



Council Overview Board

1 March 2017

Staff Survey Results

Purpose of the report:

This report provides an update to members of the Council Overview Board on the results of the Staff Survey. This is the second SCC Staff Survey undertaken by Best Companies and provides useful comparison data against last year.

Executive Summary:

1. In 2015, Best Companies was appointed by Surrey County Council (SCC) to administer a three year programme of annual employee surveys. Best Companies are recognised as being associated with 'The Sunday Times Best Companies' report and providing expertise in the areas of employee engagement and advocacy which was felt to fit well with the organisation's values and culture. The first survey was undertaken in October 2015 with the second survey a year later. This report summarises the key findings from this most recent survey.
2. 49% of employees responded to the survey in 2016, which is above the average response rate for a similarly sized not-for-profit organisation and provides the best evidence we have of how staff are feeling. In analysing the survey, Best Companies provide an overall score which translates to one of their five rankings – unclassified, ones to watch, 1-star, 2-star and 3-star. Best Companies have again allocated Surrey County Council to their "Ones to Watch" category. This means that the Council has achieved an accredited status and a rating of "good" by Best Companies standards.
3. The survey was made up of 70 questions or statements which employees were asked to rate on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These were then given a score and categorised against one of the eight factors of engagement (Leadership, My Company, My Manager, Personal Growth, My Team, Well Being, Fair Deal, Giving Something Back). Of these factors, the Council scored highest against My Team, My Company and My Manager and lowest against Leadership and Fair Deal. This profile is consistent with last year's results.

4. Looking at the questions that scored most highly, it is evident that employees believe that they can make a valuable contribution to the success of this organisation. They also feel that people in their team go out of their way to help and care for each other. Again, this is consistent with last year's survey.
5. The areas of focus in 2015 were:
 - a. Fair Deal, in particular issues around pay and benefits
 - b. Coping better with pressures of work
 - c. Continuing to build our leadership culture, with a particular focus on listening.

Looking at the results, these remain the key focus although there is evidence that things are improving. In terms of Leadership, there are increasing scores across all job levels around having confidence in the leadership skills of the senior management team, senior managers truly living the values and senior managers doing more listening. On Fair Deal, the pay and reward review seems to have had an impact, with an increase in the scores for most areas, particularly senior managers, managers and team leaders but a need to continue to focus on this at a team member level. In relation to the pressures of work, there is less evidence of an improvement and given the current financial pressures and challenges, there is a risk that this may continue to decline.

6. The Council's two largest directorates - Adult Social Care & Public Health (ASC&PH) and Children, Schools and Families (CSF) – have shown strong improvements in their scores. CSF results show an overall increase in 4 of the 8 factors (My Company, My Manager, Fair Deal and Personal Growth) and ASC & PH show an increase in 6 of the 8 factors. This is a strong result for the council's front line teams.
7. Members are asked to review the key findings in the report and the areas identified for further focus.

Recommendations:

The Council Overview Board is asked to note the results of the 2016 Surrey County Council Staff Survey.

Introduction:

1. In 2015, Best Companies was appointed by Surrey County Council to administer a programme of annual employee surveys. Best Companies have recognised expertise in the areas of employee engagement and advocacy and the Council has commissioned a three year programme of annual surveys with a total cost of £71,304. This cost includes all the administration for approximately 11,000 employees, use of an online workplace insight tool and full support from the Best Companies Team in interpreting the survey data (including benchmarking data from other organisations.)
2. The survey went live on 12 October 2016 and closed on 15 November. During the period of the survey being open, reminders were sent to all staff who had not completed their email survey and the Extended Leadership Team took an active role in encouraging their teams to complete the survey through team meeting discussions, newsletters and email cascades.

3. The survey was made up of 70 questions or statements. The majority of these are categorised against one of the eight areas detailed below, with each area having between 4 – 12 questions or statements assigned to it. The remaining questions look at general feedback and don't contribute to our overall engagement score. In addition, all surveys include the option of providing free text to the following two questions: *what makes this a great workplace?* and *what would make this a better workplace?*
4. All surveys included a unique code which identified the specified employee and allowed results to then be grouped according to the relevant details of the employee, such as team, job grade, contracted hours and length of service. The organisation is not able to identify individuals from the results but can analyse the data based on different demographics to identify trends.
5. The survey results are grouped into eight areas as follows:
 - i. **Leadership** – measures how staff feel about the head of their organisation, the senior management team and organisational values.
 - ii. **My Company** – focuses on how much employees value their organisation, how proud they are to work there and whether they make a difference.
 - iii. **My Manager** – measures whether staff feel supported, trusted and cared for by their immediate manager.
 - iv. **Personal Growth** – examines whether employees feel challenged by their job, whether their skills are being utilised and there are perceived opportunities for advancement.
 - v. **My Team** – includes encouraging team spirit, having fun and feelings of belonging within a group of direct colleagues.
 - vi. **Well Being** – measures stress, pressure, the balance between work and home life as well as the impact of these factors on personal health and performance.
 - vii. **Fair Deal** – includes how well employees feel they are treated and how their pay and benefits compare to similar organisations.
 - viii. **Giving Something Back** – explores to what extent staff think their organisation is socially responsible and whether they believe this effort is driven by appropriate motives.

2016 Staff Survey Results:

Response rate

6. The overall response rate for the Council was 48.94%, a significant increase on last year's rate of 34.46%. According the Best Companies, large (3.500+ employees) not-for-profit organisations have an average response rate of 40.44% and large private sector organisations, 49.49%.
7. Given the concerns raised last year at the low response rate, this was a key priority for the leadership team and it is encouraging to see that this has had an impact. This year's response rate is broadly in line with the average achieved by large private sector

organisations and given our complex staff base covering a large geographic area with large numbers of bank employees or local staff without access to email, this is a great achievement and one we hope to build on in the third year.

8. The response rate can also be broken down by Directorate, as summarised in the following table, and by service (**Annex 1**).

Directorate	Headcount	Responses	Response Percentage
Adult Social Care & Public Health	1942	1067	54.94%
Business Services	184	151	82.07%
Children, Schools and Families	4213	1452	34.46%
Customer & Communities	145	101	69.66%
Environment & Infrastructure	1268	711	56.07%
Legal, Democratic and Cultural Services	1346	586	43.54%
Orbis*	1383	1004	72.60%
SCC Total	10363	5072	48.94%

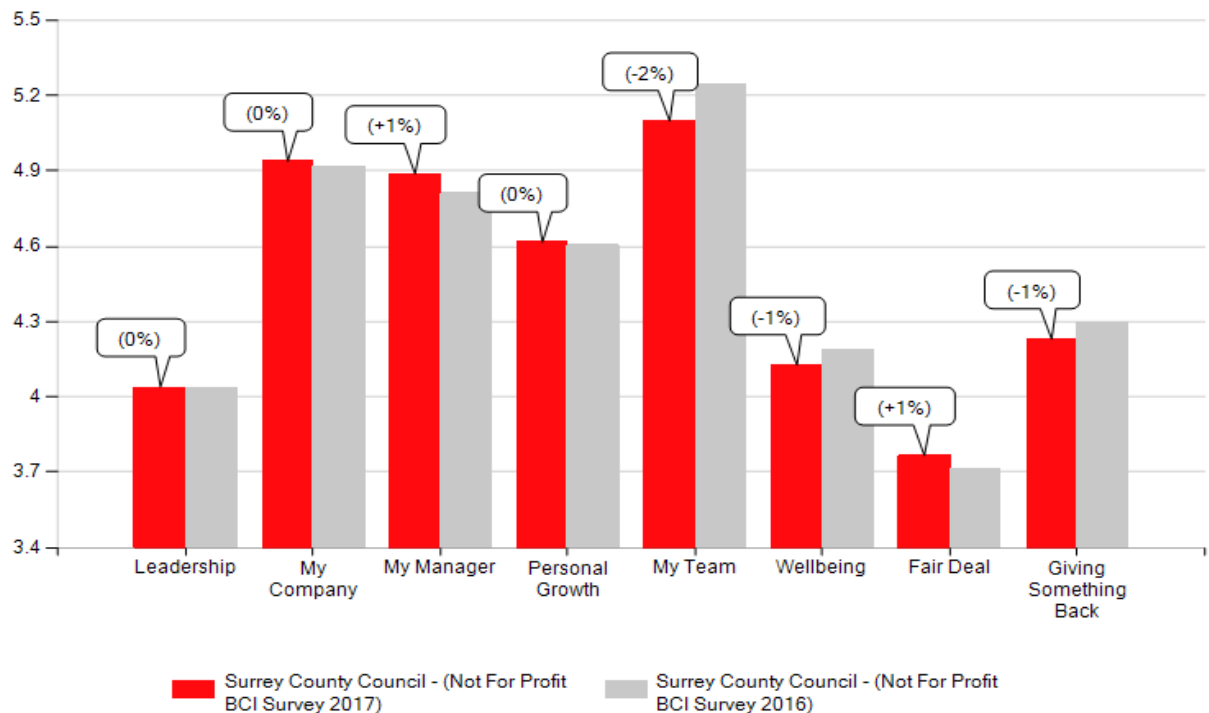
* Orbis includes staff from both Surrey and East Sussex County Councils

Findings

9. In answering the questions in the survey, staff were asked to rate each question on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These are then given a score by Best Companies on the following scale:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Each of the eight factors then receives an 'average' score based on all responses to the questions or statements that relate to that factor. Graph 1 shows the distribution of scores against all factors, along with the comparison to 2016.



Graph 1 – distribution of average scores against all eight factor areas for Surrey County Council

11. My Team, My Company and My Manager scored highest, with the three highest scoring questions within the organisation falling within these factors:

- i. I believe I can make a valuable contribution to the success of this organisation (5.62 – My Company)
- ii. People in my team go out of their way to help me (5.54 – My Team)
- iii. My work is an important part of my life (5.47 – My Company)

12. Fair Deal, Leadership and Well-being scored lower on average and the following questions scored the lowest overall within the organisation:

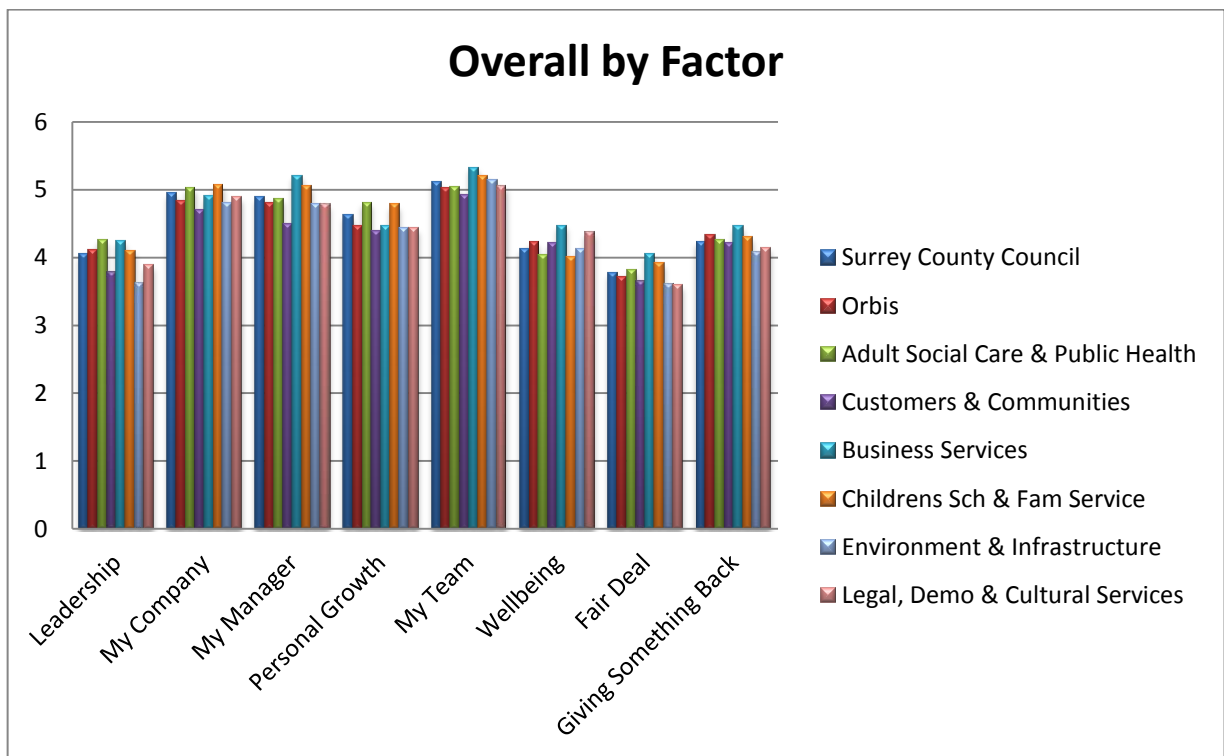
- i. I feel I receive fair pay for the responsibilities I have in my job (3.66 – Fair Deal)
- ii. Profit/budget concerns are the only things driving this organisation (3.55 – Giving Something Back)
- iii. Most days I feel exhausted when I come home from work (3.20 - Wellbeing)

13. The two highest scoring questions are the same as last year (with almost identical scores). The lowest scoring questions are also similar with the exception of *“Profit/budget concerns are the only things driving this organisation”* which all levels of the organisation felt had become a stronger driver, perhaps reflecting the challenging financial environment the Council is operating within.

14. The results this year show that there has been a positive increase in staff having more confidence in the leadership of the organisation, with the highest level of confidence growing within the senior manager community. Alongside this, there was

a clear increase in living the values and principles of the organisation, with a significant increase of 6% in staff feeling that managers are listening more and asking staff for their views and opinions. This result may be linked with the recent High Performance Development Programme (HPDP) which has focused on leadership and values. HPDP in its current form will come to an end this financial year and is under review in terms of what is needed going forward. At present, there are no plans to extend the current programme given the majority of senior managers have attended. Leadership Development remains an important part of the Council's training and organisational development offer but will likely to be re-focused going forward, with senior leaders working together in action learning sets on current issues.

15. The factors can also be compared at a Directorate level, as illustrated in graph 2. This shows that scores are fairly consistent across areas, with My Team the strongest factor in all areas.



Graph 2 – distribution of average scores against all factors by Directorate

16. Adult Social Care Directorate has increased against 6 of the 8 factors. Children, Schools and Families has also shown some increases, particularly in Children's Services. There has been a decrease in the scores across the majority of the factors for Orbis, Legal, Democratic & Cultural Services and Environment & Infrastructure.

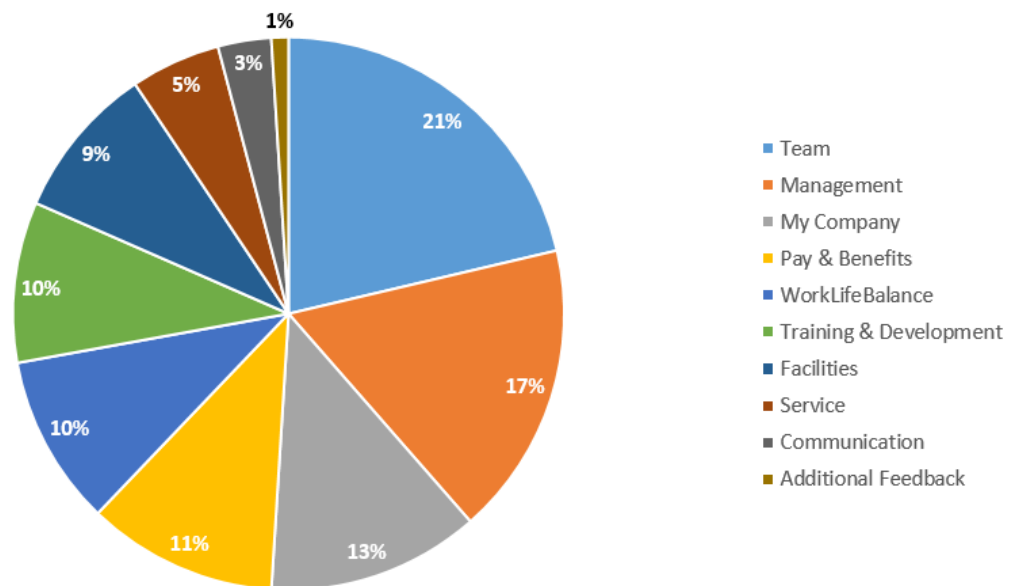
Results by Service

17. A full breakdown of scores across all services is attached at **Annex 1**. This shows the scores for each factor, the response rate and the service's overall engagement score (out of 1000) which then translates onto Best Companies ranking - unclassified (0-599), One To Watch (600-659.5), 1star (659.5-696.5), 2star (696.5 – 738) and 3star (738+.)

18. On the factors in Annex 1, a RAG rating has been applied to identify areas of strength (scoring above 5 - green) and potential areas of focus (scoring below 3.75 - red.) From this data, services where there are two or more areas scoring below 3.75 include Adult Social Care Operations, Mental Health, Trading Standards, Fire and Rescue, and Legal Services. All of these areas scored below 4 for Fair Deal and at least one other factor.
19. The highest single overall factor score was for Democratic Services, who scored 5.69 against 'Personal Growth'. Four of the eight factors scored above 4 across all service areas – My Manager, My Company, My Team and Personal Growth.
20. **Annex 2** shows the change in scores between 2016 and 2017 where a comparison is possible. There are caveats with comparing services year on year due to changes in the structure. However, there are some notable increases including Children's Services which has become a One To Watch this year and increased its overall score from 596.8 to 631.8, due to increased ratings across Leadership, My Company, My Manager, Fair Deal, Personal Growth and My Team.

Summary of Comments Section

21. In addition to the 70 multiple choice questions, there are two free-comment questions – “*What makes this a great workplace*” and “*What would make this a better workplace*”. The pie chart below shows how these split across improvement themes.



22. The three largest themes relate to the team, management and My Company, with the following coming out as the key areas to address:
 - One Team: avoiding duplication of work; improving communication; understanding what we can achieve together.
 - Management: listening and accepting everyone's views; more contact with teams; timely decisions; open and honest communication.

- My Company: Clear direction and goals; less uncertainty about the future; more proactive rather than reactive approach.

23. The feedback gathered from the open-ended questions provides a rich evidence base around the issues underlying the factor scores and the survey team will be working with teams to understand this analysis.

Progressing Staff Ideas

24. Given the strong feeling among staff that they have a valuable contribution to make to the organisation and the themes above around communication, it is important that the organisation continues to improve the mechanisms available to staff to generate ideas and progress them.

25. There are examples of this being effective in some areas. For example in Orbis, as part of their Ingenuim talent management approach, colleagues worked together to come up with ideas which were presented through a Dragon's Den scenario and the best ideas taken forward. This created a project looking at developing a skills portal to help share skills and joined people up across the organisation. The Council has also been trialling a number of online collaboration platforms including Jive which is currently being rolled out across the organisation. Early pilot projects have shown that this can be invaluable in providing forums for staff to share ideas and solutions (for example in the recent transfer of Adult Social Care to a new technology platform.)

26. There has also been a discussion forum within chatzone actively encouraging colleagues to contribute their ideas to help address the Council's financial challenge, sharing best practice examples on where they have made savings as well as suggestions for further savings. This has generated around 80 responses to date which finance are following up, both with the individuals and in supporting services and the senior leadership team to act upon them.

27. The Council recognises that its staff are a valuable asset and will continue to look at ways to engage with and support them to share and generate ideas, making use of IT solutions where most appropriate.

Other Opportunities arising

28. As part of the reporting on the survey results, Best Companies undertakes a more detailed analysis, both to interpret the results as outlined above but also to identify opportunities open to the Council to improve engagement further.

29. There a number of strengths identified from the Council's results around the support people receive from their manager and also from their team more generally and it is reassuring to see this continue to be reflected in this second year. Amongst team members, supervisors and managers, there is a feeling that their manager takes an active interest in their wellbeing and does not take advantage of them. Given the pressures staff are experiencing at work, this is positive feedback and hopefully provides some of the pastoral care needed.

30. Another strength identified by Best Companies is that Managers and Directors feel that what is expected of them in their work is made clear and that Surrey County Council is making use of their skills. This provides a strong base and an area that managers are encouraged to focus on with their teams to ensure they gain the same clarity.

31. From Best Companies wide experience, they identify three factors as the most critical for organisations to influence if they wish to increase engagement overall – Leadership, My Manager and Personal Growth. Whilst there is an improvement on the scores relating to the leadership skills of the senior management team and their commitment to living the values, Leadership is the factor where Best Companies still felt there was real potential to increase engagement. They recognised that with the environment the Council is operating within, this can be extremely challenging, noting that the financial challenges and the impact this has on the organisation has led to an overall lack of excitement about where the organisation is going, concerns about the future plans and a feeling of job insecurity. This is a significant threat for the organisation and should not be underestimated so in response to this, Best Companies felt there were three key areas to focus:
- Continuing to encourage managerial engagement at all levels, especially amongst senior managers
 - Helping managers to understand that their behaviour matters
 - Reinforcing organisational clarity by establishing and communicating strong principles across all job grades.
32. In reviewing the results and listening to Best Companies, the Chief Executive and his direct reports have endorsed these recommendations and will be working with the Extended Leadership Team during February and March to agree how best to work on addressing these three areas.

Conclusion:

33. This report details the key results of the 2016 staff survey and the resulting proposed areas of focus. Nearly half of the Council's employees responded, providing the best evidence Surrey has of how staff are feeling and having completed the survey twice, an understanding of how the organisation is evolving and changing.
34. Using Best Companies provides the Council with a detailed understanding of its engagement and allows us to be benchmarked against other organisations. For the second year running, Best Companies have classified the Council as good and allocated it to their "Ones to Watch" category, praising the increased response rate and consistent My Manager scores in particular.
35. Looking at the questions scoring most highly, employees believe that they can make a valuable contribution to the success of this organisation. They also feel that people in their team go out of their way to help and care for each other. However, there is evidence to show that the financial environment teams are working within and the challenges this produces continues to impact on colleagues.
36. In terms of looking ahead, there has been some improvement on the key themes identified last year - particularly around Fair Deal and Leadership - but these are likely to remain the focus for the next year, looking at how we ensure managers are equipped to support their teams through the pressures and challenges of work, providing clarity on expectations and continuing to focus on role modelling our values and behaviours.

Financial and value for money implications

37. The Section 151 Officer confirms that there are no financial and value for money implications associated with this report.

Equalities Implications

38. In engaging Best Companies to undertake the staff survey, the Council is using an experienced and established methodology which has been rigorously tested to ensure a fair and consistent approach which does not discriminate or differentiate against any known protected characteristic.

Next Steps:

- i. Directors and management teams have been provided with packs detailing their own results, including comparisons with last year's results as well as other teams and services. This will now be cascaded across the organisation, supported through David McNulty's weekly emails and discussions with the Extended Leadership Team.
- ii. Individual teams have been encouraged to use the data to have conversations about the results and agree what areas they most want to work on between now and the next survey, focussing on how we support each other at times of change.
- iii. The next survey will be undertaken in October 2017, providing a further opportunity to compare results year-on-year.

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Annexes:

Annex 1 – Overview by service

Annex 2 – Comparison to 2015 survey by service

Sources/ background papers:

Item 6 – Staff Survey Results: People, Performance & Development, 5 April 2016.