

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Chief Executive

Council : 28 May 2008

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**Subject: Employee Survey Actions Group**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Council on the progress of the Employee Survey Actions Group (ESAG).
- 1.2 The attached plan at Appendix 1 provides a summary of the recommendations made in response to the survey outcomes, key targeted actions and the progress made to date.
- 1.3 Additionally, a table at Appendix 2 highlights the estimated financial resource which is required to support improvement initiatives.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The employee survey conducted in May 2007 highlighted a number of significant challenges for the Council in addressing issues affecting the culture of the organisation and staff morale.
- 2.2 The subsequent report 'Best Value Audit Improvement Plan –Employee Survey Programme' highlighted that internal communication and management styles were considered to be a key challenge for the organisation. Other issues include staff not feeling recognised and valued, and the requirement for improved performance and development planning. Other key challenges included those associated with positive leadership behaviours, communication and consultation, and dignity at work.
- 2.3 The report also outlined that whilst implementation of recommended actions should be overseen by a Staff Survey Working Group initially, it would be important for actions to be implemented within existing structures, whenever possible.
- 2.4 At a meeting of full Council on 29 August 2007, Council agreed to set up a Member/Officer Working Group to address the issues raised in the survey and look at IBP's recommendations. It was agreed that the Working Group would also look at wider staffing and organisational issues, and report back to Council in six months time.

- 2.5 The working group was established in November 2007 and 14 recommendations were identified and agreed by the group (see Appendix 1). The group has met four times over the past 6 months.
- 2.6 An action plan which focuses on priorities and plans to address areas such as leadership and management development, internal communications, people development, Elected Member relations, and the health and well-being of staff has been developed and is being progressed by Senior Officers on the group.

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1 The action plan at Appendix 1 illustrates the key actions and progress made to date. Preliminary actions have been implemented to address behaviour and people management practice, and long term strategies to effect and embed lasting change have been identified.
- 3.2 In addressing key challenges relating to staff morale and organisational culture the group has recognised the importance of a strong commitment to involving staff at all levels to effect change. Opportunities have been utilised to ensure managers and staff are consulted to gain their buy-in to future development.
- 3.3 A series of consultation forums has been completed with managers at all levels. The forums have been used to identify personal and collective development needs and shape future development programmes. The outcomes of these events will be used to build a leadership and management development model and competency framework, the introduction of accredited and non-accredited development programmes, and the development of support structures to help line managers embed good people management practice.
- 3.4 The forums also identified other organisational frameworks which will be essential to implement throughout the organisation to ensure a strong culture of performance and development. This includes a revised process for individual performance management, personal development planning, and wider skills development opportunities for all staff.
- 3.5 As part of our plans to address management behaviours, positive steps have been taken to address dignity at work issues through extensive development and revision of our policy and strategy. The review of the policy and the development of effective training to underpin implementation of the policy is a critical step in developing a culture of respect and dignity within the organisation. It is anticipated that the implementation of this strategy will, over time, influence the working atmosphere and employees' behaviour within the workplace.

- 3.6** Feedback from the consultation forums has also been used to develop an internal communications strategy, agreed with the Trade Unions, which defines the policy and principles for effective employee communications and sets out guidance and best practise for developing and embedding robust communication structures.
- 3.7** As part of the internal communications strategy, a review of inter and intra departmental communications strategies is being undertaken through an Authority wide audit of communications and related structures. This extends to include a review of the management communication structures and systems.
- 3.8** A number of developments are underway to support an integrated communication framework which includes better information sharing, the development of communications IT proposals, and provide the training for managers on effecting communication within their teams and wider departments.
- 3.9** The 'Healthy Working Lives' team are continuing to develop strategies which enable the Council to achieve the Scottish Health at Work (SHAW) Silver award. The introduction of our Alcohol & Drugs misuse policy, stress training, and healthy eating and physical activity initiatives all contribute to enabling a healthy work/life balance and ultimately support employee attendance.
- 3.10** An employee communication is being prepared for issue after approval at the ESAG meeting on 19 May 2008. This will provide all employees with details of the positive progress being made and will be communicated through the staff magazine, online and through the Core Brief framework.
- 3.11** The member officer working group has now disbanded, agreed at 19 May 2008, and an operational team identified to drive forward the Employee Survey Action Plan on a day-to-day basis; Organisational Development, Corporate Communications and Healthy Working Lives. The operational team will report to the Improvement and Efficiency Executive through the Organisational Development stream.
- 3.12** A number of initiatives, in response to feedback from staff on communications and leadership, were put in place by the operational team during the final stages of the matching process in relation to Single Status. Feedback suggests that this new approach was considered helpful by staff, managers and Trade Unions and demonstrated more openness from the senior management team. This model will be used for future change management. Activity included:-

- 1 Dedicated Senior Manager Briefing & Core Brief (2)
- 2 Development of Manager's Information Pack
- 3 Managers Forum – 200 managers attended
- 4 Chief Executive Roadshows – 6 dates, over 200 staff
- 5 Staff Consultation Questionnaire - 751 responses
- 6 Chief Executive Q&A

**3.13** A further staff survey was planned in 2008 and will now be conducted in early 2009 to assess the impact of the action plans on staff motivation and attitudes to working life within the Council. This will be presented to Audit Scotland as part of their next interim review.

**3.14** The survey has been delayed to allow sufficient time for key areas of the Action Plan to be implemented and the impact felt by staff. It was also felt that the implementation/imposition of Single Status would skew results if the Survey was carried out in 2008 and any impact of the proposed recommendations would not be clear from Survey results.

#### **4. Personnel Issues**

**4.1** The action plan addresses key development areas which will support effective people management practices across the Council, and in the long term facilitate a strong and positive culture within the organisation.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

**5.1** The action plan has highlighted the need to financially support and resource a number of key initiatives over the longer term at Appendix 2. It is anticipated that the costs for Year 1 will be absorbed within existing budgets and costs in Year 2 and 3 will be considered as part of the annual revenue estimates exercise.

**5.2** It is envisaged that relevant learning and development interventions will be supported through the revised framework for centralising the training.

#### **6. Risk Analysis**

**6.1** A Risk Analysis of failing to implement the recommendations outlined in Appendix 1 has been carried out and highlights the following:-

- Failure to support the recommendations from the 2007 Staff Survey and action plan will further reinforce the belief that staff are undervalued and not communicated with effectively. The forthcoming Survey in 2009 will show no positive change to staff attitudes.

- The Council will continue to experience issues of low morale and motivation within its workforce, potentially leading to higher absence rates and increased grievance claims.
- Audit Scotland has identified leadership and communication as a priority area for the Council. The Council's progress in this area will be reviewed at the next interim review and reported by the Accounts Commission. The Council must be able to demonstrate progress in the areas listed above, including Member/Officer relations. Failure to do so could potentially damage the reputation of the Council locally and nationally.
- The reputation of the Council as an employer nationally and locally could potentially be tarnished. This will impact on the Council's ability to compete to attract and retain skilled staff, and will damage the credibility of the organisation across other Authority areas.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1** The challenges highlighted by the Staff Survey and Consultation Forums cannot be met with a 'one-size-fits-all' quick solution. It is acknowledged that gradual steps will be implemented to effect sustainable cultural change.
- 7.2** The commitment of the Corporate Management Team and wider management teams will be required to embed change within the Council.
- 7.3** The activity of the ESWG directly contributes to the Corporate Priority Theme 6 'An Improving Council – Valuing our Employees' and also to the Single Outcome Agreement, National Indicators 13 and 15.
- 7.4** The ESAG has implemented a strong action plan which effects change through a number of key initiatives and builds in opportunity to ensure the embedding of change within the Council and developing excellence in our people management practice.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1** Council are asked to comment on the content of this report, the summary of progress at Appendix 1, and the financial plan at Appendix 2.

**David McMillan**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Date: 20 May 2008**  
**Person to Contact:**

Angela Terry  
 Organisational Development Manager

Louisa Mahon  
Corporate Communications & Marketing  
Manager

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Action plan  
Appendix 2: Resource plan

**Background Papers:**

Council Report – Employee Survey,  
29 August 2007