



**Performance and Finance Committee**  
April 2010

**Report from Director of Business  
Transformation**

For Information

**Staff Survey 2009/10 – Main findings and actions to date**

**1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report is to update members of the Performance and Finance Committee the main findings from the 2009/10 Brent council staff satisfaction survey and actions to date.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Recommendations to note.

**3.0 Background**

3.1 The market research company, ORC International undertook the survey on behalf of the council. The 2009 survey is the third successive survey undertaken by ORC. The main strengths of ORC's approach continue to be their wide experience and technical expertise in employee surveys; their independence, access to their UK benchmarking databases, (which includes data from other local authorities) and the range of bespoke reporting options they offer.

**4.0 Methodology**

4.1 As in previous years, a questionnaire was available for staff to complete on-line. In addition, paper copies of the survey were targeted at staff with limited access to PC's or the intranet. Structure and content of the questionnaire were revised, although fifty-three, (53) core questions were retained to enable comparisons with previous years. The restructured questionnaire was divided up under the following ten section sub-headings:

- Your job;
- Training and career development;
- Performance and line management;
- Senior management and leadership;
- Communication;
- Equal opportunities;
- Work Life Balance;

- Pay and Benefits;
- Customer Focus;
- Perceptions of Brent Council.

4.2 The survey fieldwork period ran from October 5 to October 30. During that time 1,968 questionnaires were completed. This represents an overall response rate of 62%, four percentage points down on the 2008 figure of 66%, but still considerably above the 49% average of other local authorities within the ORC International perspective database.

### Response Rates broken down by service areas

Service Area	2007	2008	2009
Environment & Culture	64%	73%	79%
Finance & Corporate Resources	67%	77%	77%
Business Transformation	-	-	76%
Central	64%	68%	65%
Children & Families	53%	49%	48%
Housing & Community Care	54%	71%	47%
<b>Brent Council overall</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>62%</b>

4.3 The main reporting mechanisms include:

- The narrative report, 'Engage, Inform, Improve' 2009 - containing a full textual analysis on the six main sections of the questionnaire plus additional analysis on the areas of work life balance, pay and benefits and customer focus. The narrative report also contains – Key Driver analysis. A draft copy of the narrative report is appended to this report.
- A benchmarking report showing how Brent compares the average scores recorded in the ORC local govt benchmark database. Thirty questions in the 2009 survey are benchmarkable A copy of the benchmark report is also appended to this report.
- A comments report. The questionnaire included an open comments question; ***'If there was one thing you would change at Brent Council, what would it be?'*** The responses to this question and the responses to other part questions that required open text answers are reproduced verbatim in the comments report. Comments have been proof read and edited to ensure confidentiality and themed. Where appropriate, anonymised comments are included in the narrative report to aid explanation and add context.
- Enhanced managers' reports. For the first time enhanced managers' reports have been made available to service areas. Fifty-four enhanced managers reports have been published and distributed. These reports contain a breakdown of results by service area and show comparisons to their parent directorate. Enhanced managers reports also contain a key driver analysis for that particular service area.
- The highlights tool. As in previous years the highlights tool is the principal mechanism for generating top-line data results. The highlights tool allows for results comparisons to be made between service areas, directorates and the Council overall. In addition data can be looked at by trend, demographic sub-group and against local govt benchmarking scores.

## 5.0 Results

- 5.1 **General** - Fifty-three, (53) questions in the 2009 survey can be compared with the 2008 survey. Differences of  $\pm 5\%$  are considered statistically significant and are highlighted as an improvement or a decline. Of the thirty benchmarkable questions, two thirds, (20) are in-line with benchmark scores and five are significantly above. Only five questions are below the benchmark scores.
- 5.2 The narrative report contains detailed analysis covering the ten main sections in the questionnaire: Your Job, Training & Career Development, Performance & Line Management, Senior Management & Leadership, Communication and Equal Opportunities, Work Life Balance, Pay & Benefits, Customer Focus and Perceptions of Brent Council. Results in these sections are for the Council overall but demographic and sub-group differences are highlighted where appropriate. (See narrative report pages 29 to 54).
- 5.2.1 **Your job** – The overall score for this section is 74% and is one of the highest scoring sections. Staff are generally positive about their jobs and clear about what they are expected to achieve, (84% +ive). Staff are prepared to go the extra mile when required, (92% +ive). However only 42% of staff responded favourably to the question – *‘there are good working relationships between departments in line with the principles of One Council’*. ORC suggest that the low score might be because staff do not fully understand the principles of ‘one council’, or as evidenced by the high neutral score, staff do not work cross-departmentally and therefore do not have the experience to answer positively or negatively. Staff satisfaction with physical working environment has risen by 5% since 2007.
- 5.2.2 **Training and career development** – staff perceptions in this section have decreased slightly over the last two years. *‘I am given the opportunity to improve my skills at Brent Council’*, *‘the training I receive is appropriate to my job’* and *‘my performance has improved as a result of skills I have developed over the past year’* (66%, 67% and 64% +ive respectively) – all slightly down on the 2008 scores but still either on or above the local govt benchmark. However only 34% are confident about their career opportunities in Brent and this has dropped 5% since 2008 – also 3% under the local govt benchmark. ORC say training and career development is a key driver of employee engagement and is therefore a priority area for improvement.
- 5.2.3 **Performance and line management** – there has been little movement in satisfaction levels on performance and line management over the past two years. Four questions in this section are showing slight declines, whereas *‘my line manager recognises and acknowledges when I have done my job well’* and *‘my line manager motivates and inspires me to more effective in my job’* have both improved and are both above the local govt benchmark. Two questions: *‘my line manager gives clear direction on how my job helps the Council meet its business objectives* and *‘there are good working relationships and support between managers and*

*employees'*, are identified as having a strong impact on employee engagement. ORC suggest acting on these to influence engagement and improve business performance. There are considerable variations in both these questions when viewed by directorate. A majority of staff, (72%) have had an appraisal in the last 12 months – (up two percentage points on the 2008 figure). Only 66% of respondents feel that their appraisal accurately reflects their performance. Although this is the same as the 2008 score it remains eleven percentage points below the local govt benchmark score. This question also had a large neutral score, (28%), which ORC suggests might indicate low understanding of the appraisal process and the competencies.

- 5.2.4 **Senior Management / Leadership** – this is the lowest scoring section with notable declines on all questions. Senior management providing effective leadership and being sufficiently visible have both dropped significantly since the 2008 survey, (41% +ive, a five percentage point drop since 2008 and 40% +ive, an eight percentage point drop since 2008 respectively). Moreover these two questions have high neutral scores, (40% and 35% respectively). ORC recommend that more effective ways to encourage employee involvement are devised, e.g. more encouragement to staff to get involved in improvement activities and a PR campaign to improve perceptions of leadership from and visibility of senior managers. Less than a third of staff, (31%), believe Brent Council supports employees affected by change. This question attracts a high neutral score, (48%) and it's suggested that this may be due to few staff being directly affected by change, or having knowledge of staff who are directly affected by change.
- 5.2.5 **Communication** – satisfaction with communications has declined slightly with the exception that *'the future of Brent Council is clearly communicated to me'*, (60% +ive – up three percentage points on the 2008 survey and 8 points on 2007). Staff feel *'they have the necessary information to do their jobs well'* and *'understand what other services in their department do'*, (72% and 68% +ive respectively). Staff were asked to rate the effectiveness of different internal communication channels – the intranet and information from the line manager were the most popular. However there are some high neutral scores in this section, particularly *'Brent Council involving staff when undertaking organisational change'*, *'being encouraged to have a say on the way things are done'*, and *'feeling safe to speak up'* (38%, 36% and 33% neutral respectively). ORC suggest that upward communications is an area for improvement.
- 5.2.6 **Equal Opportunities** – The overall score for equal opportunities is 72% and has not changed since 2008. Equal Opportunities remains one of the highest scoring sections. Notwithstanding there has been a slight decline in the perception that Brent is an equal opportunities employer since 2008, but the score is in line with the local govt benchmark. The incidence of harassment/ bullying, (12%) and discrimination (11%) have both declined, with managers being identified as the main source of harassment/bullying and discrimination. Analysis of the reasons for not reporting

harassment/bullying or discrimination indicate that better communications are needed to assure staff that their concerns are treated with confidence.

- 5.2.7 **Work Life Balance** – scores for this section are generally in line with those from the 2008 and 2007 surveys but the proportion of staff who are able *'to balance their work and personal commitment'*, (64% +ive), is still five percentage points below the local govt benchmark. Twenty-seven (27%) of staff *'feel unable to do their job effectively within the hours for which they are paid'* and 18% are *'uncomfortable with the pressures placed on them by their job'*. Notwithstanding, only 1% of staff have taken time off work due to work related pressures. ORC suggest that dissatisfaction with work life balance could have a negative impact on engagement and further impact on the quality of services to customers.
- 5.2.8 **Pay and Benefits** – perception that pay is fair given responsibilities has improved by 5 percentage points since 2008. However satisfaction with the total benefits package, (49% +ive), is lower than the local govt benchmark by sixteen percentage points. There is a large neutral response to *'I am satisfied with the total benefits package etc'* (32% neutral) – indicating that more communication of benefits may be needed.
- 5.2.9 **Customer focus** – This is the highest scoring section in the survey. Perceptions of Brent Council being customer focused are high with staff *'being committed to customer satisfaction'*, (74% +ive and six percentage points above the local govt benchmark) and *'acting on the feedback from internal and external customers'*, (74% and 76% +ive respectively).
- 5.2.10 **Perceptions of Brent Council** – this section is used to measure the levels of employee engagement within the Council. (narrative report pages 22 & 23.) ORC define engagement in terms of Say, Stay and Strive.
- **Say** – where employees are inclined to speak positively about the organisation;
  - **Stay** – reflecting the individual's commitment to the organisation, e.g. career development, commitment to stay and be part of the organisation;
  - **Strive** – going the extra mile and put extra discretionary effort into their work.

The Employee Engagement Index (EEI) which is the average score for the questions in this section is 77% - the same as 2008. However three questions: *'I am proud to tell people I work for Brent Council'*, *'considering everything I am satisfied working for Brent Council'* and *'I am happy to go the extra mile at work when required'*, (65%, 75% and 92% +ive respectively) are all above the local govt benchmark. Overall satisfaction with working for Brent Council has risen marginally by 1%.

## 6.0 Employee engagement and Key Driver Analysis

6.1 A Key Driver Analysis (KDA) has also been undertaken and can be used to focus on those aspects of working for Brent council which have the greatest impact on engagement. For the first time KDA is has been undertaken at service team level and is available in the enhanced managers reports. Six main areas, (factors) and their relative importance to engagement are listed in the table below. Each factor being made up of key questions in the survey.

Factor	Relative importance (%)
Training & Career Development	30%
Customer Focus	22%
Work Life Balance	15%
Senior Management & Communications	15%
Equal Opportunities	13%
Performance & Line Management	5%

6.2 An explanation of the KDA process can be viewed within the narrative report – (pages 24 & 25). Some headline strengths and weaknesses are listed below:

### 6.3 Areas identified as strengths

- **Employee engagement** - levels are higher than average and employees feel happy to work on their own initiative and go the 'extra mile' when required.
- **Job satisfaction** - is high and staff are positive about their job, clear on what they are expected to achieve and how their role relates to the Council's goals and objectives. ORC suggest that this is consequence of the future direction of Brent council being more clearly communicated – up by eight percentage points since 2008.
- **Information to do the job** – satisfaction with work related information is high and staff feel they have the necessary information to their job well, (72% +ive). Staff also understand what other services are provided by their department, (68% +ive).
- **Good teamwork and support** – a high proportion of staff feel they are encouraged to work in partnership with other units in their department and believe their colleagues cooperate to get work done.
- **Employees treated with fairness and respect** – 71% believe this and this score is in line with the local govt benchmark.
- **Perceptions of Brent Council being a customer-focused organisation are high** – staff are committed to customer satisfaction, (74% +ive which is 6 percentage points above the local govt benchmark), and staff act on feedback from internal and external customers – (also 74% +ive).

#### 6.4 Areas to improve on

- **Training and career development** – helping staff feel more confident about their career and development opportunities is seen as an area for improvement. Only 34% are confident about their career opportunities in Brent with similar proportions being either neutral or not confident, (33% and 33% respectively).
- **Senior management / effective leadership and visibility** – Senior management providing effective leadership and being sufficiently visible have both dropped significantly since the 2008 survey, (41% +ive, a five percentage point drop since 2008 and 40% +ive, an eight percentage point drop since 2008 respectively). Moreover these two questions have high neutral scores, (40% and 35% respectively). ORC recommend that more effective ways to encourage employee involvement are devised, e.g. more encouragement to staff to get involved in improvement activities and a PR campaign to improve perceptions of leadership from and visibility of senior managers.
- **Improve perceptions of good working relationships between departments** – perceptions have declined since 2008 and are notably below the benchmark.
- **Improve recognition** – only 47% of staff feel properly recognised or rewarded.

#### 6.5 ORC also identify the following for further work:

- Work life balance;
- Supporting employees affected by change;
- Perceptions of line management – particularly at directorate level;
- Being informed about matters affecting me;
- Some negative perceptions that employees are appointed not on the basis of merit;
- Satisfaction with the total benefits package is below the benchmark;
- Harassment/bullying and discrimination – although the incidence is down less staff are reporting.

## **7.0 Next Steps**

- 7.1 The consultants ORC presented findings to staff at a One Council seminar on 13 January
- 7.2 The importance of taking forward key recommendations presented by the consultation to departmental managers – January – February.
- 7.3 Feedback to staff – initial staff feedback was given through the January edition of 'insight', the staff newsletter.
- 7.4 HR and Consultation Teams are continuing to provide support and advice to services areas using the highlight tool.
- 7.5 Developing action plans – HR has developed the first draft of the corporate action plan awaiting sign off CMT.
- 7.6 Internal intranet site has been commissioned by HR and developed by IT. The aim is to allow for the sharing of departmental action plans across the council.
- 7.7 The first training session for departmental facilitator's took place 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. The aim of the training is to develop departmental facilitator's skills in supporting and developing local action plans. This is also the beginning of developing an "Employee Engagement" culture. Research has shown that a highly engaged workforce will have greater impact on business performance.
- 7.8 Paul Eccles (Health & Safety) has been given access to the highlights data tool to enable him to complete the H & S Workplace Stress Assessment Analysis.
- 7.9 The survey results fed into the liP steering group and shared with the external liP Assessor.
- 7.10 Narrative and Benchmarking reports uploaded on the intranet.

## **8.0 Background Papers**

- Brent Council Staff Survey (draft) narrative report, Engage, Inform, Improve 2009
- LB Brent Staff Survey Benchmarking Report 2009

## **Contact Officers**

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