The Highland Council

Committee:	**The Highland Council**
Date:	**14 December 2023**
Report Title:	**Staff Survey Action Plan**
Report By:	**Depute Chief Executive**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 On 26 October the Council considered the Staff Survey Report. The responses to the survey are being used to inform policy and practice to deliver continuous improvement and improve staff engagement in the organisation.

1.2 To help inform this work, Services have met with their staff since April 2023 to discuss the survey finding which have focused on three key improvement themes: employee engagement and communications; senior leader visibility; and managing change.

1.3 Feedback from these sessions has been collated and a draft Corporate Action Plan with indicative timescales has been developed (**Appendix 1**).

1.4 A Wellbeing and Stress Survey is due to be issued before the end of the year.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

    i. **Agree** the priority actions as contained in the Draft Action Plan in **Appendix 1**; and

    ii. **Note** the ongoing work to address the bullying and harassment concerns and further survey on wellbeing and stress to be issued.

3. Implications

3.1 Resources – Staff are our key resource, the survey and the actions arising from it are critical to maximising our use of staff resources in future. It is therefore essential that the Council addresses the issues raised in the staff survey and that it invests in its workforce. Work is underway to look at options to introduce an employee accreditation scheme which, if progressed, will have staff and financial resource implications. Where resources have been identified by staff as an issue, these matters have been discussed in the staff engagement sessions and will be further explored at Service level.

3.2   Legal – No specific issues identified which have legal implications.

3.3   Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – Methods of engagement with the workforce have to be accessible to all staff to comply with equality issues eg those who do not have access to laptops, part time staff, staff who work flexible work patterns.

3.4   Climate Change / Carbon Clever – there are no implications arising from this report.

3.5   Risk – there is a risk if actions are not taken forward it will be increasingly difficult to effectively engage with staff and this is likely to have a negative impact on attendance levels, grievances, turnover and productivity.

3.6   Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – there are no implications arising from this report.

3.7   Gaelic – there are no implications arising from this report.

4.   Staff Survey Findings and Action Plan

4.1   The survey report identified the following three key areas for improvement:

- Engagement
- Senior Leadership Visibility
- Management Change

4.2   Service survey sessions were undertaken during April to November 2023, led by the Service ECOs and supported by the Service HR Business Partners.

4.3   Services were asked to cascade survey results, this has been done in a number of ways, including face to face and online. The sessions were used to review, discuss and generate ideas to inform the corporate employee engagement action plan, focusing on the three key areas for improvement.

4.4   All suggestions have been captured and collated and the common themes across all Services identified. Service-specific issues that can be implemented straight away are being taken forward within each Service. Issues which are considered as priority actions for the whole organisation will be taken forward corporately and are set out in a high level Draft Action Plan at **Appendix 1**.

4.5   There are already a number of actions underway:

- A Health and Wellbeing Survey is about to be issued
- A programme of staff briefings is ongoing
- Staff budget engagement is ongoing
- Commencing Investors in People (IIP) accreditation is under consideration
- Service level action planning is well developed

4.6   The Employee Engagement Index score is an outcome measure based on the average sum of 5 key engagement questions which measures advocacy of the organisation, attachment to the Council and how much the Council inspires staff to be better workers. The overall Engagement score for the Council according to the Staff Survey was 31% which is below the average Local Authority benchmark. There are notably

high neutral responses in each of the individual Engagement questions with all 5 questions having over a 40% neither agree nor disagree rate.

4.7   Examples of how these areas are being addressed through improved engagement at all levels include: Chief Executive on-line staff engagement sessions; planned visits by the Corporate Management Team to area based teams; ECO/Heads of Service service-wide briefings; regular extended management team sessions; Heads of Service attending their staff's team meetings and so on.

5.   Bullying and Harassment

5.1   The Staff Engagement Survey reported bullying and harassment to be around 10% (2% higher than the benchmark). It is the case that pre pandemic, the benchmark score was 10% which is in line with the Council's score at the time the survey was undertaken. The reported level does not reflect recorded data for the same period of the staff survey with 8 cases reported in 2022.

5.2   Any allegations of bullying and harassment should be reported. If the individual is not able to raise it directly with the alleged perpetrator, it can be reported confidentially to the line or senior manager; a Council bullying and harassment contact; HR; or trade union. The Bullying and Harassment guidance has recently been reviewed through the HR Sub Group with additional bullying and harassment contacts identified and trained who have the following remit:

- to listen to employees who believe they are being harassed, to clarify the options open to them and to assist them in resolving the matter informally where possible;
- to provide similar support to those accused of harassment; and
- where requested, to support individuals throughout the resolution of their concerns.

5.3   Staff and managers have also been reminded through information published on Staff Connections that the Council has a 'zero tolerance approach to any form of bullying and harassment including gender based violence' as part of the promotion of the Equally Safe at Work initiative.

5.4   A Wellbeing and Stress Survey is due to be issued before the end of the year and will provide an updated position on not only the wellbeing of our workforce, but also bullying and harassment. It is the intention the outcome of this survey will be reported back to Council ideally in March 2024.

Designation: Interim Depute Chief Executive

Date: 4 December 2023

Author: Elaine Barrie, Head of People

Background Papers: Staff Survey Results

Appendices: Appendix 1 Draft Corporate Action Plan

Draft Employee Survey Corporate Action Plan   **Appendix 1**

1	Engagement	Action	Owner	Target Date
1.1	***Valuing Staff***			
1.1.1	Staff Recognition, celebrating success, ensure recognition	Complement annual staff recognition event with regular staff recognition initiatives eg reporting staff success at committee, Service team events, staff connections, Service news letters.	ECOs/Managers	Mar-24
1.2	***Communication***			
1.2.1	Engagement Strategy	Develop and implement Strategy to include appropriate forms of communication and when to engage - ongoing, real time, more frequent feedback from line managers, use of huddles	Head of People	Mar-24
1.2.2	Survey Results Action Plan	Develop draft action plan to be communicated to staff and Memberrs for feedback prior to finalisation	Head of People	Dec-23
1.2.3	MS Teams protocol	Develop guidance for meeting protocols when using MS Teams	Head of People	Jan-24
1.2.4	Visibilty of Service and Team structures	Organisational charts updated and available on intranet	ECO/Relevant Service Managers	Jan-24
1.2.5	Staff Suggestion Feedback Scheme	Budget Suggestion Scheme currently live - feedback to staff underway and final feedback by end of financial year. Regular scheme to be established	Head of People/Corporate Communications Manager	Mar-24
1.2.6	Management Blog/Vlog	Introduce blogs/vlogs	ECO/Relevant Service Managers	Mar-24
1.2.7	Two Way Communications	Staff encouraged to feed in/feedback at meetings/staff engagement sessions and item formally on relevant agendas	ECO/Relevant Service Managers	Dec-23

1.3	*Training*			
1.3.1	Mandatory leadership and management courses	Relevant training to include effective communication	Head of People	Mar-24
1.3.2	ICT Training	Recruiting ICT trainer for 24 months to support FHRP Programme	Head of People	Jan-24

2	**Leadership Visablity**	**Action**	**Owner**	**Target Date**
2.1	Methods to improve visability	Potential to consider initiating Employee Forum; ECO blogs; local area visits by senior managers; Improved onboarding for new staff; Senior leaders to offer staff drop-in clinics	ECOs/CMT	Mar-24
2.2	Timing of leadership engagment being inclusive for all staff	Ensure reasonable notice for arranging staff engagements with leaders so that all staff can attend that want to.	All Leaders	Jan-24

3	**Managing Change**	**Action**	**Owner**	**Target Date**
3.1	*Improvement in Change Processes*			
3.1.1	Early engagement with key staff and opportunities to shape change at the beginning	Review and promote guidance on change process documentation to incorporate staff's early engagement/involvement, providing oppportunity to shape change and reinforce need for effective communcations through out process	Head of People/Service Lead Strategic Improvement	Mar-24
3.1.2	Full business case prior to change			
3.1.3	Comms throughout the whole process			
3.1.4	Clear responsibilites			
3.2	*Stakeholder consultation*	Services to review methods of achieving this	ECOs	Mar-24
3.3	*Training*			
3.3.1	Clear communication of benefits of change	Guidance on how to consult effectively	Head of People/Head of Community Support and Engagement	Mar-24
3.3.2	Training on service design	Review training and guidance on change management	Head of People	Feb-24