Personnel Committee

16 November 2023

Title	RBC Staff Survey and Action Plan
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Kathryn Cook, Assistant Director HR&OD
Lead Councillor	Councillor Liz Terry
Corporate priority	Our Foundations
Recommendations	1. Personnel Committee notes the staff survey outcomes and the action plan.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1.   RBC regularly runs a staff survey to understand the views of staff about working for the Council. The latest staff survey was run in June and July 2023. Following analysis of the results, a corporate action plan has been created. Personnel Committee is asked to note the outcomes of the survey and the actions proposed.

2.   Policy Context

2.1.   It is important to have an engaged workforce and one of the ways in which we identify issues is through the regular use of staff surveys. These surveys are generally carried out once a year. The results are analysed corporately and each DMT also considers the results for their area, identifying any additional actions they feel need to be taken.

3.   The Proposal

3.1 The staff survey was open for 4 weeks from 19 June to 14 July 2023. It consisted of 58 questions, plus optional questions about the respondent (e.g. directorate, ethnicity, age range etc). The questions asked included new ones relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

3.2 There were 744 responses which represents 44% of the Council's workforce. This is a decrease from previous surveys in 2022, 2021 and 2019 where the response rates were 49%, 58% and 51% respectively. The results are nevertheless statistically valid.

3.3   Headline results for the staff survey were presented to Corporate Management Team (CMT) in August and published to all staff shortly afterwards. Appendix 1 details the trend in responses by question compared to last year.

KEY FINDINGS

3.4 **Positives to maintain/build on:**

- Nearly all respondents (96%) agree or strongly agree that they make a valuable contribution to the success of the Council by doing their job and know how their role supports the overall objectives of the Council (95%).

- There is evidence that the Team Reading values are embedded in the Council with nearly all respondents (94%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they know what the four Team Reading values are.,
- Nearly all respondents (94%) agree the Council values a diverse workforce.
- Feedback for line managers is once again very positive e.g. My line manager supports me to work flexibly– 92%, My line is approachable and supportive - 91%; My line manger demonstrates the Team Reading values – 88%, I have confidence in my line managers leadership skills- 84%

Positives with an increase of 5% or more include:

- I understand how my role supports the overall Council objectives
- There are opportunities for me to contribute my ideas
- I would still like to be working at the Council in a year's time
- I feel confident using the ICT systems and equipment needed for my job
- The Council is an inclusive organisation where everyone is respected and valued
- I would recommend the Council to my family and friends as a great place to work
- I am confident that my ideas are taken seriously and heard at the right level.
- Leadership by the senior leaders is positive and supportive
- Reading Borough Council works as one, where teams collaborate for the benefit of our customers
- I have experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months (this means unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated, or offended). The positive increase here reflects a reduction in the number of respondents who have experienced bullying and harassment
- For people who raised bullying and harassment at work in the last 12 months: I felt listened to and my concerns were taken seriously

The highest increase in scores were given to "I am confident my ideas are taken seriously and heard at the right level" and "The Council is an inclusive organisation where everyone is respected and valued." These increased by 13% and 9% respectively.

In addition to the quantitative results, staff could add 'free text' comments about anything they wished to comment on. Three hundred and nineteen comments were provided. Many positive comments were received, however most comments from respondents were related to negative experiences of working at the Council.

Positive comments were provided in the following areas:

  o Line manager support and care
  o Flexible workstyles, locations
  o Team and colleagues being helpful
  o Great new employee experience
  o Recognition of great manager/senior leader
  o Sense of belonging, Positive experience of supervision
  o Inclusive place to work

3.5 Areas for improvement from comments made:

As last year, the results are generally very positive whilst the comments are generally more negative. We should continue to acknowledge that both things are true at the same time, with many staff feeling positive and supported, whilst others do not feel this way and have a negative view of working at the Council.

The top five negative comment themes reflect again the four corporate priorities from last year (workload and pressure, pay and benefits, behaviours, and Leadership impact), and also ICT issues. They also align with the scores for specific questions:

Workload and pressure

The percentage of staff who agree or strongly agree that the pressure of work is manageable is the same as in 2021 and 2022 (67%). 47% of the people who raised workload pressures with their managers did not feel the discussion was useful. This is a frequently occurring negative theme in the comments. The main concern for those who scored this negatively is that there are too few people expected to do too much, too many priorities and people working excessive hours.

Pay and benefits

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that their pay is fair has slightly increased to 54% from 53% last year). This is also a frequently occurring negative theme in the comments, which focus on pay not keeping pace with the increasing cost of living and poor benefits.

Behaviours/values

15% of staff (1 in 7 approx.) agreed or strongly agreed that they have experienced bullying at work in the last 12 months (the question last year covered a two year period). Whilst this is a 5% reduction on last year this is still an area for improvement in line with the Council's zero tolerance to bullying and harassment.

22% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they have witnessed bullying and harassment at work in the last 12 months.

The proportion of people who believe the council works as one, where teams collaborate for the benefit of our customers has increased by 7% to 54% (up from 47%).

Leadership:

There was a 5% reduction in responses to Line Managers giving clear feedback on work.

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that they have confidence in the leadership skills of senior leaders has slightly increased to 56% (up from 55%).

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that leadership is positive and supportive has increased to 57% (up from 53%). Concerns about senior leadership are however an occurring negative theme in the comments in terms of visibility, communication to all levels, understanding of employee experiences, being open to constructive challenge in relation to behaviours and poor behaviours.

Other:

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that they have the ICT equipment and resources to do their job well has continued to increase now 81% up from 75%. However, ICT is a common negative theme in the comments, which focus on poor quality equipment and poor training for systems.

40% of people who completed the survey do not feel action will be taken as a response of the survey. The lower response rate this year could indicate a range of issues e.g. lack of confidence in action from the survey, survey fatigue noting a number of surveys were live during the period eg the Big Conversation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) or indeed to indicate that generally staff are happy with how things are right now, so didn't feel the need to respond.

3.6   **Cohort analysis:**

3.6.1 Further analysis has been carried out this year into how different groups responded – this analysis included looking at protected characteristics, location and 'group' (eg senior managers). (Please note that approx.. 20% of respondents used the "prefer not to say" option for the 'About You' questions related to protected characteristics. For the purpose of this breakdown characteristics have been analysed individually, without consideration of "intersectionality" the experience of employees from multiple identities).

Enjoyment of roles:

- BAME employees and Senior Managers appear to be the most positive staff groups overall.

- staff at Bennett Road score lowest for enjoyment of their roles 80% vs the overall survey score of 88%, with DACHS team members scoring highest as an overall Directorate in this question. 100% of Senior Leaders enjoy their jobs vs 84% of Team Leaders/Supervisors. BAME employees score above the survey average at 91% whilst employees with a disability score lower at 83% in this question.

Pay:

- Bennett Road and wider community-based roles score lowest for agreement to pay being fair, along with Team Leaders/Supervisors, carers, and male employees.

Workload:

- Team Leaders/Supervisors/ and Team/Service Managers score lowest in terms of workload being manageable.

Bullying and harassment:

- DACHS employees, officer level employees, non-heterosexual, and employees based at Bennett Road score lowest feeling confident to raise issues of bullying and harassment if I experience this or witness someone else experiencing this.
- Employees at Bennett Road score higher for experiencing and witnessing bullying and harassment.

Opportunities to progress:

- Employees with a disability score lowest for having the same opportunities to (62%) progress as their colleagues compared to a survey score of 75%.

- Bennett Road and employees who are transgender/non-binary score lowest in terms of agreement that they have the opportunities to develop and grow in their roles.

Leadership:

- DEGNS score lowest for leadership by Senior leaders being positive as a Directorate, with officer, team leader, Bennett Road, employees with a disability and transgender/nonbinary employees scoring noticeably lower here too.

Collaboration:

- Senior Managers score higher by far than all other groups on collaboration for the benefit of customers.

There is much to celebrate from the 2023 Staff Survey with many positive results and comments. There are some areas where improvements are needed, and these are broadly the same 4 areas that we focused on last year (workload and priorities, pay and benefits, senior leadership impact and behaviours/values). Looking at both the statistical results and the thematic analysis of comments taken together, the recommendation is that these remain the priority areas for action. In addition, it is proposed that a fifth area be included related to IT.

3.7 Actions:

Focus area	Actions
Workload and priorities	• Increase the visibility of support for line managers to carry out effective 1:1s and annual reviews – focussing on tools and techniques eg prioritisation planning, time management etc • ADs & managers to be supported when reviewing team structures and roles to address excessive working hours and processes that are inefficient. • Identify ways in which RBC can support individual and team resilience and continue to signpost help and support eg employee assistance provider, tools and learning opportunities that address issues such as stress management • Invite staff to take part in a focus group to understand in more detail the issue of workload pressures and potential solutions
Pay and benefits	• Continue to ensure current benefits are well publicised across the workforce (including those not at the Civic) • Provide clarity to employees on the job evaluation process and structure. • Continue to benchmark RBC salaries with other councils and ensure controls over the use of market supplements and honoraria are up to date. • Develop a 'Personal and Career development' workshop to support progression – signposting support and development opportunities including digital skills
Leadership	• Work to increase visibility of senior leaders eg via circulating chairing of Team Talk and the All Staff briefings and attendance at team meetings • As part of the forthcoming service planning process, for leaders to actively consider priorities and workloads for their teams

	• Senior leaders to attend 'Allyship' training – part of our I&D action plan- to give a positive message staff to call out poor behaviours when they see them
	• Launch the 360 pilot programme to support increased self-awareness by leaders of their leadership impact.
Values/ Behaviours	• Continue (and enhance) regular, online/face-to-face all staff briefings including a 'spotlight' session to showcase the work of teams around the Council, to breakdown silos and create a 'one-council' ethos.
	• Continue to promote existing staff groups eg the Staff Ambassadors Group; staff disability forum etc and encourage more staff to join. Support the development of further staff groups. Develop a mechanism for staff groups to report back to CMT once a quarter/6 monthly so that senior leaders hear from staff how they are feeling.
	• Provide confidential mechanisms for employees to feedback/call out poor/negative behaviours not aligned to Team Reading values.
ICT	• Increased promotion of Face to face training/online sessions made available for staff on SharePoint and Office 365 applications (in addition to self-guided eLearning).
	• Regular promotion of Service Now and how to seek support for IT systems.
	• Specific communication and progress reporting of new printer agreement/contract

3.8 Next Steps

Action:	Lead:	Timing:
• Corporate action plan to be shared with staff	HR&OD	By the end of September
• Summary of the insights and the cohort analysis will be shared with Senior Leadership Group	AD HR&OD	15th September
• Summary of the insights and the cohort analysis will be shared with trades unions at the next JTUC	AD HR&OD	20th September
• Summary of the insights and the cohort analysis will be shared with trades unions at the next Lead Member briefing	AD HR&OD	26th September
• Action plans to be shared with Team Reading Board and progress reported	AD HR&OD	29th September and all subsequent TRB
• "Myth Busting" communications (incl. on recruitment and pay)	AD HR&OD	October/November

• Focus group on workload issues and solutions to be run	OD&L	October
• Full results for each ED area to be shared with each ED (broken down by AD area)	SHR&OD BPs with EDs	September/October
• Corporate action plan to be shared at Team Talk with update on progress	AD HR&OD	24th October
• Action plans for each ED area to be developed	EDs	3rd week of October
• EDs to share action plans for their area with their teams and to update on progress end of January and April	EDs	End of October/January and April
• Staff survey action plan to be shared with Personnel Committee	AD HR&OD	16th November
• Six month update on progress to all staff	AD HR&OD	January 2024
• Nine month update on progress to all staff – including 'you said' & 'we did'	AD HR&OD	April 2024
• Launch of the 2024 staff survey	Chief Executive	June/July 2024

4   Contribution to Strategic Aims

- An engaged workforce that feels valued is vital to achieving our corporate aims and objectives. The staff survey provides one mechanism to understand how our people feel about working for RBC, what is valued and where improvements need to be made.

5   Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1   None.

6   Community Engagement

6.1   Not applicable for this report.

7   Equality Implications

7.1   The cohort analysis helps us to identify differential impacts. The analysis from the staff survey has informed the Inclusion and Diversity strategy and plan.

8   Other Relevant Considerations

8.1   None.

9   Legal Implications

9.1   None.

10   Financial Implications

10.1   None.

11   Timetable for Implementation

11.1   The actions identified will be progressively delivered up to the next survey (due summer 2024).

12   Background Papers

12.1   There are none.

Appendices

1.   Headline results and trends

Headlines from 2023 Staff Survey

Key:

Last year's figures are in brackets.

Trend: ⬆ +5% improvement.   ⬇ -5% reduction   ↔ within 5% +/- of last year's results

MY JOB					
I enjoy my job:					
Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Blank/don't know**	**Trend**
23.5% (25.8%)	**64.4%** (59.2%)	**10.6%** (12.9%)	**1.5%** (2.1%)		↔
I make a valuable contribution to the success of the Council by doing my job					
42.0% (40.9%)	**53.8%** (54.1%)	**3.2%** (4.2%)	**1.0%** (0.7%)		↔
I am clear what I am expected to achieve in my job					
32.7% (34.2%)	**54.9%** (54.1%)	**11.0%** (10.2%)	**1.4%** (1.5%)		↔
I have the ICT resources and equipment to do my job well					
20.4% (18.1%)	**54.6%** (53.3%)	**19.8%** (24.4%)	**5.0%** (4.2%)	**0.14%**	↔
My team work well together and support each other to do our jobs					
42.6% (40.8%)	**43.4%** (46.2%)	**10.2%** (11.2%)	**3.8%** (1.8%)		↔
I think my pay is fair given the responsibilities in my job					
5.9% (7.5%)	**49.0%** (45%)	**34.6%** (34.1%)	**10.5%** (13.3%)		↔
I think the rewards and benefits are fair in my job					
12.2% (12.5%)	**64.7%** (63.8%)	**18.3%** (18.8%)	**4.9%** (4.9%)		↔
I would recommend the Council to my family and friends as a great place to work					
9.9% (12.6%)	**64.7%** (56.6%)	**20.7%** (25.5%)	**4.8%** (5.3%)		⬆
MY WELLBEING					
I feel respected, appreciated and valued for what I do at work					
18.9% (19.4%)	**56.4%** (52.9%)	**19.4%** (21.2%)	**5.3%** (6.4%)		↔
The organisation supports me to have a healthy work/life balance					
21.7% (19.3%)	**54.9%** (54.6%)	**18.7%** (20.6%)	**4.8%** (5.5%)		↔
I can access support if and when I need it					
18.6% (19.2%)	**66.3%** (63%)	**13.3%** (15.5%)	**1.8%** (2.3%)		↔
My line manager shows genuine interest in my wellbeing					
45.1% (44.2%)	**41.8%** (43.8%)	**9.2%** (9.2%)	**3.9%** (2.8%)		↔
My line manager supports me to work flexibly (location/times) where possible, in line with the needs of our customers and service delivery					
51.0% (45.8%)	**41.5%** (46%)	**4.6%** (6.1%)	**2.9%** (2.1%)		↔
I feel the pressure of work is manageable					

7.1% (7.6%)	60.2% (59.7%)	**25.0%** **(25.5%)**	**7.7%** **(7.2%)**		↔

Have you raised concerns about your workload with your line manager as part of your 1:1 and/or annual review?

Yes	No	N/A			
29.5%	3.2%	67.3%			

Were those discussions helpful?

53%	47%%				

Are there things you do which you feel do not add value and we could stop?

21.2%	78.2%	0.6%			

Do you feel confident negotiating deadlines with colleagues and managers to manage your workload?

Yes	No	Blank			
85.6%	13.7%	0.7%			

I know what the four organisational values of Team Reading are

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank	
34.9% (27.1%)	58.8% (65%)	5.3% (5.6%)	1.0% (1.1%)		↔

My team live the Team Reading values in our work

21.8% (18.3%)	62.9% (63.3%)	12.6% (12.5%)	2.7% (3%)	0.1%	↔

Reading Borough Council works as one, where teams collaborate for the benefit of our customers

6.3% (6.4%)	48.2% (40.8%)	**34.5%** **(34.2%)**	**10.9%** **(14.9%)**	0.1%	↑

The Council is an inclusive organisation where everyone is respected and valued

17.3% (11.4%)	60.2% (57.8%)	16.8% (21.7%)	5.7% (6.4%)		↑

I have the same opportunities to progress as my colleagues   - NEW QUESTION

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
16.3%	58.9%	18.7%	6.0%		

The Council values having a diverse workforce – NEW QUESTION

24.0%	69.8%	3.9%	2.2%		

I am treated with dignity by all   - NEW QUESTION

20.5%	60.5%	15.9%	3.0%		

There are opportunities for me to contribute my ideas

23.7% (16.9%)	65.0% (64.6%)	9.2% (13.2%)	2.0% (3.9%)		↑

I am confident that my ideas are taken seriously and heard at the right level

15.4% (13.1%)	58.5% (48.1%)	21% (28%)	5.2% (7.9%)		↑

I understand how my role supports the overall Council objectives

26.5% (22.5%)	68.2% (66.6%)	4.2% (7.6%)	1.1% (1.7%)		↑

I have experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months

4.3% (6.7%)	10.6% (13%)	39.8% (23.4%)	45.3% (33.5%)		↑

I have witnessed bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months- NEW

6.01%	16.06%	39.25%	38.69%		

I feel confident to raise issues of bullying or harassment if I experience this or witness someone else experiencing this

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank	

27.7% (21.8%)	56.2% (53%)	13.6% (13.5%)	2.7% (6.6%)		⬆

If you have raised bullying and harassment at work in the last 12 months: I felt listened to and my concerns were taken seriously

Yes	No	Not applicable	(blank)		
6.8% (7.3%)	5.0% (12%)	87.2%	1.0%		⬆

I felt sufficient action was taken

Yes	No	(blank)			
6.2% (5.5%)	5.7% (12.6%)	88.1%			⬆

MY LINE MANAGER

My line manager gives me clear feedback on my work

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
37.4% (40.2%)	47.1% (48.5%)	11.7% (9.6%)	3.8% (1.7%)		↔

My line manager supports me to fulfil my potential

35.9% (35.3%)	48.0% (48.5%)	11.6% (14%)	4.5% (2.2%)		↔

My line manager sets clear priorities and objectives for me

33.2% (38.5%)	49.6% (48.4%)	13.7% (13.6%)	3.5% (2.2%)		↔

I have regular 1:1s and an annual review

39.4% (39.6%)	45.0% (43.9%)	10.2% (13.7%)	5.5% (2.8%)		↔

My 1:1s and annual reviews are constructive, and I can discuss the issues I want to raise

37.9% (40.8%)	46.5% (45.9%)	11.5% (10%)	4.2% (3.4%)		↔

My line manager is approachable and supportive

50.3% (49.8%)	40.5% (41.6%)	6.6% (6.9%)	2.7% (1.7%)		↔

I have confidence in my line manager's leadership skills

44.4% (43.9%)	39.5% (40.8%)	11.0% (12.1%)	4.9% (3.2%)		↔

My line manager keeps me informed about changes at work and how they may affect me

40.8% (41%)	45.0% (45.1%)	9.9% (11.5%)	4.33% (2.3%)		↔

My line manager keeps me informed about changes at work and how they may affect me

40.8% (41%)	45.0% (45.1%)	9.9% (11.5%)	4.3% (2.3%)		↔

My line manager demonstrates the Team Reading values

42.6% (41.3%)	45.5% (48.4%)	8.9% (8%)	2.9% (2.3%)		↔

I understand what the Council's priorities are

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank or don't know	
16.2% (16%)	61.9% (63.6%)	9.8% (11.5%)	1.4% (2.3%)	10.8% (6.6%)	↔

LEADERSHIP

I have confidence in the leadership skills of senior leaders (Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Deputy and Assistant Directors, and Service Managers)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank/don't know	
8.4% (11.3%)	48.0% (43.3%)	14.9% (22.1%)	5.7% (8.1%)	22.9% (15.2%)	↔
Leadership by the senior leaders is positive and supportive					
10.3% (10.2%)	47.2% (42.7%)	16.1% (23.1%)	5.2% (8%)	21.2% (16%)	↔
I feel I receive sufficient communication to carry out my work effectively from the Chief Executive – reworded question					
8.2%	46.4%	14.4%	5.2%	25.8%	
I feel I receive sufficient communication to carry out my work effectively from Executive Directors – reworded question					
8.4%	44.1%	16.3%	4.2%	27.0%	
I feel I receive sufficient communication to carry out my work effectively from my Service Manager, Deputy Director or Assistant Director - reworded question					
16.1%	52.8%	12.7%	4.1%	14.4%	
Learning and Skills					
I have learning opportunities to develop and grow in my role					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(blank)	
18.4% (15.7%)	56.4% (57.4%)	20.0% (22.5%)	4.9% (4.5%)	0.3%	↔
I feel confident using the ICT systems and equipment needed for my job					
21.7% (17.7%)	60.1% (56.9%)	15.2% (21.6%)	2.8% (3.8%)		↑
I would benefit from training to get the most from our ICT systems and new technology					
12.9% (20.8%)	54.3% (48.1%)	**28.9%** **(25.5%)**	**3.6%** **(5.7%)**	0.3%	↔
OVERALL					
The Team Reading values are lived at Reading Borough Council and I see my colleagues practice them in their day-to-day work					
9.8% (10.2%)	65.4% (61.9%)	21.0% (22.9%)	3.8% (4.1%)	0.1%	↔
When making decisions and designing services at the Council, we fully consider the customers' perspective					
14.4% (13.6%)	58.1% (56.3%)	22.5% (24.8%)	4.8% (4.4%)	0.3%	↔
I feel proud to work for this organisation					
17.5% (17.8%)	65.9% (59.7%)	14.1% (18.2%)	2.5% (3.2%)		↑
I would still like to be working at the Council in a year's time					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
29.5% (27.2%)	56.4% (53.9%)	11.2% (12.7%)	2.9% (4.4%)		↔
I believe action will be taken as a result of this survey					
8.8% (11.8%)	51.5% (46.1%)	**28.4%** **(27.4%)**	**11.3%** **(13%)**		↔