

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

23 September 2009

EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Report by Director of Planning & Development

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Summary

This report details the progress being made in terms of meeting the objectives set out in the Action Plan for the Service to address the main issues arising out of the fourth Employee Survey in 2007.

1. Introduction

The fourth Employee Survey was carried out in November 2007. The return rate for Planning and Development was 78% compared to an overall return rate of 40%.

2 Findings

There were some positive findings in the survey, for example:

- An increase in the number of staff who feel they have supportive colleagues, have sufficient resources to do the job and get feedback on their performance.
- An increase in satisfaction among staff on how immediate managers or supervisors are carrying out their roles
- An increase in the number of staff understanding the need for change, being supportive of it and looking forward to change as a challenge.

However there were also areas for further improvement, for example:

- Only 34% of staff thought that they were well informed, with staff feeling that there was not enough opportunity to discuss issues with management and not enough consultation with staff.
- There was a need to increase the number of staff who have had PDPs and consequent training needs analysed.
- 47% of staff said they felt stressed, the highest level in the Council.
- There was a need to improve the management of change.
- There was a continuing high level (more than half the staff) who are critical of morale in the Service.

3 Involvement of Staff

The Service results were circulated to the management team and local briefings took place to engage staff directly in the results and encourage contributions to the Action Plan to address the areas for improvement which had been identified. An Action Plan for the Service was developed and an updated Plan for 2009/10 is attached as an **Appendix**.

4. Action Plan Update

4.1 The Action Plan covers five themes:

- Communication
- Personal Development Plans, Training & Career Development
- Pay & Conditions/Working Arrangements
- Equipment and Environment
- General

Each theme has a Service commitment and updated actions to deliver improvements.

4.2 Communications

- The Service continues to work to improve communications and the range of both formal and informal meetings/briefings at all levels within the Service have increased in the past year
- Team meetings are being held at least every two months with agenda and action notes produced and Managers are asked to ensure inclusion of relevant corporate topics
- Managers are strongly encouraged to attend the twice yearly corporate briefings for Council Managers, and also the current MDP run by the Employee Development Unit.
- Throughout the year new team managers attend the Corporate Management Induction Course
- Use of Sharepoint has increased within the Service so that staff who have a common interest can easily share information, keep it updated and comment on issues etc. Sharepoint is actively used for e-Planning, Building Standards and Local Plans.
- Many more cross service working groups have been operating in the run up to the introduction of e-Planning, the new Planning legislation and also the review of the Building Standards Service following external audit. These have had very positive outcomes in terms of the work completed on reviewing business processes and procedures leading not only to greater consistency and efficiency but increased staff skills, knowledge and morale.
- There has also been a greater emphasis placed on communicating with other Services and having joint working groups on particular topics thus leading to improved outcomes, consistency and sharing of good practice.

4.3 Personal Development Plans, Training and Career Development

- The Service has re-emphasised that it is a priority that all staff have a Personal Development Plans (PDP) as a priority. Monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that all staff have a PDP by March 2010.

- Formal training in PDPs is delivered through management induction and PDP courses run by Employee Development
- A Service Training and Development Plan will be produced for 2009/10 to reflect the training needs arising from corporate and service priorities as they feed through the Service Plan, Team Plans and eventually to personal objectives and PDPs.
- The Service has appointed and is supporting a healthy number of trainees e.g. graduate planners and trainee building standard surveyors, as well as assisting other staff to undertake degree qualifications which will be of future use within the Service. A formal training policy and plan for these staff will be drawn up in 2009/2010.

4.4 Pay & Conditions/Working Arrangements

- Service Managers are continuing to support team members through job evaluation and implementation of the new terms and conditions package.
- A whole Service Work Positive Survey (Stress Risk Assessment) was undertaken in Nov 2008 and the initial findings discussed by Senior Management in February 2009. A service-wide focus group, facilitated by Employee Development, is currently meeting and will produce an Action Plan by Oct 2009.
- Service Managers are attending Managing Workplace Stress courses with all staff being encouraged to attend Stress Awareness training.
- Greater use is being made of flexible working arrangements with condensed hours and home working being introduced on a more formal basis.
- Council vans have been introduced to four of the area offices and monitoring is being done to assess their effectiveness and efficiency in reducing travel costs.

4.5 Equipment and Environment

- While the Asset Management Review and spend on office rationalisation is improving working conditions e.g. first at Drummie and now at Wick in the coming year, the Service is also looking to see what more minor improvements can be made.
- At Headquarters, plans are almost finalised and ready to be put out to tender for the refurbishments of the toilets and back and front stairwells
- A humidity test was done at Headquarters which indicated that the air was too dry and adjustments were made to the ventilation system. Liaison is also continuing with H&P to ensure regular maintenance of the system.
- Senior Managers have attended the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Health and Safety course for Senior Executives.
- Office layouts are constantly under review to maximise efficiency with a permanent war waged on paper and files around the office
- The Service has taken part in the corporate printer rationalisation where it was found that the Service was well ahead of others in the small numbers of printers it had and also in its use of centralised printer/copier/scanning machines.

4.6 General

- Managers and staff have been encouraged to attend Change Management and Dealing with Change training.
- The Service has endeavoured to create a culture of celebrating success at all levels e.g. encouraging entries to the Council's Quality Awards, highlighting individual and team successes in the quarterly staff newsletter, encouraging a 'have you said thank you today' attitude.
- As well as monitoring complaints we are also recording compliments and letters of thanks received by the Service.

5. Monitoring

- 5.1 A small focus group of staff, representative of all parts of the Service, has been created to assist in taking forward and monitoring the Service Action Plan. Monitoring is also undertaken quarterly by the Service Management Team.
- 5.2 A report updating progress will be presented to Planning, Environment & Development Committee in September 2010.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to **NOTE** progress to date and **APPROVE** the revised Action Plan to address areas where further improvement is required.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Planning & Development

Date: 16 September 2009

Author: Sheila Lunn, Business Support Manager (2294)

**EMPLOYEE SURVEY
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN updated for 2009/10**

Theme	Action	Lead Official(s)
1. Communication	<p>We will improve communication within the Service</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor that Team briefings are being undertaken as per the Council's Internal Communication Standards and ensure the passing on of corporate briefings at team meetings. 2. All Manager to attend Chief Executive's Briefing Sessions and cascade keynote subjects to team members 3. Mangers will also brief staff following Weekly Business/Weekly Diary Meetings and Service Management Team meetings. 4. Ensure better communication between, and encourage opportunities for all staff to meet/work with other colleagues on a regular basis. 5. Continue and expand the use of information technology to create opportunities for informal exchange of views and information within the Service and with other Services 6. Promote cross service working groups to allow staff from different Services to work together on particular issues/project 	<p>SMT(Service Management Team)</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p>

2. PDPs/Training and Career Development	<p>We will complete the roll-out of PDPs to all staff and ensure appropriate training and development opportunities are available within any budgetary constraints.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All staff to have a PDP by March 2010. 2. Monitor compliance on carrying out PDP 3. Prepare a Service Training & Development Plan for 2010/11 which is linked both to the Service Plan and also the outcomes of PDPs. 4. Develop informal methods of training and developing staff e.g. on the job training, coaching and mentoring 5. .Prepare formal Training Policy and Plans for trainee staff within the Service 	<p>SMT</p> <p>Business Support Manager (BSM) BSM</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>BSM</p>
3. Pay & Terms & Conditions/Working Arrangements	<p>We will ensure that effective support and communications are in place for all changes to working arrangements and to manage workload and stress.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Managers will continue to support staff effectively through Job Evaluation and new conditions of service implementation. 2. Implement the Action Plan arising from the Work Positive Survey (Stress Risk Assessment) 3. Continue to make use of flexible working arrangements and to encourage working across area boundaries 	<p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p>
4. Equipment and Environment	<p>We will provide a safe and supportive working environment.</p>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Office accommodation will continue to be reviewed to improve working conditions. 2. The opportunity will be taken, when re-organising office layouts, to clear away paper and files as much as possible and create break-out areas for staff especially in open plan areas 3. A Service Health and Safety Working Group will be re-formed and meet at least quarterly. 4. The operation of the 'buddy' system for lone workers will be reviewed 5. Review the use of Council vans and seek ways to increase the use of tele and video conferencing to cut down travelling time 	<p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>BSM</p> <p>BSM</p> <p>SMT</p>
<p>5. General</p>	<p>We will increase staff morale and motivations by strengthening managers' skills in communication, people and performance management and the management of change.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Managers will continue to emphasise a culture which acknowledges and celebrates success at all levels. 2. Managers will promote the uptake of Change Management and Dealing with Change training. 3. Managers will ensure appropriate supervisory training and development for all who have some responsibility for supervising staff 	<p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p>

Employee Survey Action Plan – 9-9-0

Employee Survey Action Plan 15.09.09