

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

1 October 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Fourth Employee Survey – Finance Service Improvement Actions

Report by Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance

Summary

This report provides members with Improvement Actions identified for the Finance Service in response to the views expressed in the fourth Highland Council Survey.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The fourth Employee Survey was conducted in November 2007 with the results reported to Resources Committee on 20 February 2008.
- 1.2 The Resources Committee approved proposals to inform staff of the results and to consult on the actions required to improve.
- 1.3 The corporate improvements identified were reported to and agreed at, Resources Committee on 20 August 2008. This report advised that Services will also report Service-specific improvements to their strategic committees during the following cycle.

2. FINANCE SERVICE-SPECIFIC RESULTS

- 2.1 At 79% (290), the response rate to the Staff Survey by Finance Service staff was the highest within the Council. This was an increase of 18% from the 61% who responded to the 2005 Survey.
- 2.2 Similar to the other Council Services, the results from a Finance Service perspective were varied.
- 2.3 The results showed an improving picture of support by line managers and the majority of staff were aware of the Council's Flexible Working Policy, and felt they could use it if they wished to do so. Moreover, the continued commitment to Training & Development is very well received partly enabled by a high % of Finance Service staff receiving their Personal Development Plan on (at least) an annual basis.
- 2.4 The concerns expressed were in respect of job security, pay, morale and communication which also led to a fall in job satisfaction. 49% of Finance Staff who responded advised that they were satisfied with their job, a fall of 8% on 2005. The Council average for job satisfaction is 64%.

3. STRATEGY, INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The Finance Service Management Team (FMT) designed and agreed a strategy to effectively manage the Service's response to the results of survey.

- 3.2 Finance Service staff were actively encouraged to attend the Corporate Employee Survey events where members of the Council's Senior Management Team presented the results from a Corporate perspective.
- 3.3 In addition to the corporate events, FMT members considered that it was critical for them to meet with all their staff. FMT members delivered a total of 21 presentations to their staff reporting the Service-specific results. These presentations were delivered throughout the Highlands and staff were afforded the opportunity to offer any Improvement Actions either during the presentation and/or in writing thereafter, anonymously if preferred.
- 3.4 The wider group of 27 Finance Managers from across the Service then met to discuss and agree the Improvement Actions, including agreeing the Lead Officer for each of these actions.
- 3.5 The FMT and Finance Managers recognised that it is good practice to specify a Lead Officer for each of these actions for reasons including ownership. It is equally important to recognise that all Finance Service staff have at least a contributory role to play in some of the actions. Participating in the "*Work Positive*" initiative to better understand the concerns regarding stress is one such example. Naturally, effective management by the Lead Officers (and by the FMT) on all the Improvement Actions is essential.

4. FINANCE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS AND MONITORING

- 4.1 The proposed Improvement Actions for the Finance Service are shown at Appendix 1. They are grouped under 5 themes:
- Communication
 - Performance and Stress Management
 - Working Arrangements
 - Change Management
 - Progress
- 4.2 Progress against these actions will be monitored by the FMT, the Chief Executive's Quarterly Performance Review meetings and the Employee Survey Reference Group. Staff will receive updates from their respective FMT member and the aforementioned Quarterly Performance Reviews.
- 4.3 A report on progress will be presented to Resources Committee in September 2009.

Recommendations

Members are asked to approve the Finance Service improvement actions in response to the fourth Employee Survey.

Signature:

Designation: Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance

Date: 5 September 2008

Author: Allan R Gunn, Business & Technical Support Manager

Author's Tel No.: 01463 702491

Appendix 1

Theme	Agreed Action	Lead Officer/s
<p>Communication</p>	<p>Design and maintain dedicated web page on the Intranet replacing the Staff Newsletter.</p>	<p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p>
	<p>Managers undertake monthly meetings, including capturing action points, where appropriate.</p>	<p>All Managers</p>
	<p>Each Finance Management Team (FMT) member to attend respective team meetings (at least) annually.</p>	<p>FMT Members</p>
	<p>Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance to deliver annual briefing to all staff.</p>	<p>Depute Chief Exec & Director of Finance</p>
	<p>FMT regularly brief Managers of overview of all Weekly Business Management items.</p>	<p>FMT Members</p>
	<p>Update and communicate work plans to all, where appropriate.</p>	<p>All Managers</p>
	<p>Increased use of web cams, where appropriate.</p>	<p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p>
	<p>Recirculate the Finance Service communication strategy.</p>	<p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p>
	<p>Clarify Council strategy behind Public Folders and Intranet, and follow accordingly.</p>	<p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p>
<p>Improve naming conventions of files particularly for shared folders.</p>	<p>All Managers</p>	

Theme	Agreed Action	Lead Officer/s
Performance and Stress Management	Implement <i>Work Positive</i> .	Business & Technical Support Manager
	Act on action plans arising from <i>Work Positive</i> .	All Managers
	Ensure that all new staff to the Finance Service have inductions.	All Managers
	All Finance Service staff have PDP at least every year.	All Managers
	Deliver Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefits Statutory Performance Indicators (SPI) session to all Exchequer staff.	Policy & Development Manager (Exchequer) and Business Support Officer (Exchequer)
	Managers to ensure coaching/buddying arrangements in place, as appropriate.	All Managers
	Provide feedback to staff following Finance Service Leadership Development Programme.	Business & Technical Support Manager
	Continue with Finance Service Leadership Development Programme for appropriate posts.	Business & Technical Support Manager
Undertake age profile of Finance Service and identify new ways of recruiting staff.	Head of Accounting	

Theme	Agreed Action	Lead Officer/s
Working Arrangements	<p>Review forward planning of installation of Finance Systems software releases.</p> <p>Review role, function and remit of the Service Centre in relation to handling calls in connection with the Finance Service.</p> <p>Review option of shift working.</p> <p>Continue to review accommodation provision taking advantage of any opportunities to further improve standards of accommodation provided to staff.</p> <p>Maintain and update Exchequer procedures.</p> <p>Provide up-to-date guidance on Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit circulars.</p>	<p>All Finance Systems Owners</p> <p>Head of Exchequer</p> <p>Head of Exchequer</p> <p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p> <p>Policy & Development Manager (Exchequer)</p> <p>Policy & Development Manager (Exchequer)</p>
Change Management	<p>Recirculate the Finance Service communication strategy.</p> <p>Relevant staff wishing to attend Change Management training course continue to be supported.</p> <p>Produce an aide memoir for managers to further assist / simplify process of advising all relevant parties in respect of starters/leavers. Include this aide memoir in starter/leaver pack for recruitment.</p>	<p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p> <p>All Managers</p> <p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p>
Progress	<p>Investigate possibility of including section-identifier for next MORI Staff Survey.</p>	<p>Business & Technical Support Manager</p>