

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Corporate Services Committee - 27 June 2007

Subject: Employee Survey Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report seeks to update the Committee on the actions taken to date in relation to the Employee Survey

2. Background

- 2.1** In the public and private sectors it is increasingly recognised that regular and relevant surveys are an invaluable tool in encouraging employee engagement in the organisation. Employee Surveys help provide evidence that the organisation seeks the opinions of its employees and values its workforce. Such surveys can be utilised as a diagnostic tool to identify organisational drivers for change and continuous improvement.
- 2.2** One of WDC's values - '*Valuing Our Employees*', states that '*we will engage them on issues that affect them*'. The employee survey will support this and evidence our commitment to this value in addition to achieving the objectives of the Best Value Improvement Plan.
- 2.3** As part of its commitment to continuous improvement the Council has also agreed to implement the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF). In carrying out the Employee Survey we will seek to address Criteria 7 '*People Results*' of the PSIF; "what the organisation has achieved in terms of motivating, involving, developing and valuing its staff."

3. Main Issues

Actions to date

- 3.1** The Best Value Audit of WDC included an employee survey which was completed by 17.4% (1033) of employees. This was a low response rate however significant weight was given to the survey findings, therefore in conducting the Council Survey every effort was made to maximise the response rate. A key element in this was to foster confidence and trust in the process and it was agreed at the outset that an independent external agent should be appointed to gather and analyse data and publish the findings.

- 3.2** A small working group comprised of both management and Trade Union representation was established to lead on the Employee Survey project and they were responsible for drawing up a specification to tender for external support. Through the tendering process IBP Research were identified as the preferred provider and they were awarded the contract at a cost of £14,000. IBP have extensive experience of delivering confidential employee surveys in the public and not for profit services, including Aberdeenshire and Stirling Councils.
- 3.3** As a strategy and research company, their main role is as follows:-
- Work with the project team to develop the employee questionnaire in order to identify issues/concerns, and to elicit from staff how to address these concerns.
 - Assist with the distribution of surveys, and be the confidential point of receipt.
 - Act as the provider of the electronic online survey, receive completed submissions, and operate a telephone based survey completion service.
 - Analyse returns and report initial findings to the Steering Group.
 - Undertake employee focus groups to gain greater insight into issues/concerns
 - Benchmark data against other organisations
 - Analyse final returns and report details and recommendations to CMT.
- 3.4** The employee survey was issued to all staff at the end of April with a closing date of 14th May. In order to maximise the response rate a paper copy was issued to every WDC employee's home address with additional opportunities for completion electronically via a website or via the telephone. Issue of the survey was accompanied by a communications strategy which included posters, an article in Westlife, team briefings and payslip messaging.
- 3.5** The survey questionnaire was designed to include sections in relation to the following areas:-
- Working Life at WDC
 - Training and Development
 - Communications and Consultation
 - Leadership, Management and Council Performance
 - Dignity at Work
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Health at Work
- 3.6** Some of the questions were designed to gain greater insight and understanding of key issues raised through the Best Value Audit survey, e.g. Dignity at Work, so that future actions could be appropriately targeted. Some were designed to assist us meet the criteria to go forward with key initiatives in relation to equalities issues and the silver award for Healthy Working Lives (formerly SHAW).

- 3.7** IBP initial results indicate some 1,900 total responses, which based on a WDC headcount of 6,472, equates to an approx 29.3% return. Although disappointing this figure provides a significantly better return than that of the Best Value Audit survey and is considered to be a statistically reliable sample.

Next Steps

- 3.8** The next steps in the project are for IBP to meet with focus groups representative of the organisation in order to test and validate the responses and explore in greater detail some of the issues arising from the survey. The focus groups are scheduled for the end of June and these findings will then be fed back to the Project Group to develop an action plan to address key issues. The action plan will be presented to the Corporate Management Team for approval and thereafter communication will be issued to staff outlining the results of the survey and the arrangements that will be put in place to deal with key issues and areas of concern. It is anticipated that a full report will be fed back to the Corporate Services Committee at the end of the summer recess.
- 3.9** At the conclusion of the exercise the Project Team will also undertake an evaluation of the processes that were put in place to undertake the survey and make recommendations for the future including advice on how often the exercise should be undertaken.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There will be a requirement across all services in the Council to release individuals to take part in focus groups.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are likely to be financial implications arising from the action plan associated with the issues arising from the survey but these are as yet unquantifiable.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** A risk analysis was not required.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1** The Employee Survey Project is expected to remain on track across the summer period and culminate with a final report of on the findings, recommendations and actions to Council after the summer recess. Thereafter the derived action plan will be set in motion, with details of such communicated to employees on a regular basis.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and the ongoing actions in relation to the employee survey.**

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David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 19 June 2007

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| Person to Contact: | Tricia O'Neill, Head of Personnel Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU 01389 737584 E-mail: tricia.o'neill@west-dunbartonshire.gov.uk |
| Appendices: | None |
| Background Papers: | No Background Papers |
| Wards Affected: | No Wards affected |