

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 29 SEPTEMBER 2005

EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE SURVEY

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise members of the findings of the employee attitude survey which was carried out within the Council during June 2005.

2. BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 9th June 2005 the Committee was advised that an employee attitude survey would be carried out within the Council during June 2005. The survey was carried out by Tom McGlew of the University of Edinburgh.

Individual questionnaires were sent to all employees' home addresses and completed questionnaires were returned direct to the University of Edinburgh for analysis.

3. FINDINGS

The response rate to the questionnaire was 44%, which is a statistically robust sample on which conclusions can be drawn.

Appendix 1 summarises the findings of the survey. It contains three elements, viz;

- * A statistical profile of the responses
- * A commentary on the statistics; and
- * Comparisons with a group of other Scottish Councils.

Action will now be taken to publicise the findings of the survey through Eastwords and the intranet. Further, the Corporate Management Team will meet shortly with Tom McGlew to go over the findings of the survey in detail and draw up an action plan to take forward issues raised at both a corporate and departmental level.

The principal results of the survey are very positive, indicating for example that 88.2% claim to enjoy the work they do and 63.3% would describe

their morale as high. 76.7% expressed satisfaction with the Council as an employer.

The overall findings indicate that there are some areas which require specific action including ensuring that communication arrangements are comprehensive, that training and development opportunities are universal and targeted and that management and supervision arrangements are refined.

The survey finds that in overall terms the Council compares well with a group of comparative Councils.

4. TRADE UNIONS

The Trade Unions were consulted prior to the survey being carried out and have been issued with a summary of the findings.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to note the report.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/
Executive Director of Corporate Support

22nd September 2005

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Corporate Governance Committee of 9th June 2005 by the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support – Employee Attitude Survey

Anyone wishing further information should contact Martin Rose, Head of Personnel,
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Employee Attitude Survey 2005

Summary

Experience of Training and Development

89.3% would know with whom to address a training, coaching or development need

63.7% claim to have received explanations from line managers relating to their responsibilities concerning these matters

47.3% report the routine use of EAGER as a means by which to review training needs

57.7% believe that they could perform better at work if they had access to more relevant training and development

Best Value

83.0% claimed to be aware of the Council's commitment to delivering quality services

83.8% claim also to support the Council's attempt to achieve Best Value services

67.1% understand how as individuals they are meant to contribute to the Council's achievement of Best Value

20% of employees claim not to know how as individuals they are meant to contribute to the achievement of Best Value

Equal Opportunity Practice

67.6% agree that East Ayrshire Council encourages a policy of equal opportunity for all employees

45.8% accepts that within the Council the contribution of everyone – regardless of rank or seniority – is valued

30.6% claim not to know whether appointments within the Council are handled fairly

The Council's Core Values and Vision

58.9% are familiar with the Council's statement on its Core Values and Vision

51.3% understand how in their own role to contribute to the achievement of those values

38.8% uninformed on both indicators

Exposure to Various Means of Internal Communication

68.1% regularly receive a copy of *Eastwords*

65.7% are based in units or sections in which staff meetings are regularly convened

16.4% fall outside the Council's formal communications network, neither receiving *Eastwords* nor enjoying access to unit staff meetings

Communication and Job Performance

66.9% receive the information they need for effective job performance

61.0% describe themselves as well informed generally about issues that affect their service area

22.4% claim to experience gaps in information of relevance to their immediate work situation

Reliance on the 'Grapevine'

61.9% claim to rely often on the workplace 'grapevine' as a source of information about their own service area

Line Management and Support for Staff

Managers were highly rated by respondents for the fairness with which they approached their responsibilities

25.3% described their line manager as not available when needed

62.8% described managers as willing to praise them for work well done

Line Management and Service Planning

65.5% are encouraged by line managers to engage in work-related problem solving

61.0% are encouraged to share with management their comments and opinions

Whether a Culture of Blame

80.7% report the ability to admit mistakes to line managers

The Council as Employer: Service Delivery and Customer Care

60.9% agree that the Council cares about its customers

92.5% describe themselves as understanding the needs and priorities of clients and customers

The Council as Employer: Pride in Employment

61.1% and 60.3% respectively both experience a sense of pride in working for the Council and would recommend to others the Council as an employer

The Working Environment

77.4% describe the equipment they operate as reliable

73.0% accept that this work area is a generally pleasant place

67.8% agree that the physical conditions in which they work are adequate for the actual work they do

67.6% rate the level of cleanliness in their work area as satisfactory

Balancing Home and Work Responsibilities

79.9% describe their current working arrangements as allowing them to balance home and work commitments

59.8% respondents claim to be able to complete their duties in the normal working day

55.7% the workforce claimed awareness of Council work-life balance policies

65.1% claimed familiarity with the Council's commitment to flexible working arrangements

Health and Safety Issues

89.4% claim to be aware of the safety rules applying to their work

84.8% also feel able to comply with those rules

72.6% maintained that health and safety issues were taken seriously in their work situations

44.0% felt unable to assess SHAW's impact upon the health of the workforce

Enjoyment of Work

88.2% claim to enjoy the work they do

76.3% describe themselves as usually happy about coming to work

31.4% say that their job often gets them down

71.6% feel secure in their current employment

41.1% experience uncomfortable levels of stress in the course of their work

Recognition

56.9% believe that they are recognised by a supervisor for having done a good job

62.4% feel that their contribution in the workplace is valued
However, in each case a significant minority reports dissatisfaction

Employee Morale

63.3% rate their own morale as at least high

Positive Influences

75.1% of respondents cited job security as the most significant factor

60.8% cited a satisfactory workload

57.9% cited supportive supervision

Negative Influences

57.9% cited supervision

57.6% cited workload

51.3% cited inadequate remuneration

Assessment of Morale in the Workplace

53.9% described morale as at least fairly high

Job Satisfaction – Summary Rating

75% of East Ayrshire Council employees described themselves as satisfied with their current job

Satisfaction with the Council as Employer

76.7% expressed satisfaction with the Council as an employer

Summary of Main Findings

- (1) Although the use of EAGER is only partially established, a very large majority of employees would know whom to approach about training and development, most are informed of training opportunities and most have had the responsibilities of line managers in this regard explained to them. Nonetheless, most also argue that their performance would be improved if offered access to more relevant training, and a significant minority dispute the presence of equitably managed opportunities within the Council for career development.
- (2) An awareness of and commitment to Best Value is well embedded in employee thinking. Indeed, most claim to deliver Best Value services.
- (3) While employees acknowledge the Council's formal commitment to equal opportunity, a significant minority claims that appointments are not handled fairly. Further, four-in-ten dispute the statement that the contribution of all employees is equally valued.
- (4) Most employees claim awareness of the Council's Core Values and Vision statement, but fewer understand how they are meant in their own work to achieve that Vision.
- (5) Two-thirds of the employee population enjoy access to team meetings. Of those, a very large majority describe attendance as worthwhile. The Council publication, *Eastwords*, appears to have achieved about 70% penetration of the employee population.
- (6) Significant minorities of employees (in the range of 25% to 40%) report difficulty in gaining access to information they require for effective work performance. Most disagree with the statement that information flows freely between levels of their service area.
- (7) Most employees claim not to be fully informed about Council decisions and activities. In consequence, recourse to the informal information 'grapevine' is widespread.
- (8) First line managers and supervisors were praised generally for their fairness, supportiveness, accessibility and approachability.
- (9) Although most line managers and supervisors encourage consultation and employee initiative on work-related problems, perhaps one-in-four employees is excluded from such consultation.
- (10) There is little evidence of the presence of a 'culture of blame' within the Council.

- (11) The Council is judged by employees as sympathetic to the needs of its clients and customers.
- (12) Most employees express pride in their association with the Council and would recommend it to others as an employer.
- (13) Employees typically describe their equipment as reliable and their immediate work area as pleasant and adequately suited to their needs. However, strong criticism is made of temperature control and air circulation by employees in selected service areas.
- (14) A large majority of employees claim the ability to balance home and work responsibilities. Most are able to finish within the normal working day. Relatively few would wish to reduce their hours of work. Access to crèche facilities would be welcomed by less than three-in-ten employees.
- (15) In an assessment of a very important aspect of work, a majority of employees in each case believes (a) that line managers understand and value the actual tasks it does; (b) that it receives adequate recognition for work well done; and (c) that its contribution in the workplace generally is valued. These perceptions are, of course, highly correlated with both morale and work satisfaction.
- (16) In the same vein, most employees are extremely positive about their experience of work as an activity, with a very large majority claiming to enjoy work.
- (17) About four-in-ten employees claim to experience uncomfortable levels of stress in the course of their work.
- (18) Most employees describe their own morale as at least 'high.' Implicated especially in the experience of high morale are satisfaction with job security, supervision, and workload. Implicated especially with low morale are dissatisfaction with pay, workload and communication.
- (19) More than three-quarters of employees are satisfied with their current jobs, and the same proportion reports satisfaction with the Council as an employer.
- (20) Both high morale and work satisfaction are strongly predicted among respondents by a package of five factors, namely effective communication, a sense of being valued by the organisation, exposure to supportive first-line supervision, control over one's immediate work situation, and opportunities for career development.
- (21) On many indicators, staff varied significantly by subgroup with:-
- Women generally responding more positively than men;
 - Staff on part-time and job-share contracts and the more recently appointed reporting a more positive orientation to work than those on full-time contracts;

- More recently appointed staff reporting a more positive orientation than the longer serving;
- Staff in Craft, Technical and AP roles reporting lower, and those in higher administrative roles reporting higher satisfaction levels than employees in other grades.

SOME COMPARISONS BETWEEN EAST AYRSHIRE AND OTHER SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Questionnaire Item	East Ayrshire Value	Best Comparator*
76. How describe own morale at the moment	Very high and high = 63.3%	Very high and high = 64.0%
80. Job satisfaction	Satisfied = 76.3%	Satisfied = 76.3%
81. Satisfaction with Council as employer	Satisfied = 76.7%	Satisfied = 74.8%
4. Kept informed of training and development opportunities	Strongly agree and agree = 66.5%	Strongly agree and agree = 62.8%
6. Could do job better if had more relevant training and development	Disagree and strongly disagree = 29.8%	Disagree and strongly disagree = 25.2%
10. Understand how meant to contribute to Best Value	Strongly agree and agree = 67.1%	Strongly agree and agree = 62.0%
12. At Council, contribution of all valued	Strongly agree and agree = 45.8%	Strongly agree and agree = 24.2%
13. Council encourages policy of equal opportunity	Strongly agree and agree = 67.6%	Strongly agree and agree = 62.3%
16. Unit has regular team meetings	Strongly agree and agree = 65.7%	Strongly agree and agree = 61.8%
20. I receive information I need to do job properly	Strongly agree and agree = 66.9%	Strongly agree and agree = 66.9%
21. I am kept informed about issues that affect my service	Strongly agree and agree = 61.0%	Strongly agree and agree = 56.3%
24. I feel informed about Council decisions and activities	Strongly agree and agree = 34.3%	Strongly agree and agree = 39.4%
25. I often have to rely on 'Grapevine'	Disagree and strongly disagree = 32.3%	Disagree and strongly disagree = 37.5%
28. My line manager treats me fairly.	Strongly agree and agree = 83.4%	Strongly agree and agree = 76.8%
32. We are encouraged to think of different ways to solve problems	Strongly agree and agree = 65.5%	Strongly agree and agree = 68.5%

37. People are afraid to make decisions	Disagree and strongly disagree = 51.5%	Disagree and strongly disagree = 55.0%
40. I feel proud to work for Council	Strongly agree and agree = 61.0%	Strongly agree and agree = 51.2%
53. Current work arrangements all me to balance work and home	Strongly agree and agree = 79.9%	Strongly agree and agree = 74.9%
59. Usually able to finish work in normal day	Strongly agree and agree = 59.8%	Strongly agree and agree = 54.8%
64. I enjoy the day-to-day work I do	Strongly agree and agree = 88.2%	Strongly agree and agree = 88.0%
65. I feel that my contribution is valued	Strongly agree and agree = 62.4%	Strongly agree and agree = 56.2%
67. I usually feel happy about coming to work	Strongly agree and agree = 76.3%	Strongly agree and agree = 77.8%
68. My workload is often too heavy	Disagree and strongly disagree = 43.0%	Disagree and strongly disagree = 31.1%
71. I do not feel in control of my work	Disagree and strongly disagree = 72.3%	Disagree and strongly disagree = 65.0%
73. My job often gets me down	Disagree and strongly disagree = 61.9%	Disagree and strongly disagree = 63.0%

The percentages presented are from the local authority employee sample, from several in the archives, with the 'best' profile on the particular question, i.e. the highest percentage of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with a statement. Thus, for question 76 the East Ayrshire profile (63.3% very high or high) is virtually the same as that for the best comparator council for which evidence is available and on question 12, East Ayrshire's profile (45.8% strongly agree or agree) is almost twice as high as that of the best comparator council for which there is evidence.