

## Overview and Budget Scrutiny Committee

**22 March 2018**

### Staff Survey Results

**Purpose of report:** This report provides the Committee with a summary of the results from the 2017 staff survey. This is the third SCC staff survey undertaken by Best Companies and includes helpful comparison data to the previous two years of engagement results.

#### Introduction:

1. In 2015, Best Companies was appointed by Surrey County Council (SCC) to administer a three year programme of annual employee surveys. The final survey went live on 2 October 2017 and closed on 10 November 2017. 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.
2. 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 the 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?*'.
3. 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.
4. 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.

### Response Rate

5. The overall response rate for the County Council was 54%, a significant increase on the last two year's rates of 34.46% and 48.94% respectively. According to Best Companies data, large (3,500+ employees) not-for-profit organisations have an average response rate of 40.44% and large private sector organisations 49.49%.
6. Two areas of the organisation have had particularly low response rates in previous years - commercial services catering staff (largely based in schools) and music tutors. Working with the services, it was agreed that a tailored survey would more appropriate for these two groups and this was implemented this year. As a result of this alternative approach, the response rate for this cohort increased from 4% to 29%. The results from these surveys are outside of Best Companies data and therefore not included within this report but have been fed back to the relevant Heads of Service.
7. The response rate can be broken down by Directorate, as summarised in the following table, and by service (**Appendix 1**).

| Directorate                                    | Headcount   | Responses   | Response Percentage |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Adult Social Care & Public Health              | 1810        | 991         | 55%                 |
| Business Services                              | 170         | 141         | 83%                 |
| Children, Schools and Families                 | 3024        | 1387        | 46%                 |
| Environment & Infrastructure                   | 654         | 431         | 66%                 |
| Environment & Infrastructure Trading Standards | 104         | 62          | 60%                 |
| Environment & Infrastructure Fire & Rescue     | 645         | 258         | 39%                 |
| Legal, Democratic and Cultural Services        | 1066        | 606         | 57%                 |
| Orbis*   | 1964        | 1256        | 64%                 |
| <b>SCC Total</b>                               | <b>9442</b> | <b>5137</b> | <b>54%</b>          |

\* Orbis includes staff from Surrey and East Sussex County Councils and Brighton & Hove City Council.

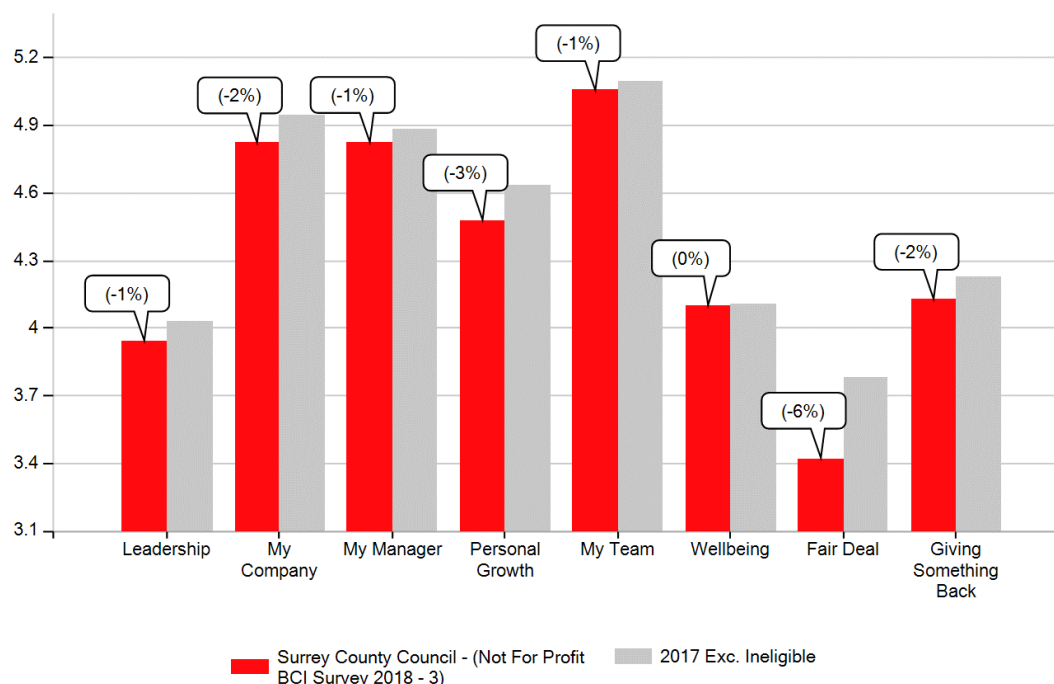
## Findings

8. 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 nor disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5              | 6     | 7              |

9. 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 comparisons to last year's survey.

**Graph 1** – distribution of average scores against all eight factors areas for Surrey County Council (excluding Orbis Brighton & Hove and Orbis East Sussex).



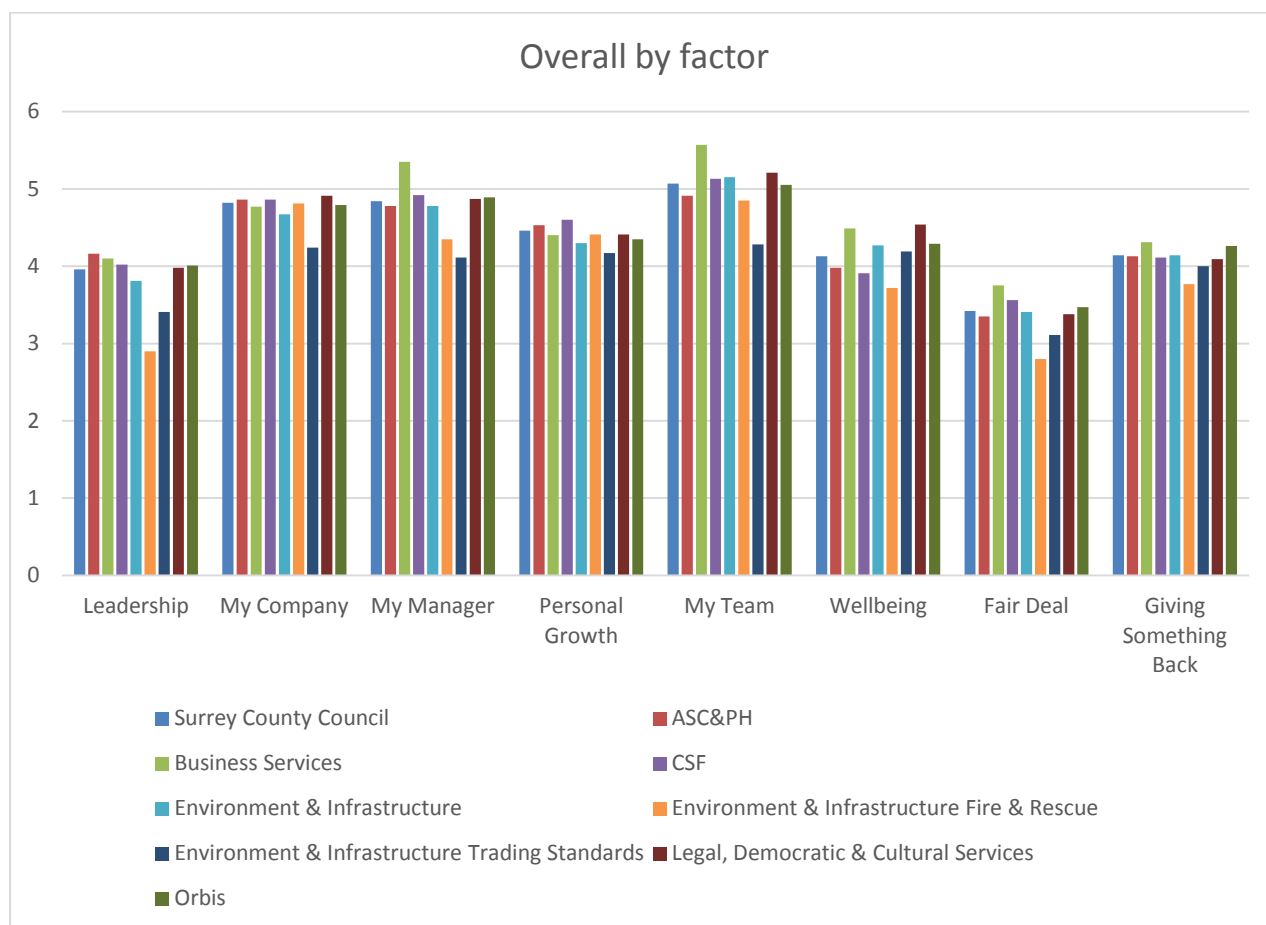
10. My Team, My Manager and My Company scored highest, with the three highest questions within the organisation falling within these factors. The following three questions have been the highest scoring questions for the past three years and the change in results since last year is shown below.

- i. I believe I can make a valuable contribution to the success of this organisation (5.52 2017 / 5.62 2016 - My Company)

- ii. People in my team go out of their way to help me (5.49 2017 / 5.54 2016 - My Team)
  - iii. My work is an important part of my life (5.44 2017 / 5.47 2016 - My Company)
11. Fair Deal and Leadership scores remain our two lowest areas and the following questions scored the lowest overall within the organisation.
    - a) Most days I feel exhausted when I come home from work (3.25 2017 / 3.2 2016– Wellbeing)
    - b) Profit / budget concerns are the only things driving this business (3.36 2017 / 3.54 2016 – Giving Something Back)
    - c) I am paid fairly for the work I do relative to people in similar positions in similar organisations (3.36 2017 / 3.72 2016 Fair Deal)
  12. The three highest scoring questions are the same as last year, although all three scores have marginally dropped. The lowest scoring questions are also similar although the Fair Deal statement 'I feel I receive fair pay for the responsibilities I have in my job' made it to fourth lowest scoring question this year rather than third place in last year's results. This statement was replaced by 'I am paid fairly for the work I do relative to people in similar organisations'.
  13. The results this year show some interesting differences in how people are feeling when analysed by job grade. In particular, organisational clarity and leadership shows improved scores for Senior Managers and Directors (S13+) but a drop in scores for levels below S13.
  14. Conversely, wellbeing results show that Senior Managers & Directors have reduced scores from last year and significantly lower in all questions when compared to the benchmark. However staff graded S12 and below show improved results for wellbeing areas when compared to last year and benchmarking results. As an example, 'I'm spending too much time working' results in different scores when looking at staff graded S12 and below (generally improved scores from last year and comparable to our benchmark) than when compared to Senior Managers (graded S13+) whose results have decreased since last year and are significantly lower than the benchmark.

15. The factors can also be compared at a Directorate level, as illustrated in graph 2.

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



16. From this graph it can be seen that Business Services show the highest levels of engagement across most areas.

### Results by Service

17. A full breakdown of scores across all services is attached at Appendix 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 (659.6-696.5), 2Star (696.6-738) and 3star (738+).
18. On the factors in Appendix 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 Surrey Fire & Rescue, Trading Standards, ASC Mental Health, E&I Emergency Management & Projects, Legal Services & Orbis Audit. All of these areas scored below 4 for Fair Deal and at least one other factor.
19. The highest overall single factor score by service was for New Models & Business Improvement who scored 6.36 for 'My Manager'. In addition, all 8 factors within this service area scored above 4 indicating overall positivity for all areas of engagement within this team.

20. There are caveats with comparing services year on year due to changes in the structure. However, there are some notable increases including Cultural Services, New Models of Delivery & Business Improvement, Orbis Strategic Directorate, Orbis Procurement & Commissioning and Environment & Infrastructure – all of whom have achieved increases in 4 or more engagement factors. This year on year comparison can be seen in **Appendix 2**.
21. Within the survey, individuals have the option to answer two free-text questions. These are 'What makes this a great workplace' and 'what would make this a better workplace'. Over 5,100 comments were recorded and this data is provided to Heads of Service to support with the interpretation of survey results. In addition, Best Companies provides an analysis of the key themes from these comments.

### **General Comment**

22. The results from the staff survey are broadly similar to our results from the first two surveys, and whilst overall results have dropped, the areas of strength and improvement remain consistent.
23. In particular, the Leadership results have gone down by 1% and is not unexpected given the timing of the survey coinciding with the Chief Executive's retirement and the wider context the Council operates within. The new Chief Executive joining the Council in March 2018 provides more clarity and an opportunity for the new leadership team to re-engage with staff on future priorities and direction for the organisation.
24. Results for Fair Deal increased in 2016 following the pay and reward consultation. However in 2017 the result for Fair Deal dropped. This could be linked to the delay in agreeing the pay deal for this year which was anticipated to be in July 2017 but was actioned in October 2017. In addition, staff appear to be feeling the effects of austerity in their personal lives and a feeling that others are paid more for similar jobs. These factors coupled with an unrelenting need to cut costs whilst at work is having a clear effect on how individuals' perceive the fairness of their pay and reward.
25. A further decrease in results since last year is for Personal Growth. This factor looks at how individuals perceive the training and development and opportunities to develop their career within the Council. There has been significant change surrounding training and development over the past 12 months with the introduction of the apprentice levy which has replaced some established training, e.g. ILM and accredited courses. There is also a shift towards more self-directed learning to address immediate learning needs rather than a heavy reliance on classroom learning which will take some time to embed. The organisation remains committed to investing in staff and providing opportunities for individual's to develop. One example is the new leadership development Offer that was launched in September 2017 and provides opportunities to current managers to develop core management and leadership skills but also has a focus on developing a pipeline of future leaders through the Talent management initiatives such as the aspiring leaders programme and leading in challenging times for Strategic leaders.
26. We continue to see great strengths from our 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 into the third year.

## **Next Steps**

27. Best Companies presented the full survey results were to Senior Managers in late January 2018. The results were then shared with managers via service-specific data packs and more widely with staff on the council's intranet. During February and March, services are encouraged to talk through the results and share through normal channels such as newsletters and meetings. The assigned workforce lead within each Directorate will their senior leadership teams with the support of the HR&OD lead to ensure a clear action plan is developed which allows focus on a small number of key areas of improvement. These improvement areas and actions are due to be confirmed by the end of March 2018.
28. This is the last year of the current contract to deliver the staff survey with Best Companies. Whilst the immediate focus is ensuring services are actively responding to the recent survey results, work will also begin in parallel to review the options going forward, looking at best practice within the sector and also more widely in terms of alternative approaches to engagement. A further report will be shared with Members on the future approach as appropriate.

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| <b>Conclusions:</b> |
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29. This report details the key results of the 2017 staff survey and the resulting proposed areas of focus. Over half of the Council's employees responded, providing a strong evidence base of how staff are feeling and, having completed the survey three times, an understanding of how the organisation is changing and evolving.
30. Using Best Companies provides the council with a detailed understanding of engagement and allows benchmarking against other organisations. This year the overall results have dropped slightly but here are some areas within the Council where results have improved. For the reasons outlined in this report, there is evidence that the environment colleagues are working within and the challenges this produces continues to impact on their engagement.
31. In terms of looking ahead, there needs to be renewed focus on areas of Fair Deal, Leadership and Personal Growth. The Council also needs to remain focused on wellbeing – especially for Senior Managers. The Extended Leadership Team will be working with services during February and March 2018 on actions to address concerns raised in the staff survey.

## **Financial and value for money implications**

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

## **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

33. In engaging Best Companies to undertake the staff survey, we are 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 characteristics.

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| <b>Next steps:</b> |
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- 1) 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 has been cascaded across the organisation, supported through the Chief Executive's weekly email and discussions with the Extended Leadership Team.
- 2) Individual teams are encouraged to use the data to have conversations about the results and agree what area they most want to work on between April and September.
- 3) As this is the end of the three year contract with Best Companies, an options appraisal will be carried out and recommendations put forward on how best to engage staff going forward.

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## **Annexes**

**Appendix 1** – Overall results by service 2017

**Appendix 2** – Comparison of results by service 2016 & 2017