

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

29TH NOVEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN & ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT – S.REES**

Matter for Information

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All

Report Title: Frontline Employee Survey Feedback and Action

Purpose of Report

To update Members on the Future of Work survey of the council's frontline workforce.

Executive Summary

The report provides Members with the background to the survey which was issued to office based employees in August 2021. 381 employees in this category responded and a summary of responses is set out in Appendix 1. The feedback has led to the development of a number of actions in response to the issues raised by employees.

Background

In May, we launched a survey for office based employees, to find out how home working has affected them over the last 14 months – what the challenges have been and what has worked well. Members received feedback from this survey at the September meeting of this committee.

In August we launched a survey specifically for our front line employees. This survey closed at the end of September.

The Future of Work Survey

The survey launched on Monday 23rd August by Mrs Karen Jones, Chief Executive, and closed on 31st September 2021. It was publicised in the weekly HR Sway, on the council's intranet, and emailed to employees identified as 'office workers'.

The survey aimed to establish the following information:

- Have you felt safe and protected from the Coronavirus at work?
- Do you think that the actions put in place to help control the spread of Coronavirus whilst at work have been enough to protect you?
- Do you feel that your work colleagues have followed all the actions put in place to help control the spread of Coronavirus at work?
- How would you describe your wellbeing at the moment?
- Are you aware of the resources that have been made available for health and wellbeing on the website?
- Have you had regular contact with your line manager?
- Have you had the opportunity to attend team meetings?

Employees were also asked questions relating to the 'Let's Talk Survey' and feedback in relation to those questions will be considered in the analysis for that survey.

318 employees responded to the questionnaire, a response rate of approximately 10%, which is on the low side. The responses are, however, proportionately spread across the frontline workforce, so it can be considered reasonably representative.

Responses and feedback

Appendix 1 sets out the questions asked in the survey and the collated responses.

The survey also gave employees the opportunity to provide narrative feedback in their own words. The thousands of statements have been analysed and grouped into key themes, to enable us to respond and take action to address this important feedback.

Actions

The Survey results have been shared and discussed with our recognised trade unions and to inform our joint working in relation to employment strategy, policy and process.

The Survey results were shared with Corporate Directors at a corporate level and also with Directorate Management Teams to consider service specific feedback and support the development of any necessary service specific actions.

The Communications & Marketing Team will put in place a Communications Action Plan to ensure that we feedback to our employees what the key survey outcomes were and actions that have been taken in response to the feedback we had from employees.

Headline feedback:

Have you felt safe and protected from the Coronavirus at work?

Yes 76%

No 24%

Do you feel that your work colleagues have followed all the actions put in place to help control the spread of Coronavirus at work?

Yes 85%

No 15%

How would you describe your wellbeing at the moment?

Very good 19%

Good 33%

Average 35%

Poor 12%

Very poor 2%

As can be seen from the feedback, the responses were largely positive, with many employees commenting that leadership have done everything they could during the pandemic to keep employees safe whilst maintaining services. However, some themes have emerged in the responses regarding what further actions could have been put in place to protect our employees, which include:

- Better ventilation in buildings,
- Schools operating with smaller class sizes
- Employees and pupils wearing masks in more areas

In relation to these points, we will recommunicate the importance of the workplace risk assessments and ask that managers / head teachers share their risk assessments and discuss these with their teams in order to alleviate any employee concerns.

Some common themes could also be identified where employees believed others may not have been following the rules laid out which made them feel unsafe in some areas, these include:

- Some employees not wearing masks
- Some employees not social distancing appropriately
- Some employees not undertaking Lateral Flow Testing

In order to combat these issues, we will ask managers to share their risk assessments with their teams, and discuss what is expected of the employees when in the workplace. Whilst undertaking Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) is a voluntary activity, we will recommunicate the benefit of LFTs as an additional measure to combat the circulation of Covid 19.

Wellbeing was an important theme we wanted to gauge from the Front Line Services Questionnaire. The questions on this subject also provided a very mixed response, with many employees feeling that their wellbeing was as good as it could be, with others noting cause for concern. The following are examples of where employees have highlighted their concerns and comments:

- General worries about the Covid Virus and concern for selves/family members
- Employees have general health concerns not related to the workplace or Covid

In addition to these two themes, it is important to also highlight the theme of 'workplace'. Many employees commented on their workplace affecting their wellbeing but in different ways. Some employees felt that their ability to work from home had greatly improved their wellbeing, with some sighting that working from home had impacted on their wellbeing poorly. There are also some comments regarding perceived unfairness regarding some employees being able to work from home with others not being able to due to the nature of their roles.

It is anticipated that as part of the rollout of the 'Hybrid Working Framework', management will have discussions with their teams and through communication this will clarify and resolve some of these perceived issues and tackle wellbeing aspects associated with 'workplace'.

In addition, there are also comments noted in relation to employees workload, pay and working hours with a suggestion that changes and 'improvements' to these could improve wellbeing.

Work is currently ongoing in relation to options for a reward and recognition scheme with training taking place in relation to reward and recognition of employee achievement. There are also plans for a recognition event, to recognise the exceptional work of our teams in Neath Port Talbot.

Financial Appraisal

The Surveys have been developed and managed internally by the council's HR and Communications and Marketing teams, at no additional cost to the council.

Integrated Impact Assessment

As this is a matter for information, an Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

Workforce Impact

Employee voice, and ensuring that employees are able to provide us with feedback on their experience at work and how it can be improved is important for people's wellbeing and motivation.

Legal Impact

There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

Risk Management

The council has adopted a risk assessed approach to workforce arrangements throughout the pandemic, placing the health and safety of our employees as a paramount concern.

Consultation

The trade unions were informally consulted with in relation to the survey and have been presented with the survey outcomes. This information will help inform more formal discussions in relation to workforce planning and strategy development.

Recommendations

That members note the survey outcomes and associated actions and the update in relation to working practices.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Frontline Employee Questionnaire and Responses

List of Background Papers

<https://gov.wales/covid-19-alert-levels>

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