

Title of Report: **Employee Attitude Survey 2009 - update on action planning**

Report to be considered by: Resource Management Select Committee

Date of Meeting: 13 September 2010

Purpose of Report: To provide RMSC with an update on the actions that have taken place within services to address issues identified in the EAS 2009 survey results

Recommended Action: To note the information

Reason for decision to be taken: n/a

Other options considered: n/a

Key background documentation: Employee Attitude Survey 2009 Highlights tool

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priority(ies):

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic recession** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP2 – Raise levels of educational achievement** – improving school performance levels
- CPP3 – Reduce West Berkshire’s carbon footprint** – to reduce CO₂ emissions in West Berkshire and contribute to waste management, green travel, transportation and energy efficiency

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme(s):

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPT4 - High Quality Planning**
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPT9 - Successful Schools and Learning**
- CPT10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**
- CPT12 - Including Everyone**
- CPT13 - Value for Money**
- CPT14 - Effective People**
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First**
- CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:
Ensuring that the issues addressed in the Employee Attitude Survey 2009 are addressed to ensure a well-managed and motivated workforce.

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Implications

Policy:	n/a
Financial:	None If there are any financial implications contained within this report this section must be signed off by a West Berkshire Group Accountant. Please note that the report cannot be accepted by Policy and Communication unless this action has been undertaken.
Personnel:	this report addresses human resources matters in detail
Legal/Procurement:	n/a
Property:	n/a
Risk Management:	n/a
Equalities Impact Assessment:	n/a For advice please contact Principal Policy Officer (Equalities) on Ext. 2441.
Corporate Board's Recommendation:	to be completed after the Corporate Board meeting

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the Employee Attitude Survey carried out in WBC in June 2009, services were asked to consider their service results and, if necessary, make an action plan to address the issues raised.
- 1.2 In May 2010, HR sought information from services about the activities that they had carried out to communicate the service results and to devise their action plans. Appendix A is the template which services were asked to complete. Appendix B is a summary of the responses returned to HR.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 RMSC may wish to draw up a list of good practice for services to implement, taking account of the actions that services have adopted as a result of the EAS 2009.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Services have taken the results of the EAS seriously and, where necessary, have worked to address the issues that were raised by the results. The changes to service structure which took effect in April 2010 means that there are some gaps in information and makes it a little difficult to analyse the results. However, there are some very interesting and worthwhile activities emerging from the action plans, many of which could be adopted across the board to improve staff engagement.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The second WBC Employee Attitude Survey was run by ORC International in June 2009. The overall results in 2009 were extremely positive and reflected very well on the Council as a place to work.
- 1.2 The corporate results were publicised to employees through a Reporter article in October and a summary presentation of the results is available on the intranet at <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/haveyoursay>. There were only two questions on which the Council scored below the benchmark for local government, with the rest scoring at least in line with the average or above it. However, there was significant variation in results between services. Thus, although no corporate action plan was felt necessary this time, individual services were directed by Corporate Board to draw up action plans where needed.
- 1.3 Every Head of Service was sent an analysis of the results for their service analysing their service results against the WBC average, the local government benchmark, and their own results in 2007 (trend analysis). Where teams contained results for 10 or more employees, these analyses were available separately. HoS were also provided with the highlights tool which contains results for the whole council and allows managers to make a range of comparisons.
- 1.4 Heads of Service were asked to communicate the service/team results to employees in their area during September and October 2009. They had a discussion at Corporate Management Team on 29th October 2009 and those which had had problem areas identified by the EAS were expected to develop and implement an action plan, supported by the HR Contact for the service. Guidance notes were provided to HoS by HR in early September 2009 to support the process.
- 1.5 This report updates RMSC over one year on from the June 2009 survey on the actions that have been taken by service areas.

Note: A *positive* result is the combined score for employees responding with “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statements in the survey.

2. Summary of employee engagement and management scores

- 2.1 As part of the Management Board report in November 2009, an analysis was made of certain key questions relating to management and employee engagement. The results can be used as shorthand to identify those services which might need to explore the results further with a view to taking actions to address the issues raised. Of course, this does not show the whole picture, and it is always necessary to go back to the full results for each service to make a proper assessment.
- 2.2 These results are summarised as percentage positive scores. Those scores with one asterisk fall below the WBC average on this measure. Scores with two asterisks fall below the local government benchmark (which is always lower than the WBC average).
- 2.3 The scores are shown in the table below:

Service	Management average	Employee Engagement
HR	75	90
Benefits & Exchequer	55*	85
Community Care and Well-Being	57	81
Highways and Transport	57	80
Children and Youth	72	80
Cultural Services	56	79
Older People	49*	77
Customer Services	64	77
ICT	53*	76
Education	57	76
Policy and Communication	61	75*
Housing and Performance	55*	75*
Planning and Trading Standards	51*	74*
Children's Commissioning and Quality	72	73*
Finance	53*	65*
Countryside and Environment	46**	65*
Property	50*	58**
Legal	25**	44**
Local Government Benchmark	47	63
WBC average	56	76

3. HR work on organisational stress

3.1 HR used the results of the EAS 2009 to identify areas of the organisation that might be vulnerable to workplace stress. Questions from the EAS were mapped against the HSE organisational stress index and a report was submitted to Corporate Board in March 2010. A procedure is now in place to identify and address workplace stress using the HSE tools. Training has been provided to HR Officers and the Health and Safety Officer to support stress management focus groups to take the work forward.

4. Information gathering and summary

4.1 Appendix A is the template which HoS were asked to fill in during May 2010 to record;

- How they communicated the results of the survey to staff;
- What decisions they made about whether specific actions were needed to address issues identified;
- How they determined the content of the action plan;
- The key issues identified; and
- The activities that took place to address them.

4.2 Appendix B contains a spreadsheet which summarises all the information returned to HR for the June 2010 update on activities. Where the service appended a separate action plan (or plans) this is indicated in the 'key activities' row.

4.3 Those services (six of them) which identified only minor issues which could be addressed through normal management activities did not need to produce an EAS action plan separately. Thus the bottom section of each column is greyed out for

these services. Although Education did not identify either moderate or significant issues, the service nevertheless devised an action plan to improve still further on its positive results.

- 4.4 Some services have teams within them with widely different results. This meant that some of the actions were only necessary for part of the service (e.g. Housing and Performance). Children's Services provided action plans for five different teams.
- 4.5 The returns were provided for the services in their pre-SMR configuration. Thus there is no separate return for Countryside and Environment or for Community Care and Well-being.

5. Summary of activities

5.1 Results were communicated to employees in the service in a number of ways. The bullets below summarise this.

- Written team brief x 4
- Awayday x 5
- Senior management team meeting - all
- Team meetings - all
- Emails x 8
- Other - one-to-ones
- Other - further analysis
- Other - working group
- Other - service briefings

5.2 Significance of issues to be addressed

- (1) HR, Policy and Communication, Highways and Transport, Children's Commissioning and Quality, Benefits and Exchequer and Education felt that the minor issues raised could be addressed through normal management and service planning processes.
- (2) Children's Services, Customer Services, Cultural Services, Housing and Performance, ICT, Planning and Trading Standards considered that they had moderate issues to address.
- (3) Finance and Legal and Electoral Services judged that they had significant issues to address. Older People's Services did not return the template but provided an extensive action plan. Property Services did not return the template but addressed issues through a restructure of the service.

5.3 Action planning was carried out in the following ways;

- SMT discussion x 5
- Staff focus group(s) x 4
- Team discussions x 5
- Awayday x 5
- Other - one-to-ones x 3

- 5.4 The key issues identified varied widely between services, as could be expected. As the overall Council results were at, or above, the benchmark average for local government, there was unlikely to be a trend across individual services. However there are some themes which were more often identified than others as of importance to particular services. These included communications, staff morale, management effectiveness, induction, equality and diversity/respect for others, pay and reward, and cooperation and team-working.
- 5.5 The activities which services put into place in their plans were wide-ranging and sometimes imaginative. Several carried out 'mini-surveys' to follow up on problem areas or to delve deeper into certain issues. Some developed focus groups or working groups to analyse the results, devise the action plan and take forward the actions.
- 5.6 It is interesting that several services recognised that many of the concerns raised by the survey could be addressed by simply ensuring that good practice standards and policies that already exist were implemented properly. In particular, many plans contained actions to be more rigorous about regular one-to-one meetings and appraisals, and to ensure that team meetings were held on a regular basis. Some planned to produce written team briefs or staff newsletters to improve communications. Several services have looked at improvements to service level induction.
- 5.7 Two services have planned to introduce 180/360 degree appraisals. Two services have decided to adapt the corporate one-to-one template to include additional questions which seek to explore management effectiveness, communication and stress. Services undergoing active change have developed regular briefings for staff to keep them informed. Several services have put in place targets for all staff to refresh their Employee Performance Management and Equality and Diversity training through the corporate training calendar. Older People's Services intends to explore remote e-learning for its dispersed workforce.
- 5.8 There were some issues that it would be more difficult to address, such as workload and resources. In some areas (e.g. Children's Services) there has been a focus on filling vacant posts to try to address the EAS results which suggest that some staff feel that teams are under-resourced.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 RMSC may wish to recommend a list of good practice for services to implement, taking account of the actions that services have adopted as a result of the EAS 2009. Suggestions from service actions include;
- Provide a written team brief or staff newsletter on a regular basis
 - Distribute SMT minutes to all staff
 - Ensure regular team meetings for all teams
 - Monitor that one-to-one (supervision) meetings are taking place for everyone at least once every four weeks
 - Monitor that annual appraisals take place within an agreed timescale and that all managers have had training to carry them out effectively
 - Ensure that service induction is planned and carried out for all new staff

- Develop an effective mechanism for ensuring that everyone in the service has a chance to contribute to or comment on the annual service plan
- Provide regular opportunities for whole service team-building and communication (e.g. annual service awayday)
- Ensure everyone is able to use available ICT to improve communications and information sharing (Intranet, Outlook etc)
- Consider 180/360 appraisal to provide managers with feedback
- Gather feedback from customers in a structured way and provide this to staff
- Provide opportunities for individuals to contribute ideas for improvements in service efficiency or effectiveness
- Ensure full advantage is taken of training available (free to services) on the corporate training (and ICT training) calendar and that everyone is aware of it
- Use senior managers to mentor more junior managers
- Where possible, ensure that vacancies are filled promptly to minimise extra workload on other staff.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Services have taken the results of the EAS seriously and, where necessary, have worked to address the issues that were raised by the results. The changes to service structure which took effect in April 2010 means that there are some gaps in information and makes it a little difficult to analyse the results. However, there are some very interesting and worthwhile activities emerging from the action plans, many of which could be adopted across the Council to further improve staff engagement.

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Service EAS Action Plan Template

Appendix B – Summary of responses from services

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: n/a

Officers Consulted: HoS

Trade Union: n/a