



**Performance and Finance Select
Committee**

17 February 2009

**Report from
Director of Business Transformation**

For Information

Report Title: Staff Survey 2007/8 - Action Plan Update

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report reviews progress on implementation of the 2007-8 Staff Survey Action Plan, highlighting achievements and work in progress. It will be appreciated that for many of the initiatives the full impact and realisation of the benefits will become more evident over time.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 This report is for information only.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Background

The staff survey is a valuable tool in assessing levels of employee engagement across the council and there is much empirical evidence to suggest that those organisations with high levels of employee engagement are also those where performance is highest. Engaged employees are better motivated, have less absence and are more productive. It therefore makes sense that not only should we conduct an annual survey but we should highlight the key areas for development, develop an action plan and feed back to staff.

3.1.1 Key Driver Analysis and other key issues

Following the survey the results were analysed using Key Driver Analysis (KDA), a methodology used to identify those factors which have the greatest impact on employee engagement. The main areas or factors having the highest impact on employee engagement and where performance was relatively low were:

- Health & Safety/Working Conditions

- Communication and Leadership
- Change management
- Bullying and Harassment
- Work life balance
- Professional Development
- Appraisals

Based upon this analysis a corporate action plan focusing on the areas above was developed and agreed by CMT. Each service area also devised its own plan to address the corporate areas for development and any issues identified locally. Significant inroads have been made implementing the plan and work will continue this year. The action plan is attached at Appendix 'A'.

3.2 Detail

Progress on implementation of the Action Plan is set out under each of the main headings below.

3.2.1 Working Conditions

- Property and Facilities Management have addressed many staff concerns about buildings and fittings. For example, at London Road, employees highlighted the very hot conditions during summer months in parts of the building. Property Services has installed ceiling fans to reduce heat stress and is considering options for a solar film on the windows facing south. A detailed work plan has also been published so staff now have a greater awareness of future work planned to address issues identified as appropriate.
- A healthy eating bar was introduced in the Town Hall offering a range of healthy alternatives including salads and jacket potatoes. The canteen manager is now a member of the Health and Well-Being Group and is currently exploring further cost effective options to expand the choices available to customers and improve the environment within the Oasis Cafe.
- The New Ways of Working and Civic Centre projects both incorporate plans to improve facilities and the working environment, not only to increase efficiencies around the use of office space but also to further enhance the productivity of employees. Current changes are taking place at Brent House and these are incorporating many of the principles around open working environments with breakout areas, fewer desks and a paperless working environment. Staff are being consulted to encourage two way feedback and buy in to the new approach.
- A Health Surveillance Group has been established, comprised of representatives from HR, Health and Safety (H&S) and Occupational Health (OH) to improve the council's response to issues in the workplace. Procedures have been reviewed with the result that H&S now undertake workplace assessments normally within 3 days of receiving a referral from OH.

Results from 2008 Survey

The 2008 staff survey results show an increase in the percentage of positive scores on the two questions in this area ('I am satisfied with my physical

working conditions' and 'My manager takes my health and safety concerns seriously').

3.2.2 Communications and Leadership

- A CMT newsletter has now been introduced to inform staff of issues arising and decisions taking following the bimonthly CMT meetings. These are then used by managers during team meetings to brief staff.
- A new team briefing initiative is to be launched in the spring which will involve the cascading of information from a variety of different sources (e.g. CMT/ SHRG, Improvement and Efficiency Board etc) to staff via their line managers. It will contain summarised information about issues of relevance and importance to all council staff. This could include information about pay settlements, changes to policies and procedures and the council being recognised for its achievements. It will also provide a channel for staff to ask questions or make suggestions. The system proposed is intended to be:
 - A tool to enable all managers to communicate better
 - A regular source of important information for all staff
 - A mechanism by which feedback or questions can be dealt with consistently and systematically, whether they come from teams or from individual staff
 - A system which can support departmental briefings.
- Housing and Community Care and Environment and Culture have network lunches for staff to meet with senior managers to cascade information around new initiatives and to gain feedback on pertinent issues impacting upon their service areas
- Most areas have introduced a staff consultation forum where matters arising are discussed including the staff survey and subsequent action planning.
- Chief Executive and CMT are visiting service units to encourage two way feedback and engender greater consultation.
- The Improving Brent seminars are to be reviewed as part of the One Council change programme.
- The staff panel and staff forums have been consulted during major policy reviews e.g. Flexible Working toolkit and new Fairness at Work policy.
- The new Fairness at Work policy was introduced in the autumn which encourages staff to raise issues in the workplace informally and a network of Fairness at Work Information Guides (FIGs) have been established to provide a support mechanism for staff raising issues. To support the informal resolution of issues a number of mediators have been selected, trained and accredited. This scheme is to be launched in the spring of 2009.
- A new appraisal system for managers and staff has been introduced which links individuals' objectives and development plans to service area and corporate objectives. These objectives are reviewed during one to ones and during the mid year appraisal review.

Results from 2008 Survey

There has been an increase in the percentage of positive scores against a number of questions in this area. Specifically:

- I feel that the work I do is clearly related to the goals and objectives of the council
- There are good working relationships and support between managers and employees
- I am encouraged to have a say on the way things are done in Brent Council
- I feel I have the necessary information to do my job well
- I am well informed about what's happening in my department
- I understand what other services in my department do
- The organisation does a good job of keeping me informed about matters affecting me
- The future direction of Brent council is clearly communicated to me

However, there was a decline in the number of positive responses in relation to two questions on the leadership of senior managers, but this may have been as a result of a slight change to the question this year in that a definition of senior management was included i.e. AD and above, and as such this may have had an impact upon the results. Nonetheless, when formulating this year's action plan consideration will be given as to how to improve the perceived effectiveness and visibility of senior managers.

3.2.3 Change Management

- The council has developed a corporate change management programme structure to ensure a consistent approach to the management of change across the council. The framework was developed following considerable consultation across the organisation to ensure that it incorporates all the key elements of successful change management.
- A communications strategy has been adopted for the One Council transformation programme to ensure key messages are being delivered to staff. These will be reinforced during the impending Corporate road shows.
- Coaching and leading through change courses have been introduced as part of the corporate L and D service offering for managers. A number of programmes have also been developed locally to support specific change programmes.
- Local Learning and Development officers are working with many teams in the various service areas to support the change process and increase engagement and consultation. For example, in Children and Families briefing sessions were held at an early stage of the transformation programme to support employees' emotional responses to change by identifying joint solutions with key stakeholders.
- Work has begun on reviewing the current Managing Change policy in consultation with stakeholders across the council.
- The competency framework for managers and staff incorporates managing change as a key element. As part of the appraisal and review process managers are required to identify individuals' skills gaps and agree how these can best be reduced. In view of this, those managers with a gap in this area should have a development plan in place to address this shortcoming and as such managerial capacity around change management across the council should be increased.

2008 Staff Survey Results

There has been an increase in the number of positive responses in relation to the two specific questions on change management ('The Council supports employees who are affected by change' and 'Brent Council involves staff when undertaking organisational change').

3.2.4 Bullying and Harassment

- Following a review of the Grievance and Harassment and Bullying policies they were replaced by one single Fairness at Work policy (FAW). The Code of Conduct was reviewed in parallel and re-launched. The new policy and Code of Conduct reinforces the behaviour expected of all Brent employees, places greater emphasis on informal resolution, provides greater guidance and strategies on how to achieve this, and introduces the use of mediation where appropriate. An innovative training session was introduced to coincide with the launch of the new policy and Code of Conduct, using bite size sessions to encourage attendance and minimise absence from the workplace. To date over 300 members of staff have attended the training sessions since November.
- An Employee Relations (ER) project group was established to examine ER casework and identify actions to reduce the number of cases. The group introduced a number of initiatives aimed at improving the skill base and confidence of all managers in Brent. For example, Espresso briefing sessions offered managers a targeted and concentrated approach over a cup of coffee, investigator training for managers was introduced with 44 managers now having received the training, 12 mediators have been selected and trained and bite size training sessions on topics such as capability and attendance management were introduced.

2008 Staff Survey Results and Number of ER Cases

There has been a decrease in the number of staff who feel they have been the victim of discrimination or harassment/ bullying (4% reduction) together with an increase in the number of staff who feel they are able to report such incidents (6% increase). In addition, the number of new grievances or FAW cases has decreased by over 60% from 13 in the last quarter of 2007 to 5 in the last quarter of 2008.

3.2.5 Work life balance and Health and Wellbeing

- Following wide consultation the work life balance working group developed a new flexible working toolkit and policies which were launched in the autumn. The toolkit is built upon the premise that flexible working is key to improving services, increasing productivity, reducing costs and improving staff engagement. The options available to staff have been expanded to include new policies such as the buying and selling annual leave and self rostering. Existing policies have been reviewed and expanded to cover all staff of all grades and now provide more comprehensive guidance and monitoring procedures. Workshops have been held with most managers and a new course on managing people remotely is to be introduced in the spring. Following a comprehensive assessment the council has been

awarded the Workwise Charter Mark of Excellence for flexible and smarter working. Brent is the only council in London to receive such an award.

- The Health and Wellbeing Group has delivered a number of initiatives during the year including:
 - regular positive health campaigns
 - stress awareness training for managers and staff
 - increasing the number of physical available to staff to include yoga and tennis
 - a health and wellbeing day for all staff
 - a employee benefits package and Employee Assistance Programme for staff and their families (see below)
- The staff benefits scheme including an Employee Assistance Programme was launched in January 2008. The benefits include a variety of discounts for staff that support a healthy lifestyle including gym membership, health clubs and holiday discounts. Local therapists and businesses offering discounts are also included on the benefits website. The Employee Assistance Programme will provide access to advice and support on matters as diverse as legal, financial and counselling.

2008 Staff Survey Results and People Dashboard

There has been an increase in positive responses in relation to questions relating to work life balance and flexible working with the majority of staff being able to balance commitments and work flexibly when necessary. The number of responses in relation to staff being able to work from home has remained static however there are two factors that may have impacted here. Firstly, the new flexible working toolkit and policies which include clear guidance around working from home was not introduced until the later part of 2008 and secondly, home working will not be an option for a significant number of staff given the nature of the service delivered. Nonetheless, with the ongoing services reviews, new ways of working and civic centre projects, this may well increase in the future.

There has been a 1.5% decrease in staff turnover and a reduction in sickness absence of about 1.5 days since last April. Given the average cost of recruiting and the direct costs associated with sickness absence these reductions amounted to total savings of nearly 700k.

3.2.6 Professional Development

- The Management Development Programme was developed to help managers to determine individual strengths and development areas in order to enhance personal performance and increase awareness of how personal impact can affect team and partnership working. The programme underwent an extensive pilot throughout 2007 before its launch in September 2007. The programme has now been expanded to cover more junior managers and it is envisaged that all managers will have attended the programme in the next two years.

- The management and staff competencies are designed to build organisational capacity and support managers in the development of staff. The Management Charter and management competencies were launched early 2007 and the staff competencies were introduced in February 2008. Through the appraisal process individual members of staff now should have a development plan clearly linked to departmental/organisational objectives incorporating the behaviours contained within the competency framework.
- A talent management and succession planning strategy was agreed by CMT in the latter part of 2008 and work is now commencing on developing and delivering an action plan to deliver the strategy.
- The Learning and Development service offering was developed following analysis of the development needs identified within service areas. In view of this, learning and development opportunities are based purely on the needs of the business. As a result of this a wide range of courses and resources have been developed for Brent staff as identified through the training needs analysis. Staff are encouraged to browse the corporate training offer on the intranet and make their bookings online which then can be approved by their line manager. All attendees are asked to evaluate the training programme to ensure that it supports them in their work.
- Personnel development programmes for women (Springboard), for men (Navigator) and for minority staff (Get Ahead), have been introduced to support staff and our potential leaders of the future.
- In response to feedback from staff L and D have introduced career development workshops for staff and an event was held specifically for disabled staff last year. Feedback from these events was extremely positive.
- By April 2009 there will have been 95 different training interventions, running over 394.5 days, training 3,604 participants (some staff have attended multiple interventions) which will increase to 4,572 over the next financial year following the opening of the training centre.

Staff Survey Results 2008

There has been an increase in the number of positive responses in relation to a number of questions in this area ('I am given the opportunity to improve my skills at Brent Council' and 'The training I receive is appropriate and relevant to my job') and the majority of staff feel the training received has improved their performance. The overall score for this section was 62%. Specifically, *I'm given the opportunity to improve my skills*, *my performance has improved as a result of skills I have developed over the past year* and *the training I receive is appropriate and relevant to my job*, scored 70%, 65% and 70% positive responses. In addition, scores on these three questions are significantly above the local authority benchmark, +12%, +10% and + 6% respectively.

3.2.7 Appraisals

- As mentioned above the staff appraisal form have been reviewed, making them more streamlined and focussed on supporting our people managers in building capability. Supporting documentation and guidance notes were produced and briefing sessions were held across the council to inform, engage and educate all staff on the forms and processes.

Staff Survey Results 2008

70% of staff stated that they had received an appraisal in the last 12 months and 66% felt that it was an accurate reflection of their performance which is no change since the previous year. Whilst there is no increase in the number of staff receiving an appraisal, the new system appears to have had an impact on people in that they are now more aware of how their work is related to the goals and objectives of the Council. In addition, the change over between the two HR systems has made the monitoring of appraisals difficult and as such it has not been possible to monitor performance in this area. Once this can be undertaken by the new HR system, performance data will again be monitored by CMT and DMTs.

Summary

- 3.1 This report highlights many of the key achievements over the past year and the corresponding rise in the number of positive responses to questions in this year's survey. Of the 35 benchmarkable questions, Brent Council scored above average, (+5% or greater), on 15 questions, within the benchmark average on a further 16 questions and below the benchmark, (5% or lower), on only 4 questions. The overall engagement score for Brent council has improved significantly and is now 77% as opposed to 66% last year. In addition to the increase in positive responses, absence and turnover have decreased resulting in significant savings for the council. It is also clear from this year's staff survey responses that, despite the significant changes and challenges facing the council, commitment to the council remains high with 91% of staff feeling that the work they do is worthwhile, 69% having a strong feeling of loyalty and 74% being satisfied with working for Brent Council. In terms of performance against CPA targets, 2007/8 saw an improvement in more than two thirds of performance indicators, a rise in the proportion which had improved in the previous year. Currently 59% of the council's vital signs are on or just below target but the 2008/09 final outcome is as yet unknown. These results reinforce the importance of staff engagement and the impact that it has upon increased performance and as such the value of the annual staff survey and resulting action plan. In view of this, whilst this year saw a good increase in positive scores across a number of areas there are still a number of areas where performance could be improved and work has already begun to develop an action plan to address the issues highlighted.

3.3 Recommendation

This report is for information.

4.0 Financial Implications

None

5.0 Legal Implications

None

6.0 Diversity Implications

None arising from this report.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 Any staffing implications are being addressed under the various initiatives.

Background Papers

Staff Survey Action Plan 2007/8

Contact Officers

Claire Gore, Strategic HR Manager (Corporate)