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**REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE 30 JANUARY 2024**

**SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2023 RESULTS**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to consider and note the results of the 2023 employee opinion survey and approve the actions arising from the results.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (B) (24 (c)) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to formulating, supervising the implementation of and review as necessary the policy and practices of the council for all employees, other than teachers in relation to the recruitment, training and development, health, safety and welfare and practices of the Council and Section B (25) relating to teachers in applying and monitoring the implementation of general personnel policies and practices of the Council including the health, safety and welfare and to co-ordinate local conditions of service in line with Council policy,

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that Committee:**

- (i) **considers and notes the results of the 2023 employee opinion survey; and**
- (ii) **approves the planned actions arising there from.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Since 2006 the Council have regularly surveyed the workforce to find out what employees felt about a range of employment related issues. Actions are identified based on the issues coming out of each survey with planned actions and programmes of work designed to address the issues. These have included the employee conferences, interim and issue specific surveys, the employee engagement programme and the workforce culture programme.

- 3.2 Although originally undertaken by specialist survey providers, latterly the surveys have been designed, administered and analysed in-house as part of the Council's efficiency measures.
- 3.3 This is the eighth whole workforce survey and it was undertaken in August 2023. The survey received 1,215 returns providing an overall response rate of 23%. This is a decrease of 8% when compared to the 2019 response rate (31%) which is thought to be due to a shorter run up for promotion and communications and less resource to allocate to this. Employees were encouraged to complete the online survey and paper questionnaires were distributed to staff without ready access to a computer at work.
- 3.4 While results have been analysed to the same level as previously, the results are being cascaded through a Headlines summary, Employee Survey Booklet (Corporate Analysis) and a front page summary plus spreadsheet of departmental results for the Central and Senior Management Teams. The results have been made available to CMT-SMT and will be shared with service managers for further analysis and discussion. This work will be led by the Organisational Development (OD) team and any improvement actions will be considered on both a corporate level and service level depending on what is deemed appropriate.

## **4 RESULTS**

- 4.1 The information in this report is supplemented by:

**Appendix A** – Previous Actions

**Appendix B** – Survey Headlines

**Appendix C** – Year on Year Comparisons

### **Overview**

- 4.2 While the overall response rate has declined, it is encouraging to note that the trend of sustained results seen in the 2019 survey continues across the majority of areas considered which indicates that the actions and programmes of work put in place as a result of previous surveys are continuing to have a long term positive impact. It is noted however, that there is a decline in the positivity of responses in some areas which will be a focus for action arising from these results.
- 4.3 It is also worth noting that the highest and lowest scoring questions have largely stayed the same from 2019, which indicates that what is working well continues to work well, but the lowest scoring concerns still remain a concern and require to be areas of focus in order to ensure some improvement.
- 4.4 As with previous whole workforce survey results, it is not possible to identify specific actions that will address areas identified for improvement as large surveys only provide a measure of satisfaction on general themes and are best used as the starting point for more targeted and focused work in specific areas e.g. the work needed to display and support the leadership and role of elected members and ensure communication remains open, honest and consistent.

### **Highest and lowest scoring questions**

- 4.5 Four out of the six highest scoring questions were the same as the 2019, which are the same as the 2017 survey and were in relation to clarity on what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the workplace, enjoyment of work, clarity on duties and responsibilities and line managers/supervisors treating employees fairly and with respect.
- 4.6 Again four out of the six poorest scoring results were the same as 2019 and were in relation to belief in elected members providing leadership for the Council, what elected members do, belief that the council will take action to address issues arising from the survey, communications from the council being open and honest, satisfaction with the leadership and direction received and that senior management have a clear vision of where the organisation is going.

### **Key improvements, sustained performance and areas for development**

- 4.7 The four improvements since 2019 are in relation to employees feeling able to cope well, being given the proper equipment to keep employees safe and protect their health, feeling their mental health is sufficiently supported at work and relationships at work are less strained.
- 4.8 The seven areas with no change are in relation to knowing what Elected Members do, being kept well informed about what is happening in their team, employees having the opportunity to participate in regular team interactions (or meetings), the information they receive is easy to understand, employees being able to access the training and development opportunities that they need, line managers/supervisors manage staff in their team fairly and consistently and it is clear what employees duties and responsibilities are.
- 4.9 The five areas which indicate the largest percentage decrease since 2019 include awareness of the challenges that face the Council over the next few years reducing by 13% to 73%. Expecting the Council will have to change the way it delivers services because of these changes reduced by 9% to 73%. Employees being kept well informed of what is happening in the council by their line manager/ supervisor reduced by 9% to 68%. Employees have been able to maintain and/or improve their mental health and wellbeing during the last year reduced by 6% to 59% compared to the mental health and wellbeing survey in 2022. Employees being kept well informed about what is happening within the Council reduced by 6% to 48%.
- 4.10 The overall job satisfaction has increased by 1% compared to 2019 to 68%. The engagement index score has changed since 2019 reducing by 10% to 59%.

### **Overall Job Satisfaction**

- 4.11 Overall job satisfaction resulted in 68% of respondents indicating they were either fully or mostly satisfied in working for the Council, an increase in 1% point from 2019. It is noted however that 31% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their job and the remaining 1% of respondents had no view.

- 4.12 Satisfaction levels vary greatly within departments however examining results out of the individual factors considered, feeling motivated, valued and recognised, taking pride in working for the Council, overall job enjoyment as well as recommending the Council as a great place to work, has the greatest impact over all other factors in terms of job satisfaction. Other relating factors include morale, as well as being satisfied by the line management received, being treated fairly and being able to approach line management when there is a problem. These factors have remained on the whole fairly consistent since 2019.
- 4.13 Children and Families: Children's Social Work, Justice Services (Support staff) and Catering services recorded the highest overall satisfaction scores at 86%. Within Education Resources and Communities: Business Support Admin, Staffing, Instrumental Instruction Service and Learning Estate was the lowest scoring department at 45% and Roads and Fleet Services the next lowest scoring department at 46%. This demonstrates a significant difference in scorings between those departments, even compared to the council average of 68%.

#### **You and Your Job**

- 4.14 There is a decrease in the response rate of 4% to 57% in employees feeling valued and recognised for the job they are doing and a decrease of 3% to 76% of respondents feeling motivated to do a good job and go the 'extra mile' when required. It is however interesting to note that despite these decreases, morale is good where I work has increased by 5% to 52% and employees would recommend the Council as a good place to work has increased by 3% to 60%. 89% of respondents enjoy the work they do and 72% of respondents take a pride in working for the council.

#### **Leadership and Senior Management**

- 4.15 This section has seen some improvement since 2019 in that respondents can see how their job links to the Council's objectives and priorities showing a 1% increase to 60%. There was however a significant decrease in response rate from 86% to 73% of respondents being aware of the challenges that face the Council over the next few years, closely followed by a decrease of 9% of respondents expecting the Council will have to change the way it delivers services because of these changes.
- 4.16 Belief that senior management demonstrate leadership and direction for the service and team decreased by 3% to 48% and belief that senior management have a clear vision of where the organisation is going decreased by 3% to 44%. As already noted, knowledge about what elected members do remained static at 36% and belief that they provide leadership for the council declined by 1% to 22%. Overall satisfaction with leadership and direction has decreased by 4% to 50%.

#### **Supervision**

- 4.17 This section explores the next level of management and relates specifically to the day to day line management and supervision received. Consistent with results from previous surveys, the opinions about line management are generally more positive than towards senior management. Within this section

it has remained mainly stable with almost all areas increasing or decreasing by 1% or 2% which indicated a fairly static performance. The only result which stands out significantly is in relation to employees being kept well informed of what is happening in the council by my line manager/ supervisor which decreased by 9% since 2019 to 68%.

- 4.18 In comparison 79% of respondents indicate feel supported by their line manager /supervisor (an increase of 1%), line management recognising and giving praise for good performance has improved by 1% to 73%, line manager/supervisor treating employees fairly and with respect has decreased by 1% to 83% and line manager/supervisor motivating employees has improved by 1% to 69%. Overall satisfaction with line management/supervision received has declined by 2% to 74% and feeling able to approach their supervisor when there is a problem with confidence it will be acted upon has declined by 1% to 77%, all of which are very minor changes.

### **Communication**

- 4.19 Views about how well informed employees feel, the communication between different parts of the organisation, the communication culture and the effectiveness of various communication methods have mixed results in this survey. Being kept well informed at team level (70%), having the opportunity to participate in regular team meetings (74%) and information received is easy to understand (74%) have not changed since the 2019 survey. Team (74%) and council communications (45%) being open and honest have both increased by 1%. In contrast being kept informed about what is happening within the council has decreased by 6% to 48% and the lowest scoring question in this section believing that the Council will take action to address issues arising from the survey has also decreased, by 5% to 28% since 2019. Overall satisfaction with communication in the council has decreased by 2 % to 45%.
- 4.20 These results indicate that while the team communications are good, there is room for improvement with the council wide communications.

### **Training, Performance and Development**

- 4.21 This section explores employee views of the opportunities and availability of training and development, as well as the performance development processes in place. There has been sustained performance in this area, with 58% of respondents indicating being able to access training and development opportunities and 70% of respondents feeling encouraged to improve their own performance, 63% of respondents indicated that training and development received helps the employee to do their job better. There is a 3% decline to 66% in the number of respondents reporting they have had a development activity/session in the last 12 months (this might be an ERDP, PR&D, professional supervision or appraisal).

### **Workforce Culture**

- 4.22 This section explores issues related to creating a positive work force culture where morale is good, people are proud to work for the council and would recommend it to others. It is split into three sections: management and team, work related and behaviour related questions.

- Management and team – the questions in this section relate to believing line managers/supervisors care about employee well-being, feeling contributions are valued, trust that communications are open and honest, belief that the team is managed fairly and consistently, that the team co-operates and works well together and that employees feel respected by colleagues. This section received improved responses. All responses have either no change or improved up to 2% and sit between 72% and 85%.
- Work Related – the questions in this section relate to having a manageable workload, unrealistic time pressures and a choice in deciding what to do at work, clarity on duties and responsibilities and whether relationships at work are strained. This section received slightly declined responses with either between 1% to 2 % or no change. Of the 2019 response of 33% feel they have strained relationships this had significantly reduced by 6% to 27% which is a positive improvement.
- Behaviours – this section asks about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, confidence issues will be dealt with, believing the council is committed to developing a positive workforce culture, harassment and the channels for reporting unacceptable behaviour. Other than belief that the council is committed to developing a more positive workforce culture which has seen a 4% decline to 60%, all other responses saw a decline of 1%. The highest scoring question of the survey was regarding what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the workplace being clear to employee's, reducing by 1% but positively still at 96%. Both negative statements regarding being subject to harassment and unacceptable behaviour/bullying in the workplace saw a decline of 3% and 4% points respectively which is an improvement.
- 5% of the overall responses reported being subjected to unacceptable behaviour, this is a 4% decrease from 2019 and the themes of unacceptable behaviour were related to behaviours of a colleague, members of the public, managers, pupils, not reporting due to no action or support, trade unions and parents of pupils..

### **Employee Engagement**

- 4.23 Employee engagement is the discretionary commitment and enthusiasm people give to the council, their services and their colleagues meaning we can provide better services and it matters to employees that the council does well.
- 4.24 Two of the four measures in this set of results see a decline: feeling motivated to do a good job/go the extra mile is at 76% (-3%) and belief the council will take action to address the issues arising from the survey is at 28% (-5%), giving an overall engagement score of 59%, 10% lower than last year. The other two questions saw increases, taking pride in working for the council 72% an increase of 1% and recommending the Council as a good place to work at 60% saw an increase of 3%. Given the pandemic where engagement activities were temporarily on hold, current budget difficulties and the uncertainty this creates for many employees, these results are perhaps not surprising. Nevertheless, this is of concern to the council and some further action is required to address these concerns. Actions will include engagement activities to demonstrate what actions have been undertaken as a result of the

survey results via a 'you said, we did' communication campaign and the ongoing review of the current ERDP provision to support motivating employees and providing recognition of their contribution to the workplace.

### **Health and Safety**

- 4.25 This section measures the culture of Health and Safety within our workplace, with additional questions added this year to monitor mental health and wellbeing. This section had the most significant increases with feeling able to cope well (74%) increased by 20% from the 2022 mental health and wellbeing pulse survey. Feeling employee's mental health is sufficiently supported at work improved by 6% to 59% and being given the proper equipment to keep people safe and protect their health increase by 6% to 82%.
- 4.26 The slight decreases were feeling involved in decisions regarding health and safety (56%) and having a good work /life balance (72%) both decreased by 1%. One of the additional questions was have employees been able to maintain and/or improve their mental health and wellbeing during the last year (59%) this has declined by 6% since the 2022 mental health and wellbeing pulse survey.

### **Benchmarking**

- 4.27 Benchmarking with other local authorities has not proved possible due to the lack of availability of up to date data and variations in questions, expectations, analysis and specific areas focused on.
- 4.28 There had been some structural changes to the organisation since the 2019 survey, so some direct comparisons cannot be drawn, but as close to the areas have been averaged and used as a general comparator in some circumstances.

## **5 ACTIONS**

- 5.1 While these results provide a picture of responses to the survey questions at a corporate level, as in previous surveys there are variations at departmental / service level which will be discussed and managed, with improvement actions and timescales identified and agreed with Heads of Service.

### **Summary**

- 5.2 The 2023 results show that while there are broad areas where there is a sustained improvement in feedback there also continue to be some discrete areas where further consideration is required to develop actions which will bring about potential improvements. These are specifically in relation to senior management's vision, elected member activity and leadership, employee engagement and corporate communications. Previous work to highlight the role of elected members has included inclusion in parts of the Employee Engagement Programme such as Service Learning Visits and the Employee Conference, however, with the pause in business as usual during the pandemic, the engagement programme is only now being fully reinstated and it is suggested that this combined with planned work such as targeted communications such as 'a day in the life of' will further enhance understanding and awareness of the elected member role.

- 5.3 In terms of responses to survey results, historically the council has put in place a range of large scale programmes of activity likely to have a larger impact across the majority of the workforce with work at a departmental level taking place concurrently. This approach will be maintained for the programme of activities in 2023.
- 5.4 While it is clear that the 2023 results are mixed, the responses indicate that progress continues to be made in some areas. It is evident that there are some areas that require further improvement with work still to be done in embedding the wider aspects of a positive workforce culture within specific teams and services.
- 5.5 It is proposed to continue to use this strategy to enable targeted work to take place in the specific areas of the council that are flagged up as having less positive results.
- 5.6 The main area for ongoing concentrated development work appears to be in relation to corporate communications, understanding of the role of elected members, senior leadership and engagement. It is suggested that the overarching theme for actions are centred around improving the corporate communications with the workforce, including in relation to the vision and direction of senior leadership for the council and improving the understanding of elected member roles as well as continuing with employee engagement activity. This will be supplemented by specific actions within departments and services as noted in 5.3, also continuing to disaggregate the results to an incremental bespoke approach specific to each service, adaptation of solutions to suit services, development of proposals and timelines to progress with manageable sections of the workforce following discussions with management teams on survey results, development of monitoring arrangements and performance targets for survey results within services.
- 5.7 Therefore, actions will be:
- Improve Corporate communications.
- Review of communication framework to identify opportunities for improvement
  - Focus engagement and culture activity on improving corporate communications that ensure key messages are cascaded consistently and effectively.
- Understanding of the role of elected members
- Work to promote and inform the workforce on the role of elected members
- Senior leadership
- A focus on leadership and senior management development.
- Engagement.
- Review of the ERDP process to promote engagement and add value
  - Consider further opportunities regards motivating and recognising additional effort and performance
  - Launch 'you said we did' communication campaign to raise awareness of the actions arising from the 2023 survey.



## **6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The work noted in this report supports the Council in achieving the objectives and priorities in the Corporate and 10 Year Plan and sets out how the Council will meet the challenges in making best use of our workforce and resources. In particular, the actions will ensure continued progress towards the aims of ensuring an engaged workforce with a positive workforce culture.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report although it is possible that issues in relation to bullying and harassment in particular could lead to legal challenges against the council. The work that is ongoing and planned in relation to employee engagement and workforce culture continues to provide a solid foundation from which to develop further work to address the cultural issues identified in this report.

It is also important to recognise the importance that the Scottish Government places on the people working in the public sector to deliver the reforms identified by the Christie Commission. The principles and recommendations remain valid today as they were in 2011. Scottish Local Government has over the past 12 years embedded the principles of Fair Work in all that we do. This includes encouraging our workforce to look after and improve their mental health and wellbeing and access to services to create a resilient workforce. Equipping the workforce with tools and skills and improving technology to enable new ways of working. This allows the council to meet the needs of our communities and adapting to the evolving needs of our workforce. Having informed, diverse and flexible employees is key to achieving the aims of Christie. The links to workforce planning are fundamental to demonstrate best value that drives an effective response to both national and local needs.

### **(c) Financial implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **(d) Risk Implications**

As with previous survey reports, there are risk implications related to decreasing staff morale should no action be taken as a result of the survey findings. These are heightened during periods of significant change, such as the council continues to experience and the lower response rate and rise in less positive results in some areas are clear indications that the workforce is feeling less positive and less resilient compared to four years ago.

The risks associated with workforce culture are also around the consequences of leaving the culture issues unaddressed and the complexity and challenge of dealing with behavioural issues.

The developmental nature of the work combined with the long term nature of establishing a cultural shift in behaviours means there are long term maintenance requirements to be accommodated before a permanent step change in culture can be achieved.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

**(f) Property**

There are no property implications arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no equalities or socio-economic impacts arising from this report.

**(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

There are no climate change or biodiversity impacts arising from this report.

**(i) Consultations**

The content of this report has been considered by the central management team.

The headline results have been seen by the central and senior management teams.

This report will be provided to the Trade Unions for discussion and consultation at the next scheduled Trade Union / Officer Group and Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers meetings with a view to seeking their input to any action plans developed.

A copy of this report will also be provided to the managers at the Personnel Forum and feedback will be sought from all groups to influence the development of any actions arising.

The Committee Services Officer has also been consulted in the preparation of this report.

An employee booklet will be available on interchange and members smi site for the workforce and elected members to access, with access to a paper version available for employees without ready access to a work computer.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

**7.1 The results of the 2023 employee survey contain a mixture of positive and improved results in some areas and some declining results in others with a decline in the overall response rate.**

**7.2 It is proposed that further work is undertaken with departments and services as part of the annual workforce planning process.**

**7.3 Any actions will become part of the engagement and culture work or set up as distinct pieces of work specific to the services where the issues are prevalent.**

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Background Papers:	
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