

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	RES/08/24

The Highland Council

Committee: Corporate Resources

Date: 7 March 2024

Report Title: Staff Wellbeing Survey

Report By: Interim Depute Chief Executive

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 A Wellbeing Survey of staff in the Highland Council was conducted between December 2023 and January 2024. The results are presented in **Appendix 1** of this report.

1.2 The survey was completed by 1614 staff, making up 15% of the workforce.

1.3 As our most valuable asset, staff and their wellbeing is crucially important to Highland Council. Incorporating staff views expressed from this survey into future planning and reviewing strategies to support our workforce is of critical importance.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the survey results and the Executive Summary as contained in **Appendix 1** attached to this report;
- ii. **Agree** the next steps as outlined in Section 7 of this report.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource:

The Council's OHSW Manager and team are well placed to lead, support services and work with trade unions on developing key service actions arising from the survey responses. This includes the review of the Wellbeing Strategy and any other related strategies.

3.2 Legal:

There are no specific legal implications arising from the report.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island):

A survey profile of responders provides equalities data in terms of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; sex; sexual orientation; identify as transgender; marital status; religion and ethnicity. It also provides data on staff who identify with caring responsibilities. This data can be taken into account when developing the action plans for the survey outcomes along with developments of other staff policies.

- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever:
There are no relevant implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 Risk:
There are no risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Risk will occur if findings are not published resulting in staff and the unions not being made aware of the survey results. Potential reputational damage if staff feedback is not acted on to drive improvement and reflected in revised policies and practice where appropriate or impact on the Council's Duty of Care which may result in increased sickness absence.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):
There are no health and safety implications arising other than those set out in this report.
- 3.7 Gaelic:
There are no implications for Gaelic arising from this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 Highland Council is committed to taking all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health and safety at work of all of our employees and others who may be affected by the Council's undertakings. In addition, the Council is committed to ensuring that all reasonable measures are in place to maintain and enhance staff wellbeing so that staff can lead productive and healthy working lives.
- 4.2 The Council accepts the aims and provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and also aims to comply with all other health and safety statutory obligations. A high standard of health and safety performance is one of the Council's primary objectives and is recognised as an integral part of service delivery.
- 4.3 The Council carried out a Wellbeing Survey in June 2020 which had a response rate of 44%. It was a standalone survey due to the nature of the issues covered:
- *Welfare checks of all employees*
 - *Effectiveness of corporate communication*
 - *Confidence in our leadership approach*
 - *Barriers to effective home working*
 - *Lessons both positive/negative*
- 4.4 The outcome of the 2020 survey raised issues of technology which was addressed with the roll out of Microsoft Teams to support how staff were continuing to deliver services and removed the requirement to travel for work. Keeping in contact with staff remotely was also an important finding from the Survey.

5. Survey Design and Delivery

- 5.1 An action from the external Corporate Staff Survey in 2022 was to undertake a staff Wellbeing Survey which was developed in-house led by the Highland Council's OHSW Manager and supported by colleagues in the People Service. The design of the survey is based on standard surveys through the Health and Safety Executive.
- 5.2 The survey questions were structured around six key areas which affect people's wellbeing at work and is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive:

- **Demands** including topics such as workload, work patterns and the work environment;
- **Control**, how much say the person has in the way they do their work;
- **Support** including the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues;
- **Relationships** including promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour;
- **Role**, whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles;
- **Change**, how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

5.2 Staff were asked to respond to each statement with the following options:

- Always – Often – Sometimes – Seldom – Never

There was also an opportunity to provide comments at the end of each of the 6 headings with further open questions as well as respond to an open questions:

*What are we doing well?
What can we do better?*

5.3 The survey was emailed to staff using both council email addresses and personal emails, promoted on Staff Connections with reminder emails and updates on the Staff Connections as a regular prompt to staff.

6. Survey Response

6.1 This is the first survey of this type since COVID therefore the results are best viewed as a place to build from for the future as there is no comparison to work from due to the unique focus of the Wellbeing survey during the pandemic.

6.2 A summary of the responses is contained in the Executive Summary of **Appendix 1** of the report.

6.3 The level of response to the survey is 15% (1614 responses) which is significantly below the response to the wellbeing survey issued in 2020 which was 44%. An explanation for this could be the time of year, survey fatigue and the specific nature of the survey conducted in 2020 when a significant number of staff were working in different environments including from home.

6.4 It is encouraging almost half of those staff who responded took the opportunity to provide comments on what the Council is doing well. Just over 50% of staff provided comments on what can be improved on. This narrative provides rich data which is welcomed from staff and can be used to inform policy and practice.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 Survey results should be explored at Service level to develop key actions to address and improve wellbeing of our staff. This would involve trade union colleagues. Corporate policies including the Wellbeing Strategy will be reviewed and updated to reflect the feedback from the survey and reported to the Central Safety Committee. The survey should be repeated on a regular basis to monitor improvement likely to be between 6-12 months with the intention of increasing the response rate and overall engagement with staff on wellbeing issues.

Designation: Interim Depute Chief Executive

Date: 26 February 2024

Author: Elaine Barrie, Head of People
Sophie Stuart, Corporate Performance Business Partner
David Cowie, OHSW Manager

Appendices: Survey Results Report

Staff Wellbeing Survey 2024



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1. Introduction

The council committed to undertaking a wellbeing survey as a direct action from the Corporate Staffing Survey. The Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager working with others in the people team put together a detailed wellbeing survey and agreed the methodology and desired outcomes and the wellbeing survey was launched mid-December 2023.

This report focuses on the 2023/24 Wellbeing Survey which has provided us with a baseline to improve our understanding of employee's wellbeing, needs and how best to provide support. This report provides a summary of key findings derived from the survey. The survey was issued on 13 December 2023 and closed on 22 January 2024. Findings from this survey will be used in the current review of the Wellbeing Strategy being undertaken by the Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager. Findings and suggestions from the survey will also be used to consider the effectiveness and any need for review of other strategies such as The People Strategy, Wellbeing Strategy and The Digital Strategy.

2. Executive Summary

This survey demonstrates The Highland Council are getting wellbeing right in many areas but also highlights opportunities for improvements and factors staff feel impact the effective management of mental health and wellbeing.

788 respondents (49%) completing the survey put additional comments identifying 'what the Council' is doing well. 860 respondents (53%) of those completing the survey put additional comments on 'What can we do better'.

The Demands and Control staff have over the way they do their work, 78% said their colleagues always or often involve them and value their contribution. 92% said they are always or often considerate about the demands they put on colleagues before asking for support.

With regard to working relations and support, 76% said they always or often feel confident to approach others in their team if they felt they needed support. 61% said they always or often know where to seek support if they experience difficulties.

With regard to the role staff fulfil, 71% said they feel they are always or often treated fairly at work and 71% said due to work relationship issues, they never or seldom feel uncomfortable whilst at work. 84% responded they always or often feel confident their skill-sets are suitable to enable them to fulfil their role and 81% responded they always or often are clear what their role is and what is expected from them.

The survey also identifies a significant variation in service areas completing the survey ranging from 55% in Performance and Governance and 7% in Property and Housing.

Some of the areas identified as what we can do better are already in hand, such as dealing with change and included in strategies so we should see some of these issues being addressed. The Council's Wellbeing Strategy is currently being reviewed and this survey will be a key feed in to this strategy to help continue with what is good and drive the improvements our staff have identified.

3. Background

In June 2020, the Highland Council undertook an organisation-wide Wellbeing Survey of employees. The 2020 survey was during the Covid 19 pandemic and its key focus was wellbeing c.

This makes a comparison between the 2020 survey and this survey difficult with limited comparisons being possible. A clear stand out between the 2 surveys was the 2020 survey was completed online with a total of 4398 respondents (43% of the workforce) where as this survey has a total of 1614 respondents (15%).

This could be for a number of reasons including more people working from home during the pandemic, the 2020 survey being pandemic focused and the pandemic was a major risk topic at the time and possibly the time of the year Spring against winter which may have played a part in lower response due to Christmas and New year holidays. There could also be survey fatigue due to the budget consultation taking place immediately before the survey was issued.

4. Methodology

The survey was carried out exclusively online using MS Forms. Both corporate and personal email addresses could be used to complete the survey, and a generic link was provided. Information on the survey was publicised on staff connections and emailed to staff where they don't have Council email addresses. A number of reminders were circulated over the course of the survey supported by internal communication along with being highlighted on the intranet home page.

5. Analysis of Data

The data in this report is rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage point. This means that some tables or charts may add up to 99% or 101%.

Data relating to smaller groups will not be reported on to protect the anonymity of individuals so they cannot be easily identified.

6. Response

Over 10,000 staff were targeted, and the Council received a response rate of 15% (1614 responses).

Table 1: Responses by Service

Service	Headcount	Responses Received	Service Response Rate	% of Survey Responses
Communities and Place	759	176	23%	11%
Depute Chief Executive	178	50	28%	3%
Education and Learning	5848	570	10%	35%
Health and Social Care	917	224	24%	14%
Housing and Property	1740	130	7%	8%
Infrastructure Environment & Economy	687	164	24%	10%
Performance and Governance	137	76	55%	5%
Resources and Finance	480	224	47%	14%
Council Overall	10746	1614	15%	

Table 1 above gives a breakdown showing how many people in each Service completed the survey in relation to the total overall number of respondents in that Service and how this contributed as a percentage of the contribution from the whole Council. For example, Education and Learning had 5848 staff who could have completed the survey but the actual number completing it was 570 which equates to 10% of staff in this service area completing the survey. As Education and learning have a large number of staff their response contributed to 35% of the overall response rate.

7. Structure

The survey focused on six areas which affect people's wellbeing at work and is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive.

- **Demands** including topics such as workload, work patterns and the work environment;
- **Control**, how much say the person has in the way they do their work;
- **Support** including the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues;
- **Relationships** including promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour;
- **Role**, whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles;
- **Change**, how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The 6 areas above were chosen to allow The Council to have a comparative to benchmark against others using the same format.

Staff were asked to respond to each statement with the following options:

- Always – Often – Sometimes – Seldom – Never

Questions were deliberately framed in the positive and the negative for example:

Question 19. I feel I am treated fairly at work (Positive)

Question 20. Due to work relationship issues, I feel uncomfortable whilst at work (Negative)

This was done to prevent people skimming through giving the same answers to all questions. After each set of questions, there was an option to add additional comments, followed by broad questions:

- *What are we doing well?*
- *What can we do better?*

8. Survey Profile

The following tables present the demographics of respondents to the survey.

Length of Service		
	Number	Percentage
Up to 1 yr	118	7%
1+ to 2 yrs	150	9%
2+ to 10 yrs	525	33%
10+ to 20 yrs	387	24%
20+ yrs	371	23%
Prefer not to say	62	4%

Grade		
	Number	Percentage
HC 1-3	302	19%
HC 4-8	659	41%
HC 9-12	283	18%
HC 13-15	48	3%
Teacher	263	16%
Agenda for Change	45	3%
CO	14	1%

Age		
	Number	Percentage
Under 20	14	1%
20-29	96	6%
30-39	206	13%
40-49	366	23%
50-59	541	34%
60-69	168	10%
70+	9	1%
Prefer not to say	214	13%

Sex		
	Number	Percentage
Female	965	60%
Male	397	25%
Prefer not to say	244	15%
Other	8	0.05%

Parental/Caring Responsibility		
	Number	Percentage
Yes	661	41%
No	795	49%
Prefer not to say	158	10%

9. What are we doing well?

788 Respondents (49%) contributed comments and additional information.

10. What can we do better?

860 Respondents (53%) contributed comments and additional information.

11. Detailed breakdown of survey sections

11.1 DEMANDS

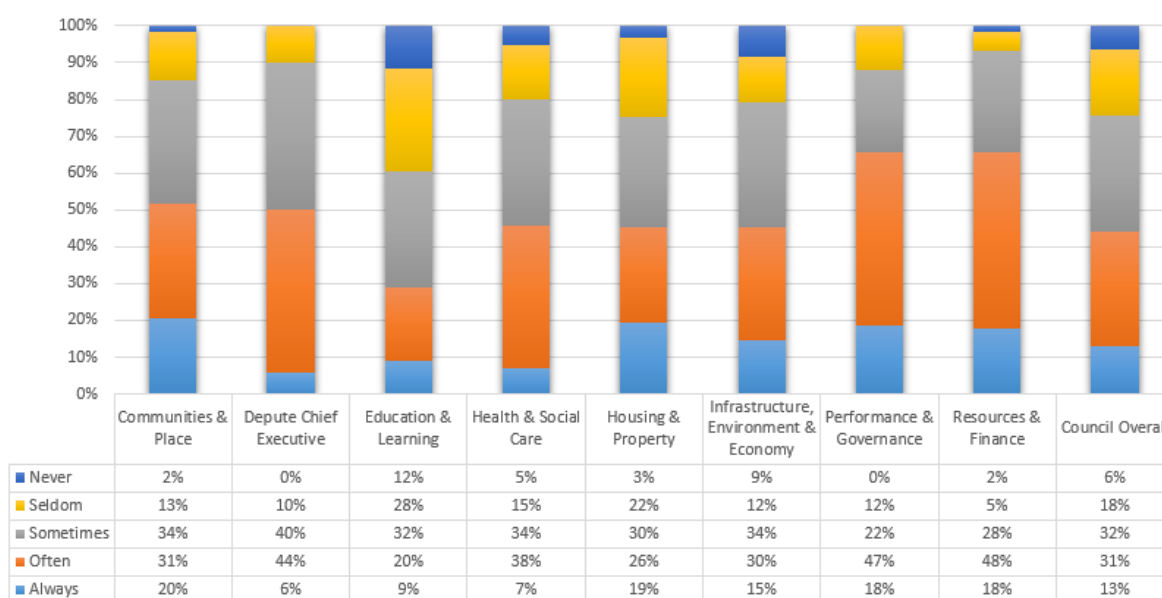
Key Findings:

The questions with the highest scores:

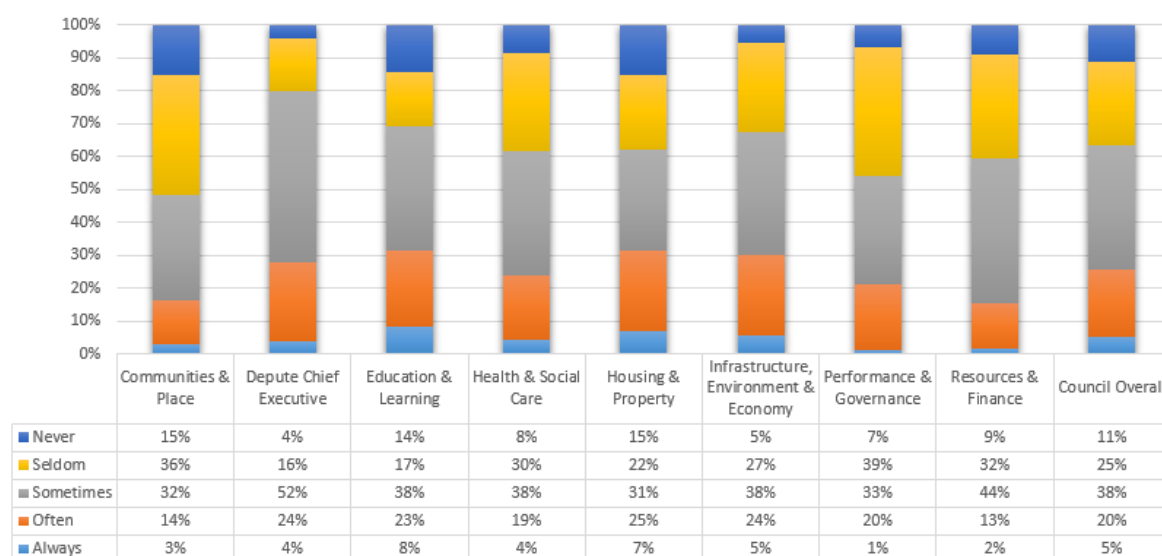
Question 5. I am considerate about the demands I put on colleagues before asking for support. (92% responded Always or Often)

Question 3. I feel I am usually in control of my workload allowing me to take appropriate breaks. (48% responded Always or Often)

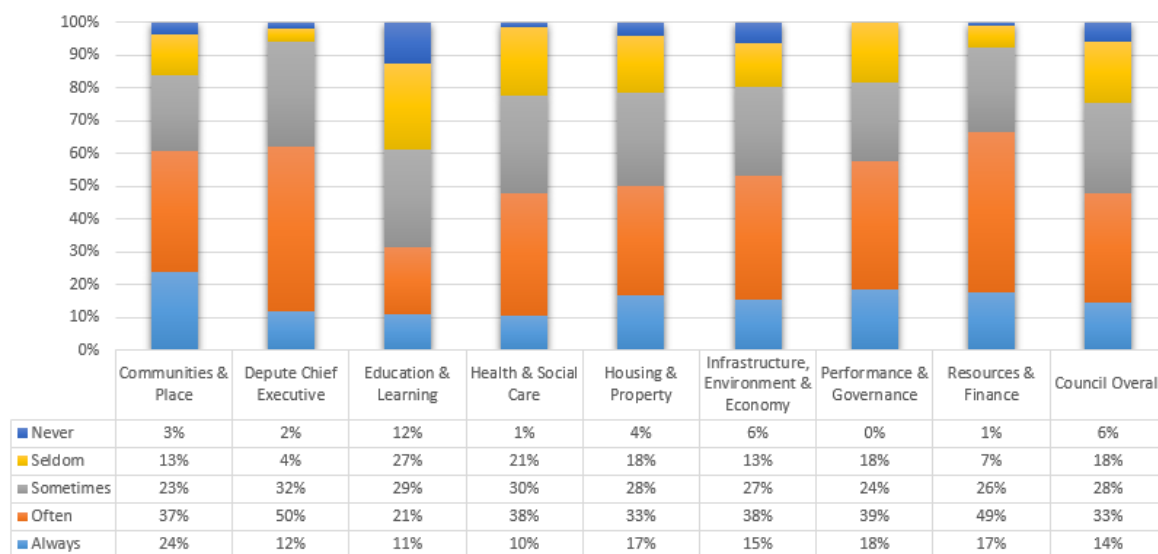
1. I feel the demands on my time are reasonable and manageable.



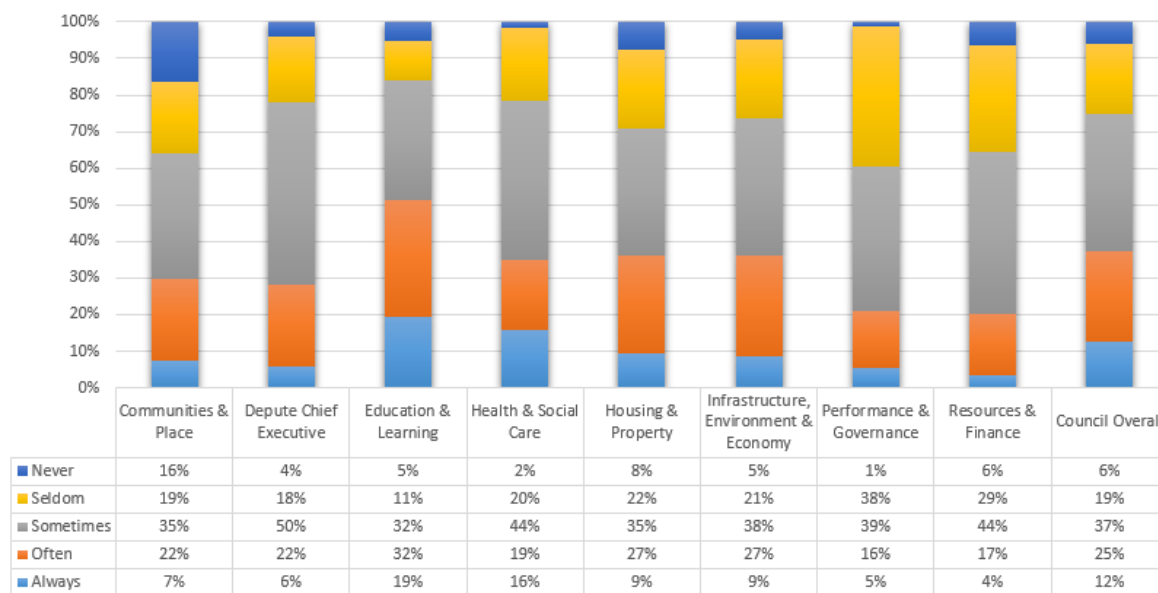
2. Demands on my time come from different people and different levels in the Council making it hard for me to organise and prioritise my workload.



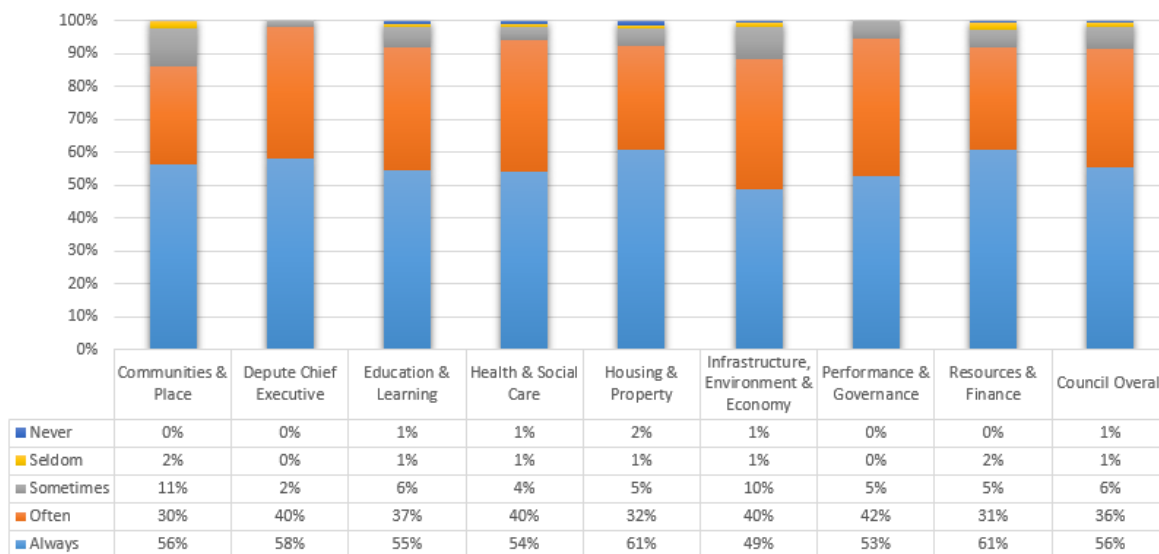
3. I feel I am usually in control of my workload allowing me to take appropriate breaks.



4. Pressure at work affects how well I do my job.



5. I am considerate about the demands I put on colleagues before asking for support.



Question 6. Any other comments/additional information.

331 Respondents (21 %) added further comments/additional information.

11.2 CONTROL

Key Findings:

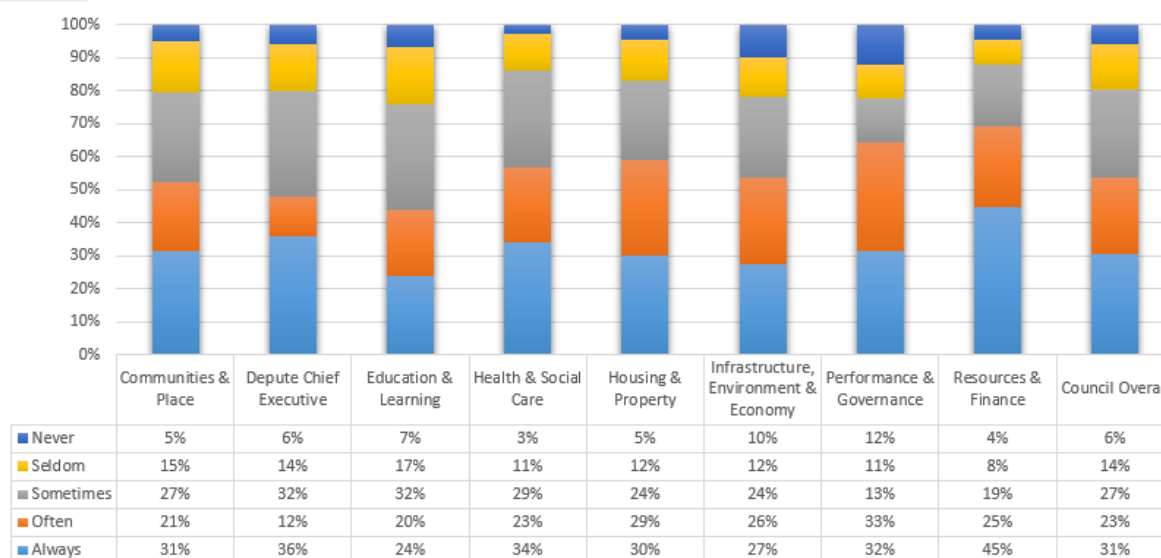
The questions with the highest scores:

Question 10b. I feel the following people involve me and value my contribution (78% responded Always or Often)

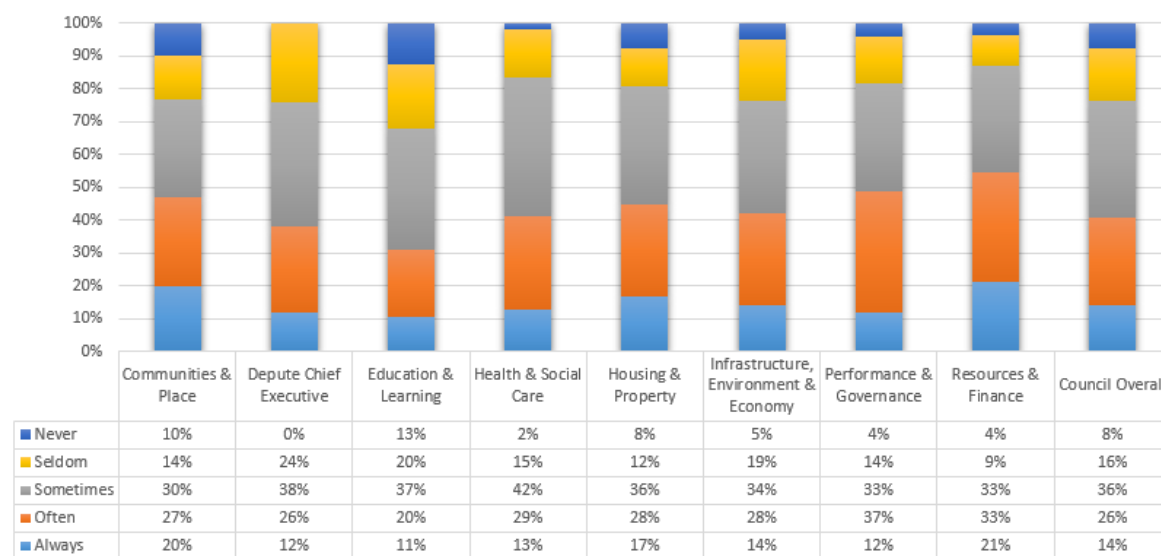
Question 9. I feel confident I can do my job well most of the time (75 % responded Always or Often)

7. I feel I can approach staff and ask for support or raise concerns in relation to my wellbeing.

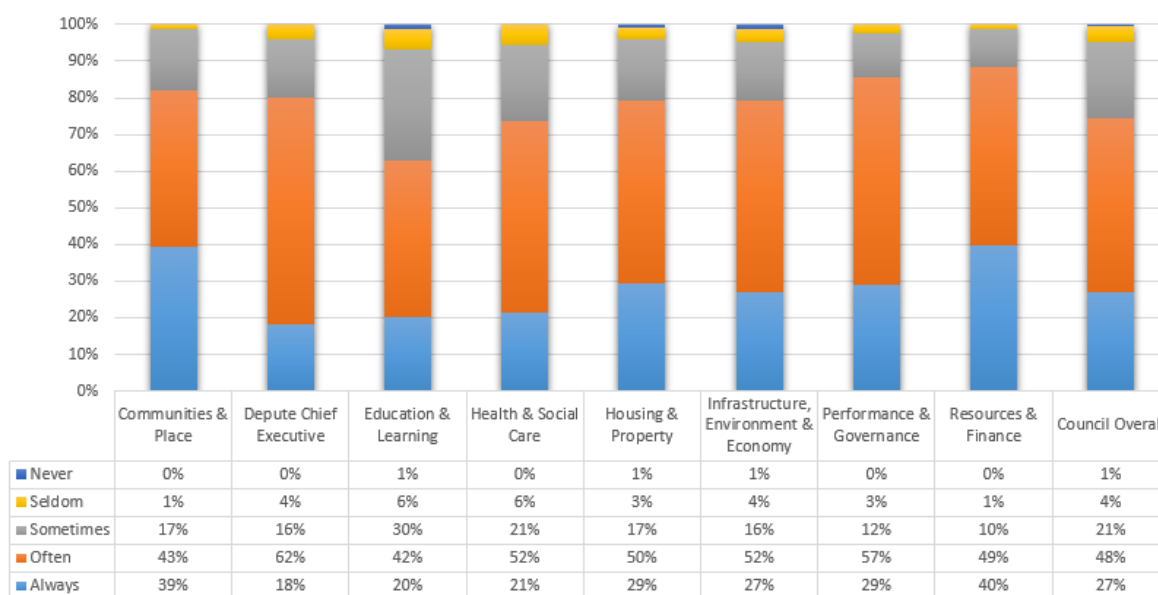
Chart Area



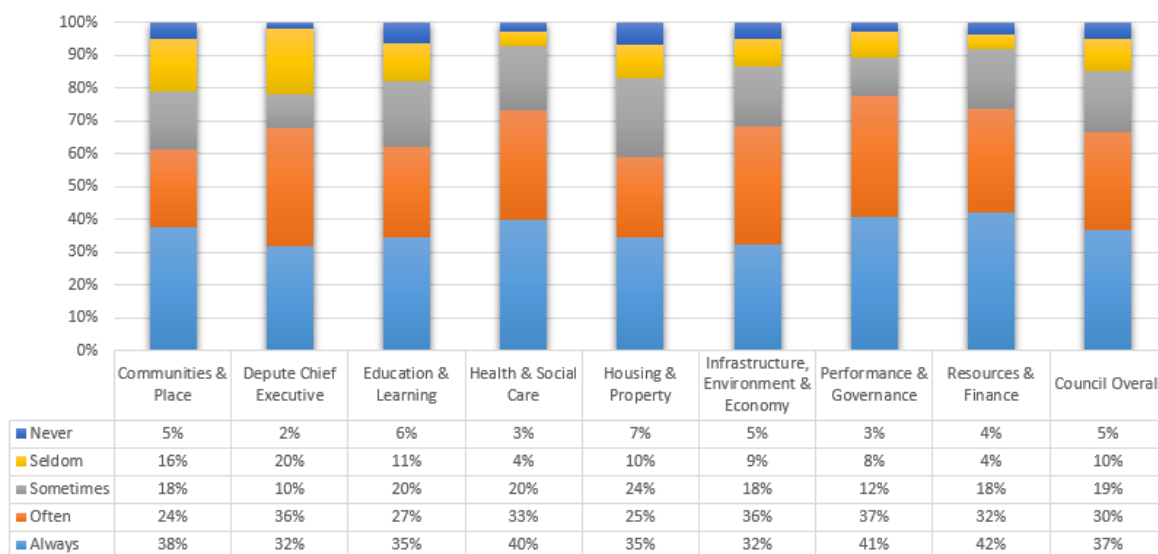
8. I feel I can negotiate new timescales if current timescales are unrealistic.



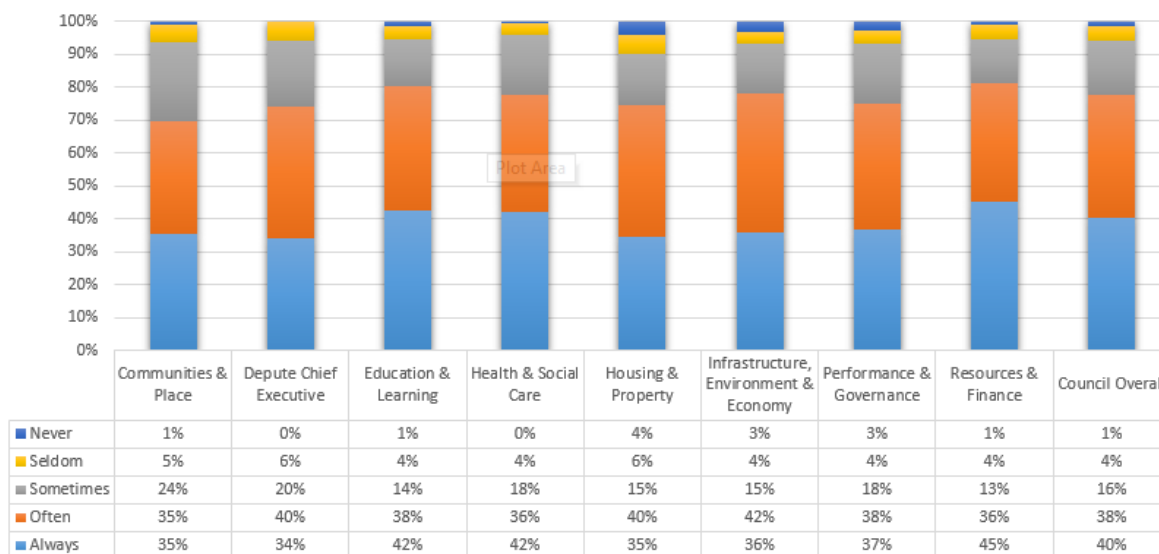
9. I feel confident I can do my job well most of the time.



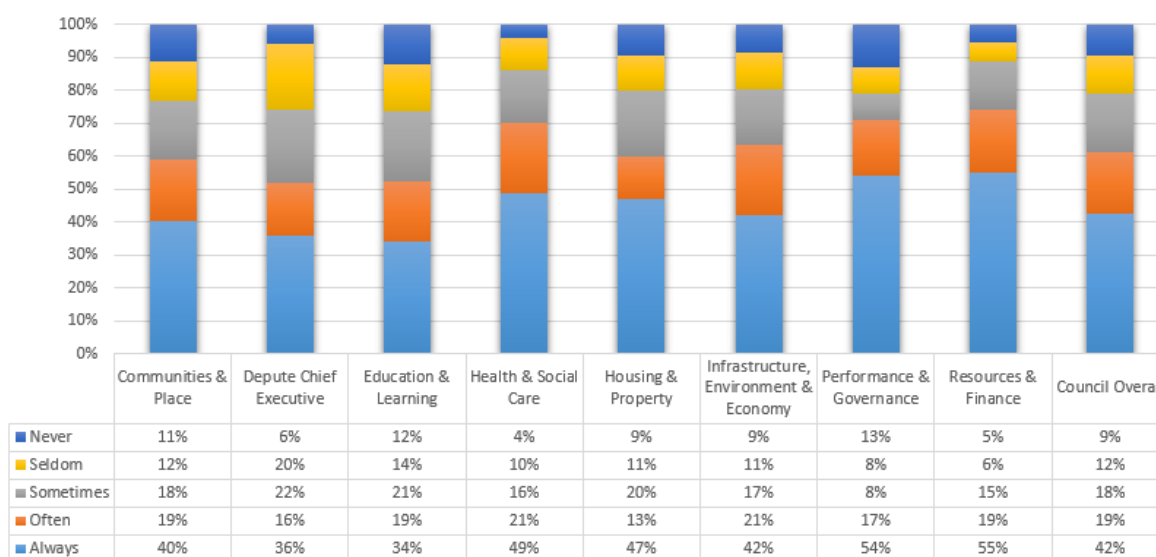
10a. I feel the following people involve me and value my contribution:
Manager



**10b. I feel the following people involve me and value my contribution:
Colleague**



11. I feel confident I could raise concerns about my mental health or work relationships with my manager.



Question 12. Any other comments/additional information.

305 Respondents (19 %) added further comments/additional information.

11.3 SUPPORT

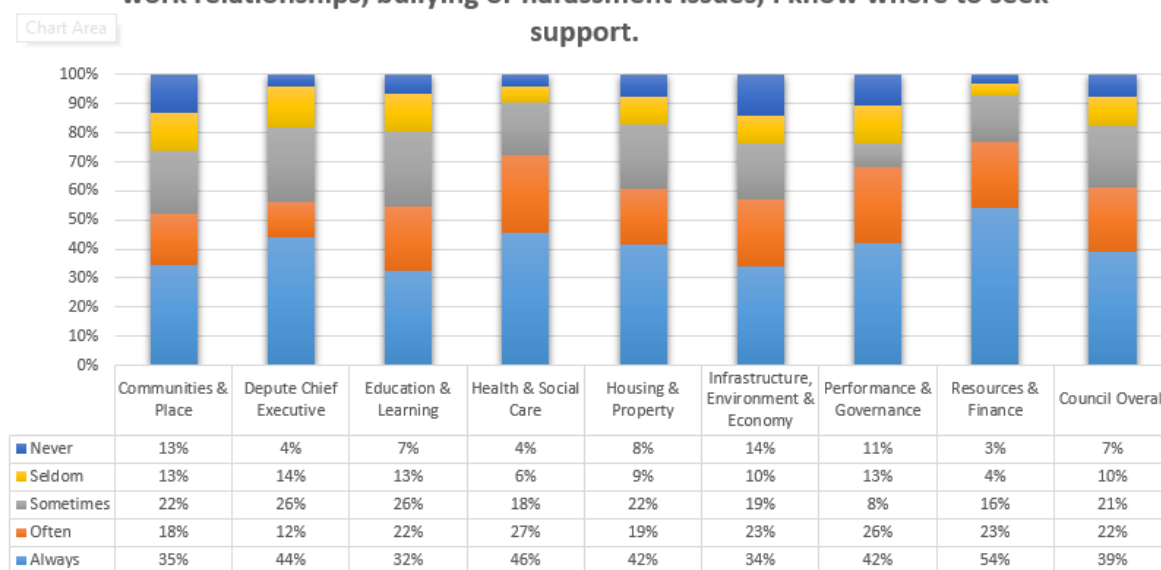
Key Findings:

The questions with the highest scores:

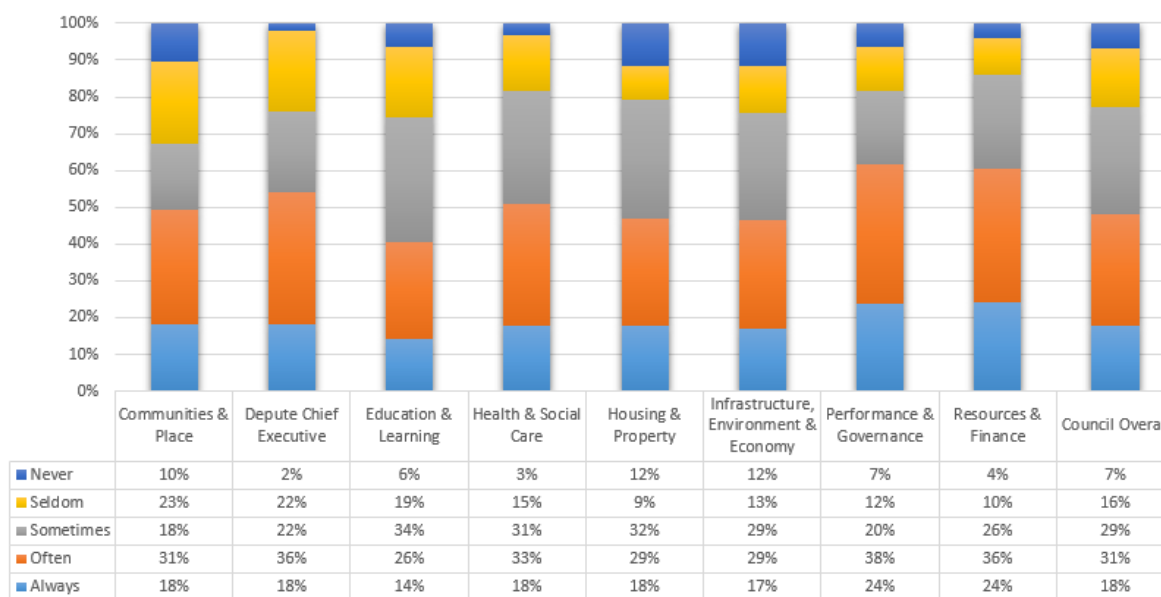
Question 13. When I experience difficulties with mental health, managing stress, work relationships, bullying or harassment issues, I know where to seek support. (61% responded Always or Often)

Question 17b. The following people proactively check in with me to see if I need support: Colleague (55% responded Always or Often)

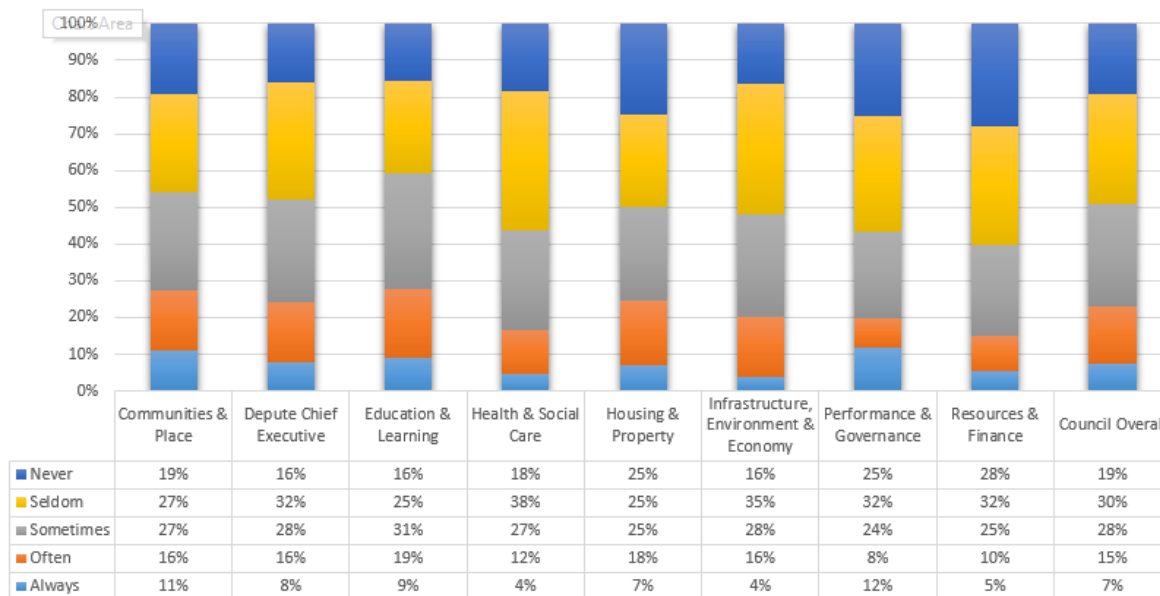
13. When I experience difficulties with mental health, managing stress, work relationships, bullying or harassment issues, I know where to seek support.



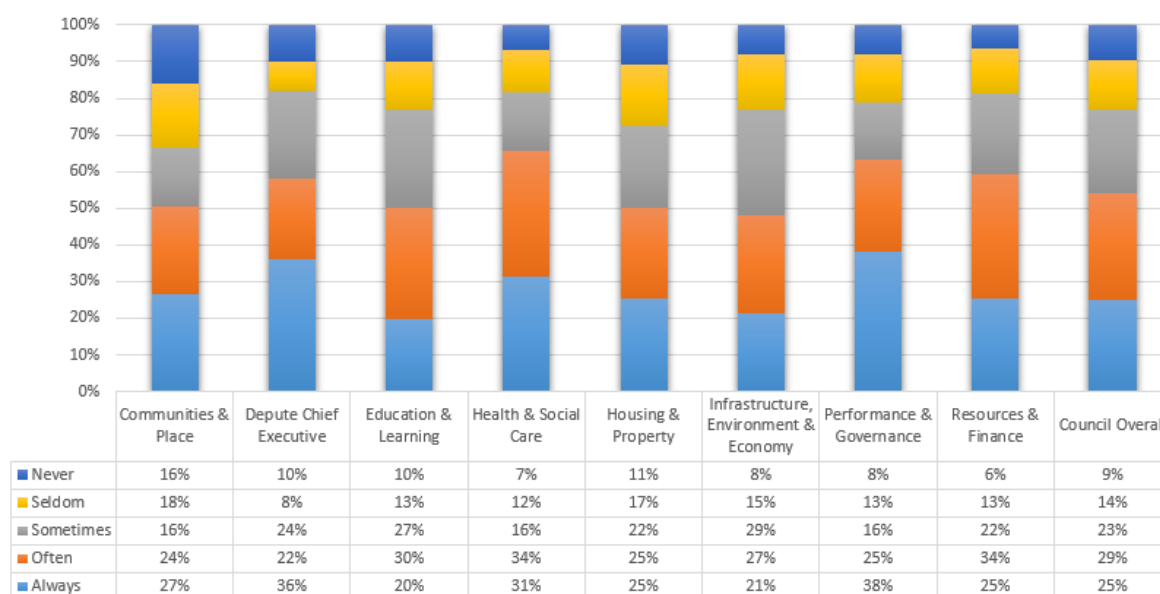
14. I receive encouragement and thanks for the work I do.



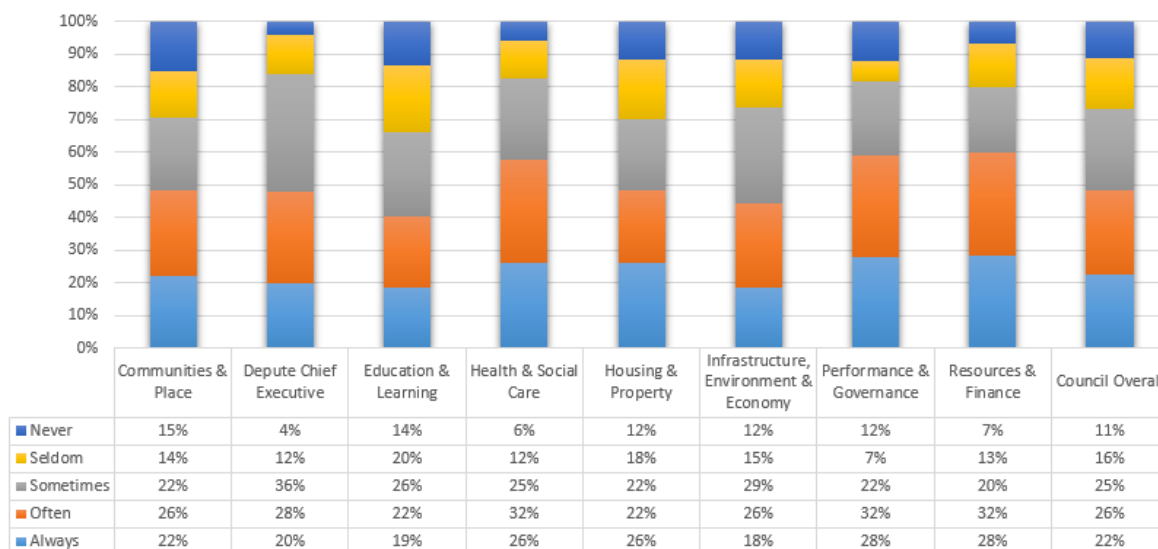
15. I do not feel my concerns are taken seriously.



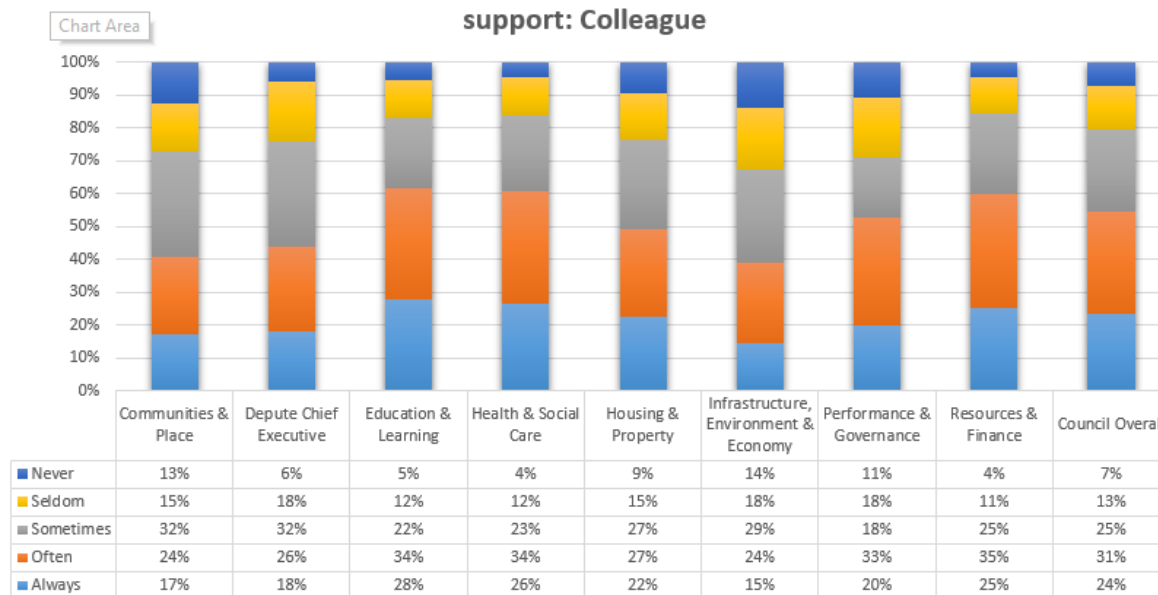
16. My line manager encourages me to develop my skills.



17a. The following people proactively check in with me to see if I need support: Manager



17b. The following people proactively check in with me to see if I need support: Colleague



Question 18. Any other comments/additional information.

238 Respondents (15%) contributed comments and additional information.

11.4 RELATIONSHIPS

Key Findings:

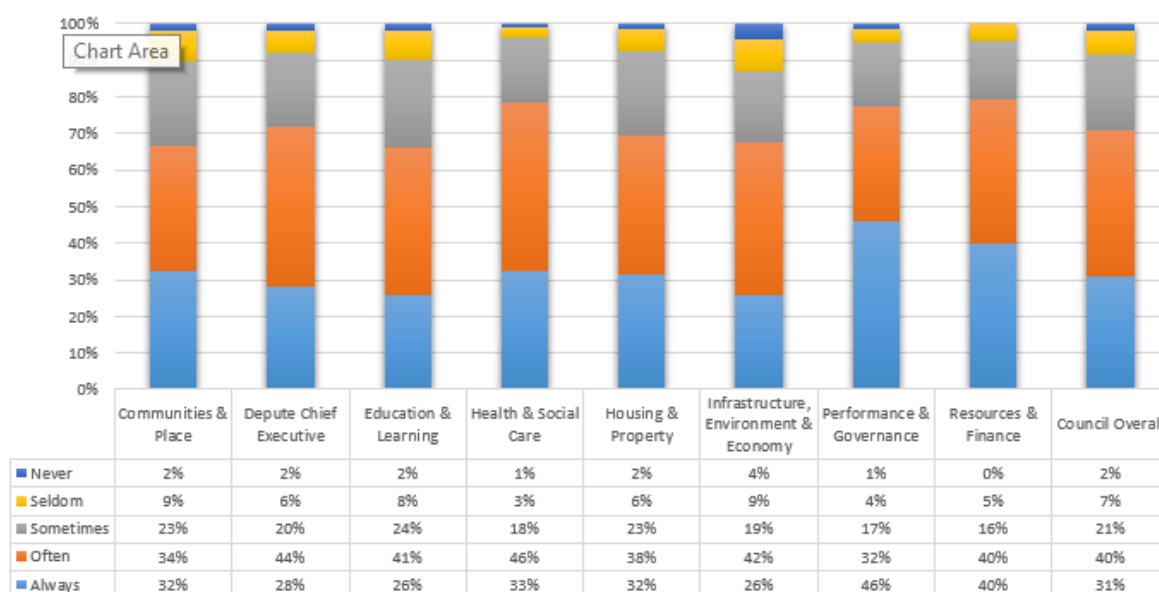
The questions with the highest scores:

Question 22. I would feel confident to approach others in my team if I felt they needed support. (76% responded Always or Often)

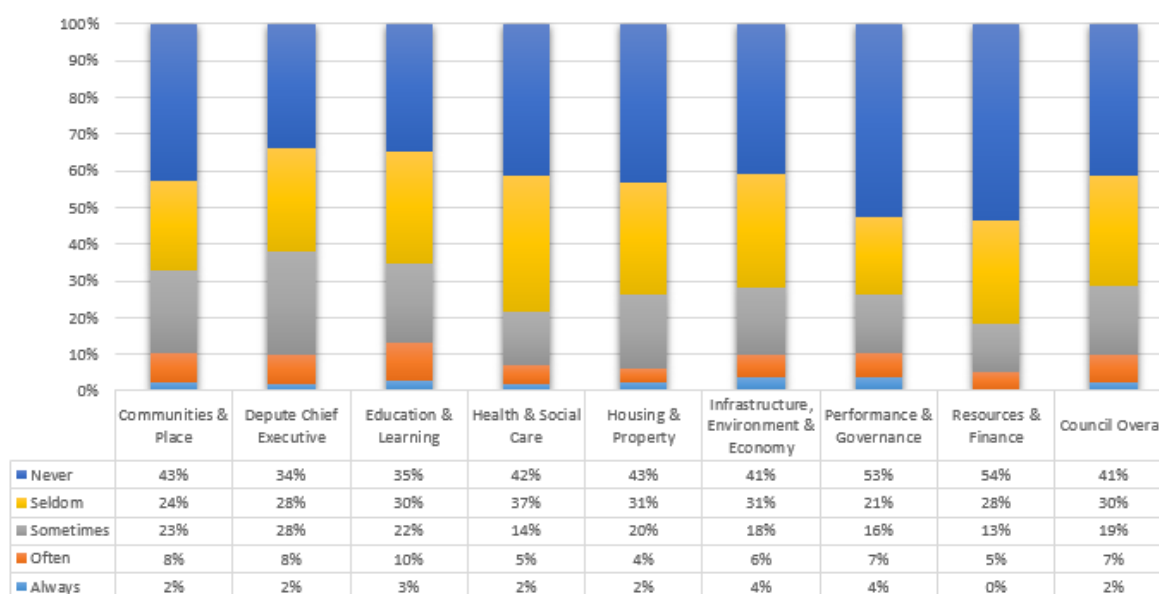
Question 19. I feel I am treated fairly at work (71% responded Always or Often)

Question 20. Due to work relationship issues, I feel uncomfortable whilst at work (71% responded Never or Seldom)

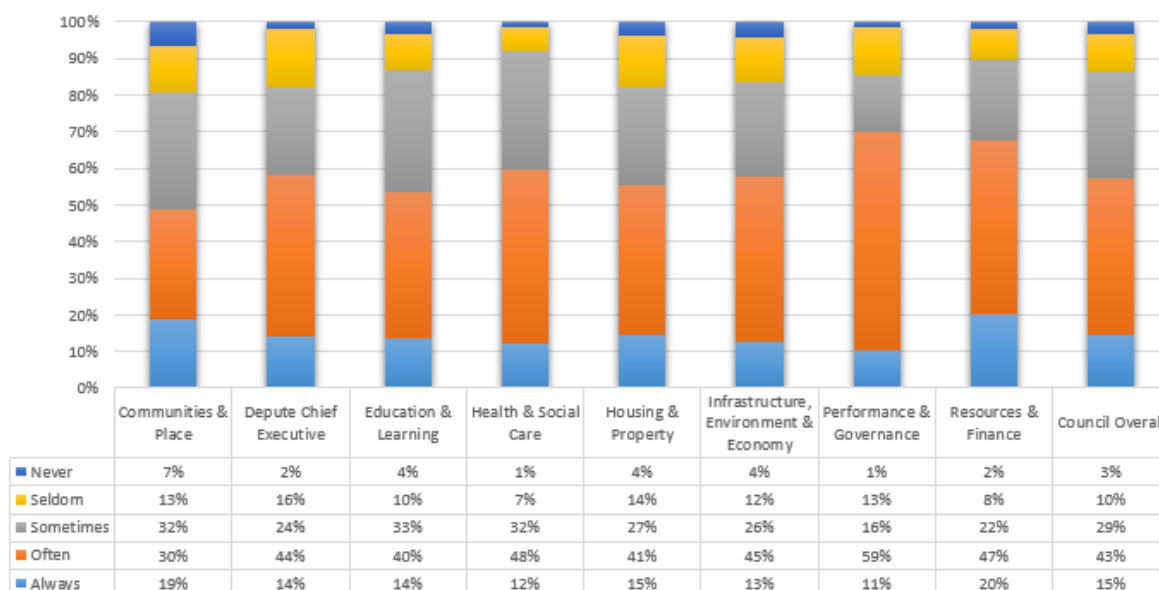
19. I feel I am treated fairly at work.



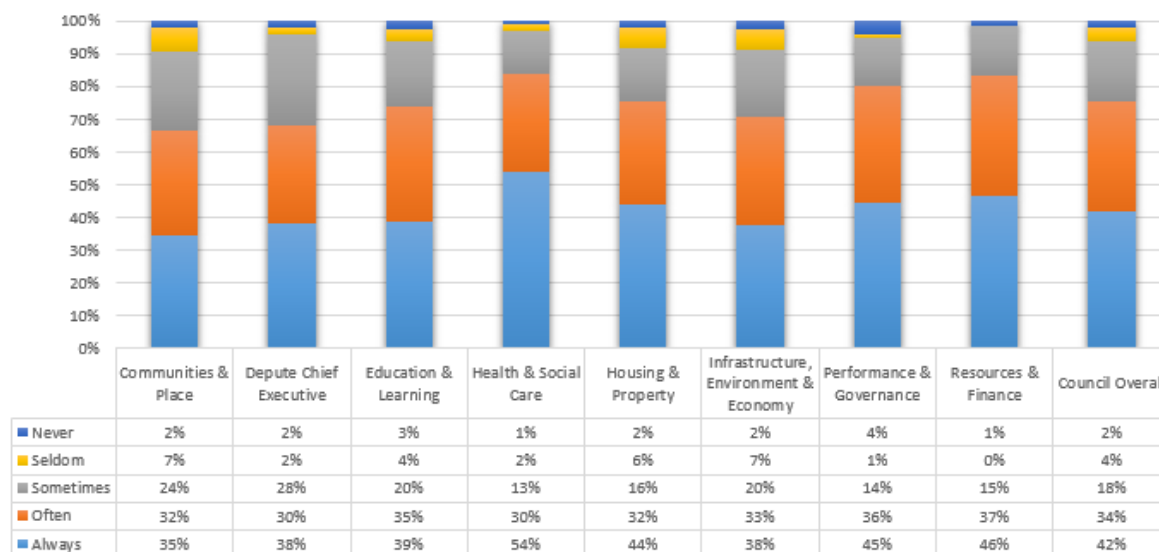
20. Due to work relationship issues, I feel uncomfortable whilst at work.



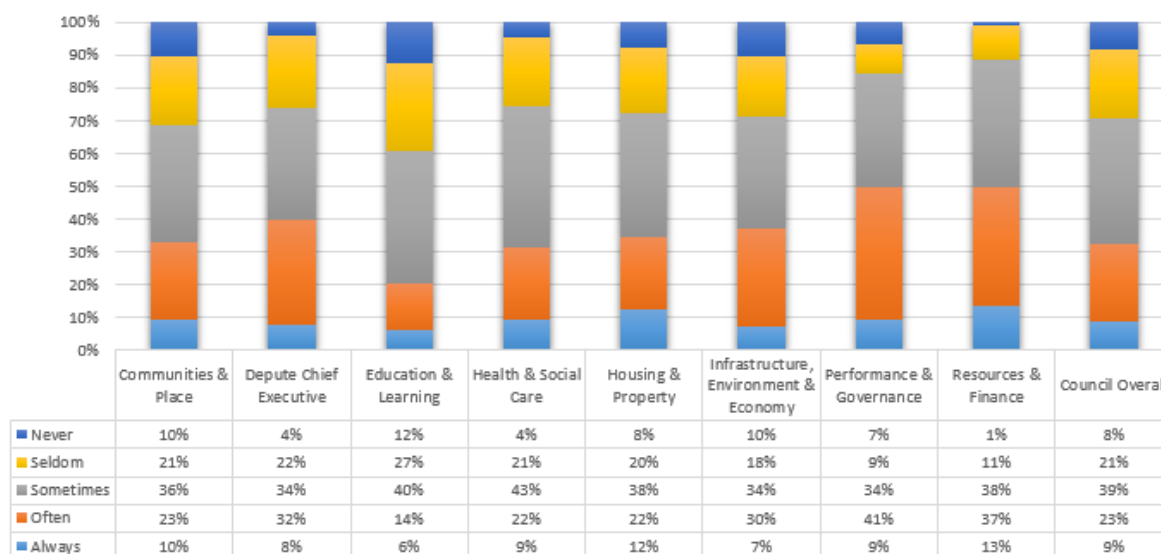
21. There is a positive atmosphere at work.



22. I would feel confident to approach others in my team if I felt they needed support.



23. The Council encourages a positive working environment and makes building good relationships easier.



Question 24. Any other comments/additional information.

283 Respondents (18%) contributed comments and additional information.

11.5 ROLE

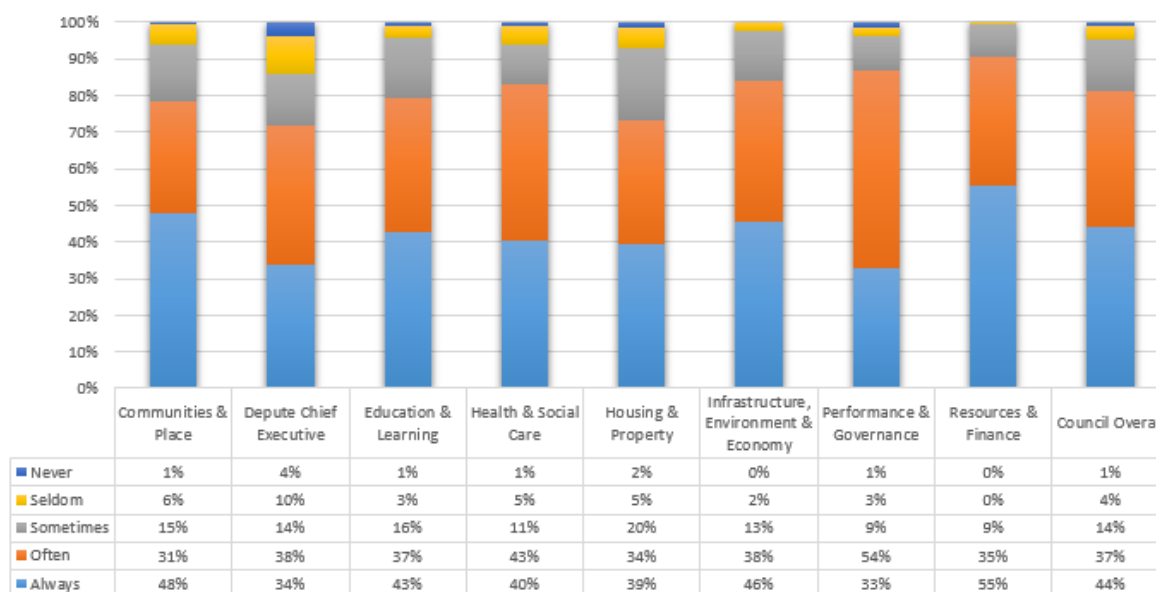
Key Findings:

The questions with the highest scores:

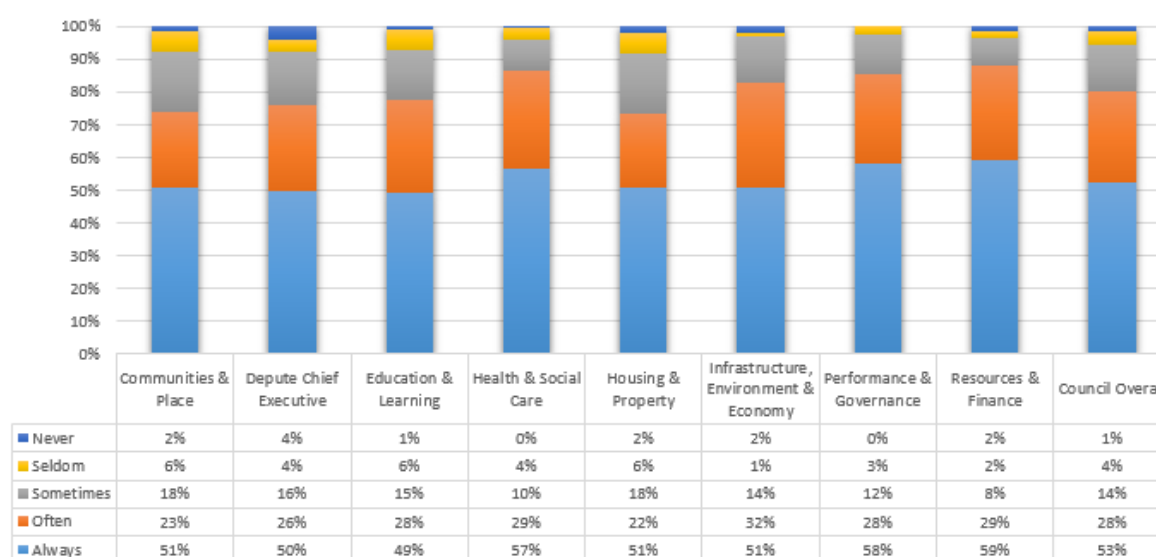
Question 27. I feel confident my skill-sets are suitable to enable me to fulfil my role. (84% responded Always or Often)

Question 25. I am clear what my role is and what is expected from me at work. (81% responded Always or Often)

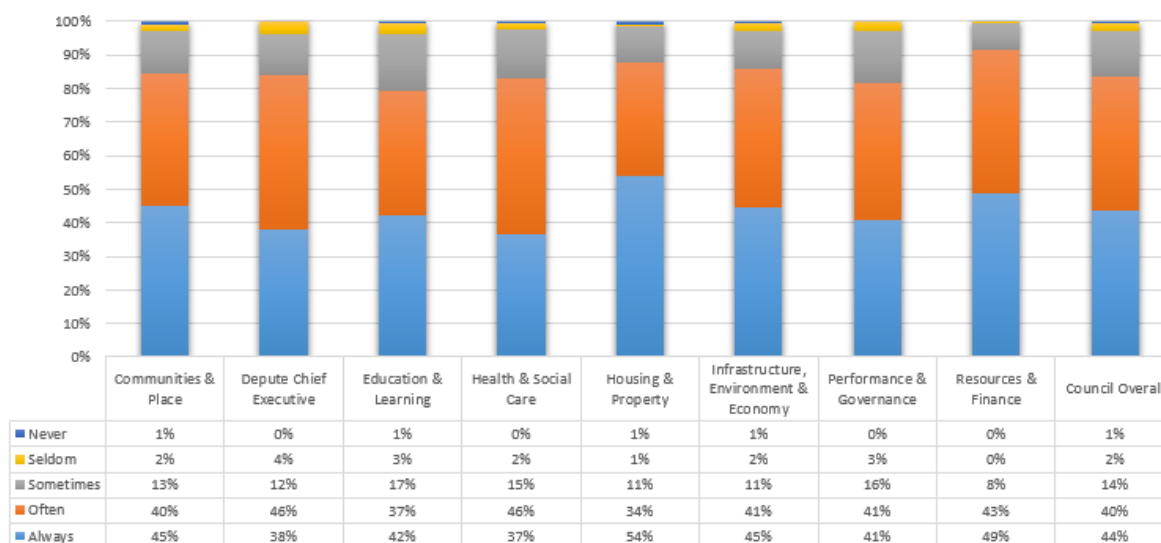
25. I am clear what my role is and what is expected from me at work.



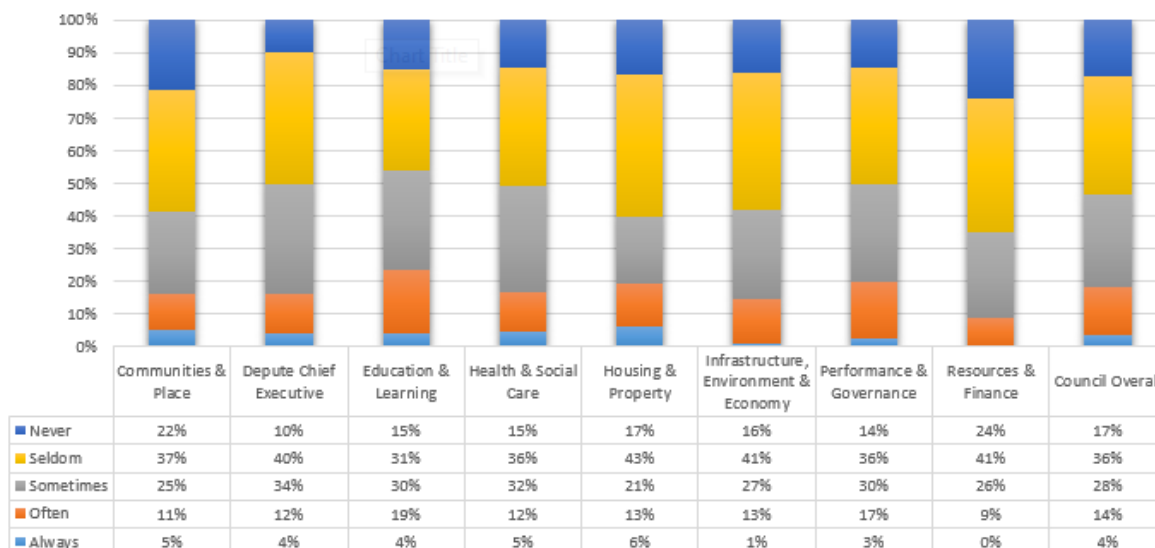
26. I know my line manager and how I fit into my team structure and my service structure.



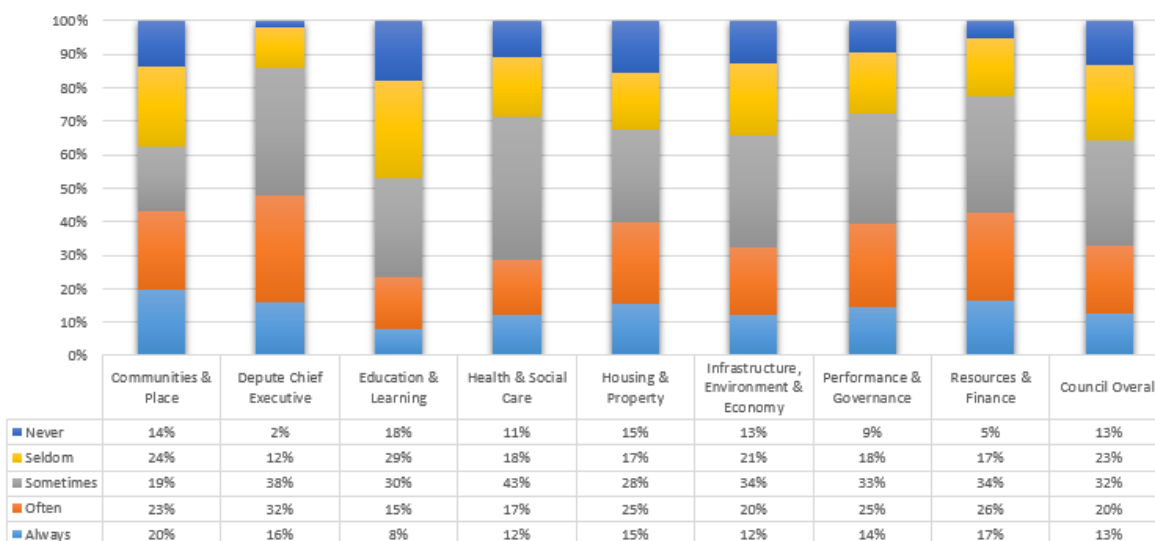
27. I feel confident my skill-sets are suitable to enable me to fulfil my role.



28. I feel my role changes and I am sometimes unclear what is expected of me.



29. I feel my role is recognised as important to the Council.



Question 30. Any other comments/additional information.

217 Respondents (13%) contributed comments and additional information.

11.6 CHANGE

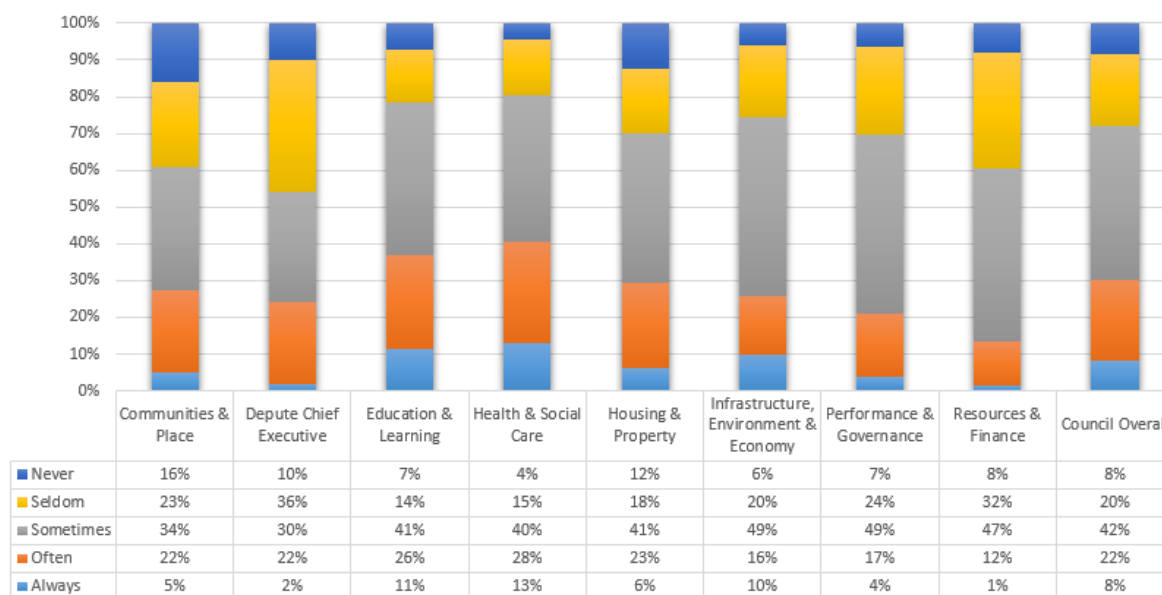
Key Findings:

The questions with the highest scores:

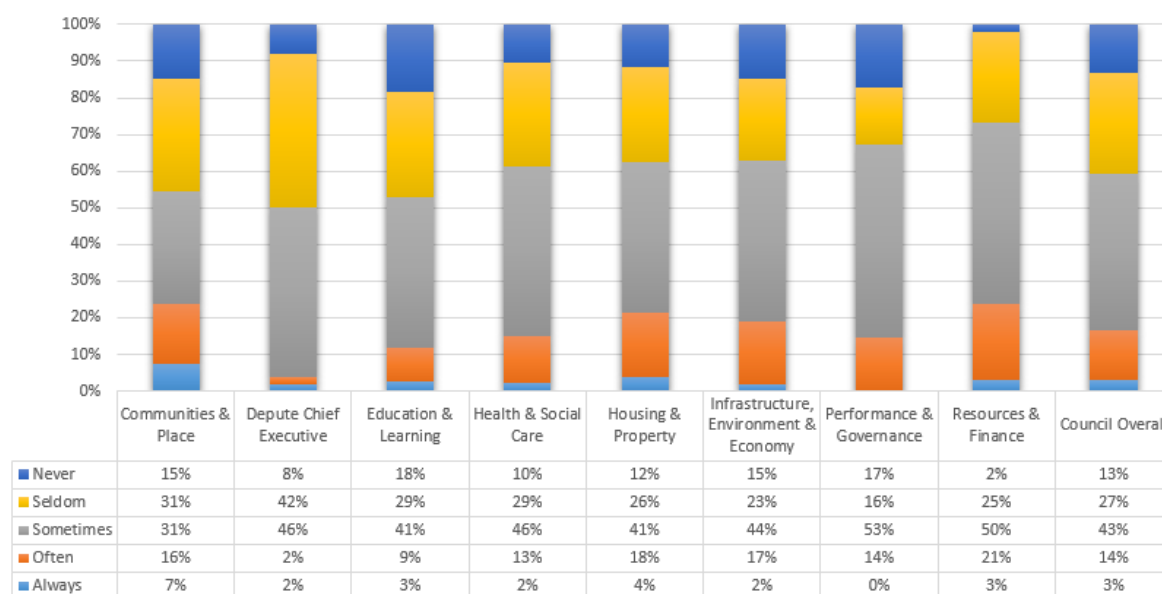
Question 35. I see most changes in my team as an opportunity for improvement. (46% responded Sometimes)

Question 33. I can influence change in my team or service. (44% responded Never or Seldom)

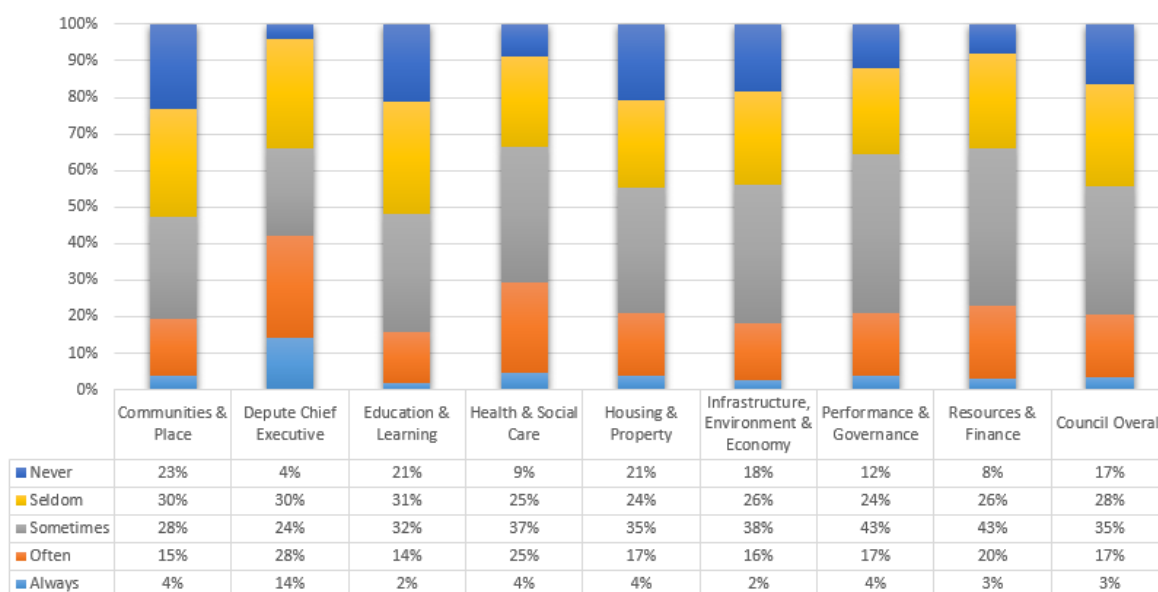
31. I find it difficult to keep up with change in the Council.



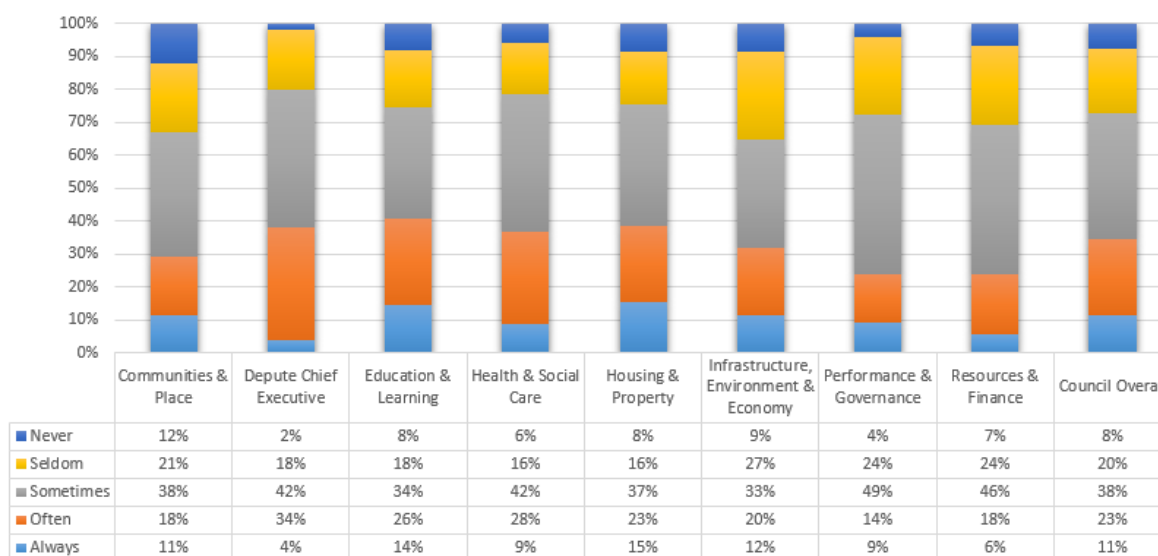
32. I feel the Council is good at explaining and consulting on change.



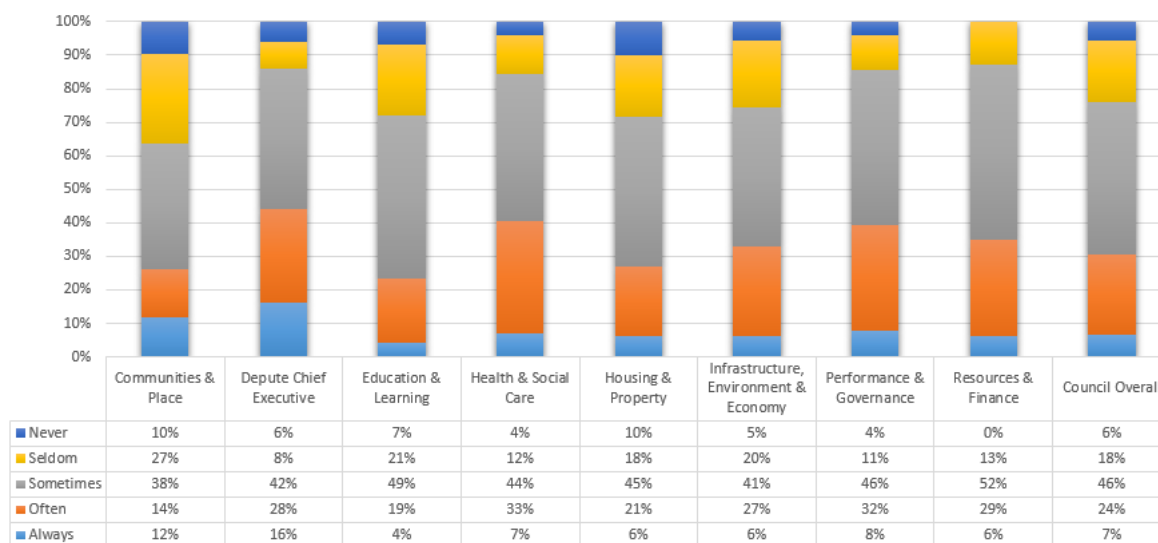
33. I can influence change in my team or service.



34. The impact of change on my team is not considered when change takes place.



35. I see most changes in my team as an opportunity for improvement.



Question 36. Any other comments/additional information.

229 Respondents (14%) contributed comments and additional information.

12. Recommended actions from this survey

It is recommended this survey is published and ECO's, Heads of Service and key managers reflect on their service feedback and that of other services and work on a plan to use the evidence provided to improve wellbeing in their respective services. Trade union colleagues should be involved in this process.

The Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager will support on this to allow coordination and implementation of plans.

It is recommended existing strategies and policies are reviewed taking account of any feedback from this survey and where required reviewed and updated.

Where it has been identified a need for changes in support or better publicity for support (both internal and external) the Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager will review and engage with support providers and work with service managers to ensure we can agree and implement improvements as required.

It is recommended this survey is repeated in 6 months from the last survey to allow for a comparison to see if action plans are improving staffs feeling of wellbeing.

This also allows us to measure if the response rate which was 1614 can be increased to give a more reflective sample and for us also to target more the areas whose contributions were particularly lower than was desired. Wellbeing issues and initiatives will be regularly reported to the central safety committee for members, unions and staff to discuss and consider.