SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

People, Performance and Development Committee
11 June 2020

Staff Survey

Purpose of the report:

To provide the Committee with an overview of proposals for an organisation wide staff survey.

1.   Recommendations

1.1   It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report.

2.   Background

2.1   Surrey County Council values meaningful staff engagement and has invested in a number of surveys over the years. Previous approaches have been to gather staff opinion through a comprehensive set of themes via an annual survey, the results of which were subsequently reported at an organisational, directorate and service level.

2.2   The last annual survey (Times Best Companies) was conducted in 2015, following which the provider contract expired. No cross-organisation staff surveys have been conducted since, although there have been large scale cultural surveys and staff engagement activities over the past two years.

2.3   Previous annual surveys provided largely ineffective. They were very long, resulting in a lengthy set of results that managers were unable to devote the times to address. Results were typically not available until up to six months following survey completion, losing the value of real-time feedback and disempowering managers and staff to own and act on outcomes.

2.4   Arguably, the culture of the organisation at the time did not lend itself to a positive environment for a meaningful staff survey, with a 'top-down'

approach, some pressure for positive results and lack of ownership of outcomes at a service level.

2.5   Given the largely ineffective nature of previous surveys, alongside the significant cultural shift that has taken place within the council over the past two years, we now need a different approach, which will allow us to collect staff experience data and maximise the use of modern analytics to deliver high-quality actionable results.

2.6   Our approach has two phases: phase one is in response to Covid-19 as part of our "learning from the experience" staff engagement activities; phase two is a longer-term approach to address the issues and challenges around staff surveys faced in previous years.

3.   Phase One – "Our Conversation" Survey

3.1   The "Our Conversation" survey will be distributed to all staff (excluding schools) in a phased implementation, commencing in June. We will work closely with service leads to ensure that we run the survey at times to suit their teams to ensure maximum opportunity for participation, recognising that many staff are still working in the "active" phase of Covid-19.

3.2   This survey will allow an opportunity for staff to reflect on their work and workstyle(s) during the lockdown period, the aim being to create an opportunity for reflection but also to discuss innovation and new future working, including readiness for agile working. Survey questions will capture a "pulse-check" of staff wellbeing to inform future emotional and physical wellbeing provision, (mindful of the possibility for a second wave of the virus). The survey will also explore remote leadership and teamworking to inform future leadership development activity.

3.3   The survey questions will predominantly be informed through feedback received from staff through the initial stages of engagement activities, e.g. focus groups. The intention is to use this feedback to give depth and value to the survey; ensuring we are asking the right questions.

3.4   Results from the survey will be shared across the organisation and we will work with managers and teams to develop further interventions as a result of outcomes.

3.5   The survey will be designed to provide some benchmarking questions to shape future surveys.

4.   Phase two – Quarterly Pulse Surveys

4.1   Phase two will take benchmarking questions and outputs from phase one to design a pulse survey which will be implemented quarterly for 25% of

staff across all directorates. This approach will provide accumulative data for the whole year and subsequently on a rolling annual basis.

4.2 The pulse survey approach should alleviate the challenges faced in the past; it will enable a survey to be developed that is quick and easy to complete, with meaningful questions that are relevant to our organisation and the culture we have been developing over recent years, so staff feel more connected to the survey. Results will be shared with all staff soon after completion so that data is current and we will engage with managers and support them to take local action on the outcomes of the survey for their area.

4.3 We will create a rolling engagement programme that uses accumulative data from the quarterly pulse surveys to enable us to have a meaningful and evolving representation of staff opinions across the organisation.

4.4 Alongside survey completion, engagement activity will include placed-based focus groups and individual interviews, giving staff multiple ways to feedback, providing richer data.

4.5 As well as taking an organisation wide view that will inform ongoing activities at a corporate level, we anticipate this approach will enable managers at service level to make evidence based staffing decisions.

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5.   Conclusions

5.1 Capturing the views of staff is vital to our workforce planning and supporting our staff, both short-term as we move through the various stages of Covid-19 as well as longer-term as we aim to continually improve employee experience and organisational performance.

5.3 The approach as outlined will address the limitations of past staff surveys and will provide a more sustainable and action–focussed data set about our staff and how they feel.

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6.   Next steps:

6.1 Phase one: procurement of a suitable system for the design, implementation and analysis of the all staff "Our Conversation" survey, working with service leads to ensure engagement with survey results.   Implementation commences June 2020.

6.2 Phase two: refine the "Our Conversation" survey and develop into a benchmarkable quarterly pulse survey to be distributed to 25% of the workforce each quarter, again working with service leads to ensure engagement with survey results.   Implementation commences Autumn 2020.

7.	**Financial and Value for Money implications:**

7.1   Costs associated with procuring a suitable provider for survey design, administration and analysis have been accounted for within HROD budgets.

8.	**Equality and Diversity implications:**

8.1   This approach will improve the collation of staff experience data, with embedded demographic questions to enable detailed analysis and appropriate action on outcomes.

9.	**Risk Management implications:**

9.1   None arising directly from this report.

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Sources/background papers: None