

## **Executive**

**26 May 2009**

Report of the Chief Executive

## **The Sixth Staff Survey**

### **Summary**

1. This headline report informs Executive of the results of the Sixth Staff Survey, outlining the corporate results from each category of questions. The survey is largely positive, with over 70% of staff satisfied with their job. The results give us material which will enable us to build on the strengths and prioritise improvement in the refreshed Single Improvement Plan (SIP).
2. The report looks at the next steps required to address the priority areas, identified for improvement through the draft Single Improvement Plan (SIP), and outlines how the results will be disseminated to staff and Directorate Management Teams.

### **Background**

3. City of York Council's all staff survey is a self-completion questionnaire which before this survey has been carried out every 18 months, with the last one in April 2007. In 2008/09 it was decided that the survey would be conducted bi-annually.
4. All permanent council employees, with the exception of teaching staff, were invited to take part in the survey.
5. Questionnaires were sent out in February 2009 via email and hard copies to employees' home addresses (for non-office-based staff). A total of 1,847 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 37%. The fifth staff survey received 2,171 responses. A sample of this size is accurate to +/- 1.9% at a 95% confidence interval.
6. All directorates were represented, with the majority being in LCCS (35%) and HASS (21%). Two-thirds of responses were from females - half from under 45s. 5% of respondents considered themselves disabled; 4% were BME; 3% non-heterosexual.

## **Results**

### **Working for the council and doing your job**

7. Almost three-quarters (71%) of staff are satisfied with their present job, a result comparable to the last three surveys (please see the annexe 1 for detailed trend data). A fifth (19%) are dissatisfied.
8. Clearly, perspectives on pay will be influenced by the recent pay and grading review. In that context, it is perhaps not surprising that the aspect of most importance was being fairly paid (67% choosing it in their top three from a list of seven aspects) with the second being achieving something useful (65%). Equally unsurprising perhaps, while satisfaction with achieving something useful was high (83%), satisfaction with being fairly paid was much lower (52%). Many of the seven aspects have remained stable compared to 2007/08, the exceptions being slight increases in satisfaction with job security (from 60% to 63%) and in having a say (58% to 61%), and a continuing decline in satisfaction with rewards other than pay, from 64% (04/05) to 48% (07/08) to 36% in this survey.
9. When asked about working for their part of the council, the majority: intended to be working for the council in a year's time (78%); were happy to say they worked for the council (71%); felt that overall the council is a good employer (70%). The latter represents a drop from 2007/08 (down from 76%) despite neutral and positive moves respectively on the other two measures. It is worth noting that the survey was conducted during a protracted period of uncertainty for many staff, while the council conducted the Pay and Grading review.
10. Around half think they can speak up and challenge the way things are done (57%) and that their part of the council welcomes and acts on new ideas (50%). Both of these are in line with 2007/08.
11. Only a minority believe that action will be taken as a result of the Staff survey (34%) or that promotion is on merit (33%). These results are broadly in line with past surveys.
12. In terms of doing their job most feel they are able to cope with the demands (78%), and are well enough informed to do their job properly (75%). Fewer feel they have the resources to do their job (62%), and over half believe they need to work more than their contractual hours to get the job done (54%). These measures are all comparable to the last survey, except for being well-enough informed which has declined compared to 2007/08 (from 81% down to 75%).
13. Relationships with colleagues are good, with most feeling their colleagues will listen to their work-related problems (83%) and few feeling that relationships at work are strained (20%).

### **Council priorities and improving services**

14. While some of the movement may be attributable to changes in question wording, there is evidence of a positive movement in measures such as understanding of how their job contributes to the council's success, 80% in the

most recent survey compared to 76% in 2007 and 66% in 2005. 70% of staff said they are aware of the council's priorities, compared to 43% in 2007 and 60% on 2005. At a much lower level, there is a small but continuing upward trend in those who feel that directorates co-operate to get work done, with 28% saying this in the most recent survey compared to 26% in 2007 and 22% in 2005.

15. Almost three-quarters believe that we regularly consult with customers about their needs and expectations (69%) and that we act on that feedback (70%). Slightly fewer though believe that service to customers is improving (60%). While there is a long-term upward trend in the feeling that we regularly consult, there is some evidence of a short-term dip in the extent to which we act on the feedback, or that service is improving.

### **Learning & development, and management**

16. In terms of learning and development, over half believe the council encourages them to learn and develop (60%) and that what they've done over the last year will help in their work and career (58%). Less than half though, feel that how and what they learn is planned (44%). That said, the long-term trend in all three measures is gradually upwards.
17. Disappointingly only around two-thirds said they have had a Personal Development Review (PDR) in the last year, down a little from 2007/08 (64%, down from 68%), although current management information from some directorates suggest PDR completion might be higher. This could be the result of different terminology being used in some parts of the council (such as Neighbourhood Services), where PDR-type meetings are known by other names.
18. Amongst those who did say they have had a PDR, there is strong agreement that roles and objectives for the next year were identified (88%) and that they received useful feedback on their performance (79%). There is less agreement that the PDR had improved their work (54%), though this measure is up from 07/08 (from 46% to 54%).
19. When asked to rate other aspects of management, most important was their manager/supervisor giving them responsibility (43% choosing in their top three out of eleven aspects), followed by their manager encouraging and supporting their learning & development (41%) and then, being a good listener and acting on issues they raise (38%). Encouragingly, a high proportion were satisfied with being given responsibility (86%); less so with the other two (62% and 65% respectively). These measures and most of the other eight aspects are stable compared to 2007/08; the exceptions are agreeing working targets (64% down from 67%) and being equal in treatment of staff (63% down from 67%).
20. Amongst line managers/supervisors themselves, around two-thirds feel they have enough information and advice to manage their staff (65%) and that they're given the opportunity to develop their people management skills (61%). This has declined from 2007/08 (76% down to 65% and 71% down to 61% respectively). This drop may be a consequence of Pay & Grading. Less than half feel they have the time they need to devote to managing their staff (39%).

21. Just under a half of all staff agree that senior managers provide effective leadership, up from 2007/08 (44%, up from 41%)

## **Communications**

22. Currently most staff get council information from *News & Jobs* (75%), by email (65%) and being told by a colleague (59%) or their manager (58%). A substantial number get information indirectly from the local media (41%) and the grapevine (39%). In future they would prefer relatively more formal communication (much less of 'colleague telling them' or via local media or the grapevine) and relatively more face-to-face (relatively less via *News & Jobs* or email, and more of manager telling them or via team briefings). This desire is reflected in the 'next steps' section of this paper, where improving face-to-face communications is recognised as an important element of the refreshed SIP.
23. In terms of their likelihood to read an electronic version of *News & Jobs*, relative to the current hard copy, almost a half claim that it would be more likely (46%) and a third less likely (30%).

## **Equalities**

24. Three-quarters feel that Equalities are relevant to their job (74%) with a substantial minority (19%) disagreeing. As regards the Equalities Impact Assessment for their area, a small minority had detailed knowledge (10%), more had a vague awareness (43%) and almost half had never heard of it (47%). However there is an accelerating upward trend in awareness over past surveys (up from 31% 2005/06 to 36% 2007/08 to 43% 2008/09) and a corresponding decline in those who have never heard of it.

## **Health & Safety**

25. Nearly three-quarters feel that H&S is treated as a high priority by their line manager and colleagues (70%), with nearly two-thirds believing that is the case for Senior Managers/Directors (64%). Over half believe that they have sufficient training and resources to achieve their H&S responsibilities (61%), continuing an upward trend over the last few surveys. In contrast, while a similar number agree that H&S inspections are carried out regularly in their workplace (56%), this is down on 07/08 (from 61% to 56%). A similar number believe that recommendations from inspections are acted upon (59%). Only a fifth are aware of the new Safety Management System (21%).

## **Bullying and whistle-blowing**

26. The proportion of those who feel bullied in the workplace is showing a steady decline over the years to a low of 5% in both this survey and the last. Although benchmarking from the last staff survey indicates that is a very low figure, it is a concern that any member of staff should feel they are being bullied. The issue will be investigated further as part of the HR section in the SIP, and processes will be put in place to address the issue.

27. Just under half of staff are aware of the whistle-blowing policy (47%) and of those, half have confidence in it (50%). A fifth expressed a lack of confidence (20%), mainly because of lack of trust, concerns over confidentiality and fear of repercussions.

### **Staff Benefits**

28. Of options offered in exchange for a salary sacrifice, the most popular ones were additional annual leave (38%), training (18%) and bus travel (18% in total across First and other). Within the last two years computers and cycles have been added to the option for salary sacrifice, but these did not feature highly.

29. Support for a Staff Lottery was split with 41% claiming they are likely to participate and 44% saying they are not. Staff favoured spending the proceeds on subsidising health-related benefits – healthcare/health insurance (36%), gym membership (27%) and physio/massage/alternative therapies (26%). There was also support for encouraging charity/voluntary work (22%), funding awareness events (16%), subsidising child-care places (15%) and external non-job-related training (15%).

### **Further work - drilling down**

30. Work on the survey so far has been at the corporate level. Further analysis of data at a lower level is required to determine to what extent the overall patterns above are reflected there, and to help shed light on some of the overall movements. This can be done:

- **by directorate:** initial analysis shows 'satisfaction with current job' is higher in LCCS (78% vs 71% overall), with other directorates in a fairly tight range (65%-69%). Notable changes compared to 2007/08 are an improvement of satisfaction for City Strategy (from 61% up to 69%) and a decline for Resources (from 70% down to 65%). However, these movements may be influenced by the reallocation of some departments between directorates rather than fundamental changes in the satisfaction levels of individuals.
- **by equality strand:** as with directorates, analysis of data is required at the level of equality strands – gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion/belief, sexual orientation. This work is yet to be carried out.
- **by other splits:** further splits that may provide useful insights are by grade, by length of time worked for CYC and by full or part-time.

### **Benchmarking**

31. Benchmarking of our data against similar data for other organisations will give a further perspective on the strength or otherwise of our results. The marketing and communications team have identified an organisation, ORC International, who provide a benchmarking service at no cost. We expect this benchmarking will be available in July.

## **Developing understanding through focus groups**

32. Quantitative data such as the Staff Survey can be a blunt tool, sometimes prompting more questions than providing answers. Specific issues arising from analysis that is difficult to understand can be addressed through focus groups with staff, which can be convened to explore these areas.

## **Next Steps**

33. The response to the staff survey will be addressed in the workstreams within the refreshed version of the Single Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2009/10. These include:

- Internal communications, such as addressing the issue of improving face-to-face communication through team briefing and the communication of actions arising from the staff survey itself
- HR priorities such as PDRs, workforce development and pay and grading
- Health and safety awareness
- A range of equalities actions and improvements
- Code of conduct awareness, including whistle-blowing and registers of interests.

34. In addition to this the following activity is underway or planned:

- A formalised training and development programme to support the Leadership & Management Standards (LAMS) is being constructed for implementation later this year
- A staff benefits booklet has been produced and will be distributed to all staff
- Views on the staff lottery will inform projects to be funded from proceeds
- Engagement and consultation with customers is addressed in the Council's new Community Engagement Strategy – *listening, informing and working together*.

## **Communicating results and action, and engaging with staff**

35. In the short term the corporate headline results have been published on the council's intranet and are being featured in *News and Jobs* and (in more detail) in *News in Depth*. CMT will hold question and answer sessions for all staff on the survey, if that is feasible. In addition a PDR workshop has already been held and the equality staff group has already met.

36. At the next level, analysis by directorate will be completed by the research team in marketing and communications, with the appropriate HR business partners and performance representatives across the council. This will be undertaken during the summer and reported to Directorate Management Teams, so that consideration can be given for improvement actions locally. A further level of communication by directorate can take place at this point.

Improvement actions can be built into Service Plans and Directorate Plans and those actions communicated to staff as part of that process.

37. Performance reporting on the actions above (paragraphs 33 and 34) will be made to Corporate Management Team and Executive on a quarterly basis as part of the SIP process. There will be further communication to staff as part of that process, using existing (and improving) communication tools throughout the life of the refreshed SIP.

### **Equalities implications**

38. As stated above, data needs to be analysed at the level of the six equality strands: gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion/belief, sexual orientation. The Corporate Equality Data Project Officer, who is a part of the equality and inclusion team, will do this analysis.

### **Sustainability issues**

39. The staff survey is an essential tool in improving morale and providing the council with the tools to deliver the corporate strategy.

### **Legal implications**

40. There are no legal implications in this report.

### **Crime and Disorder implications**

41. There are no crime and disorder implications in this report.

### **Information Technology (IT) implications**

42. There are no IT implications in this report.

### **Property implications**

43. There are no property implications in this report.

### **Other**

44. All other implications have been covered in the report.

### **Risk Management**

45. There is a risk that the staff survey will not be perceived to have changed anything unless:
- the results of the survey are acted upon
  - actions undertaken are well communicated to staff
  - there is buy-in from all staff to make necessary changes.

### **Consultation**

46. The council's Corporate Management Team has been consulted on the options outlined in this paper.

## Recommendations

47. Members are asked to:
- comment on and note the results, including further analysis to be undertaken
  - approve the 'next steps'
  - request that SIP report to Executive includes further actions to be undertaken to address the results of the survey.

## Contact Details

**Author:**

*Angela Wilkinson*  
Head of Human Resources and  
Organisational Development

*Pauline Stuchfield*  
Assistant Director of Resources  
(Customer Service and Governance)

*Matt Beer*  
Head of Marketing & Communications

**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**

*Bill McCarthy*  
Chief Executive

**Report  
Approved**



**Date**

*15/5/09*

*Chief Officer's name*  
*Title*

## Specialist Implications Officers:

NA

## Annexes

A: Slides: Over to you – February 2009, Staff survey – Headline results