation a percentage of this.

Benefits: This would be a simple way to establish the panel and pay grade could be captured as a further variable.

Challenges: The challenges around this approach however are that it would not be possible to factor area representation into this approach given the small numbers of some service groups as a result of the methodology and given that 70% of staff are based in Care and Learning, this would not provide a balance of views across different service function.

3.3 Option 2 - Service Representation with an Area dimension

Service would remain the primary factor and the panel would be representative of the staff group **within** each service. In this way, Members would be able to have confidence that the views would be representative of the staff group from e.g. Development and Infrastructure. Given the small numbers within some services, there would be a need to invite all staff from Chief Executive's, Corporate Development, Finance and Development and Infrastructure to participate to ensure a representative sample. This would result in a staff panel of around **2,868**.

In addition to using the above approach for service representation, it would be possible for the panel to reflect the geographical spread of staff across the Highland area and also reflect the spread of grades. This would be on a proportional basis e.g. 10% of staff are located in Caithness, therefore 10% of the 2,868 staff would be drawn from Caithness. This would ensure that staff across Highland are represented on the panel however it would not be possible to say that the staff are representative of the staff population from that area.

Benefits: This approach combines both a service and area approach to representation.

Challenges: The challenges of this approach though is that it is not representative of staff groups within each area and whether this approach results in a full representative panel by service will depend upon staff interest to participate in the panel and then the resulting response to surveys.

3.4 Option 3 - Area representation with a service dimension

The third option to consider would be to create a panel that is representative of staff groups **within** each Council area. This would mean that Members would be able to consider the results of staff surveys by Council area and be confident about the views being representative of the staff population there.

Due to the small numbers of staff within some Council areas, it will be necessary to invite the whole staff group to participate within Sutherland, Eilean a Cheo, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey. Attempting to make the panel representative by area would require a Panel of around **5000** staff.

In addition to area representation, it would be possible to create the panel to reflect representation within services using the same approach outlined in option 2 and also reflect the spread of staff across grades. This would be representative of services and grades at a pan-Highland level as there are not sufficient staff numbers in some geographies to enable this at a service level.

Benefits: This approach again combines an area and service based approach to developing the panel and additionally focuses on attempting to achieve area representation. This approach would enable targeted surveys too, where views from a particular area were needed rather than for the whole region.

Challenges: The challenges of this approach are that it does require a significant sampling of the staff population – around 50% - to achieve this level of representation and, as above, whether this approach results in a full representative panel by area and service will depend upon staff interest to participate in the panel and then the resulting response to surveys.

3.5 It is believed that a higher number on the staff panel can be accommodated as surveys will be electronic with staff choosing whether to use a work or home email. Staff on the panel with no email access would be sent surveys by post to enable them to participate.

3.6 On balance, it is therefore recommended that option 3 would seek to provide a panel which would be representative of staff groups in the key areas Members have requested. It is proposed that invitations to participate in the panel be sent out by the 3 June. A further report can be brought back to Members regarding the take up and therefore what this means around levels of representation.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Board Members are asked to agree to adopt option 3, as outlined in the paper at paragraph 3.4, on which to create and develop the staff panel.

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