



---

**To: Scrutiny Board 1**

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

**Subject: Staff Survey – Speak Up, Speak Out**

---

## 1. Purpose of the Note

This report details the background and context of the Staff Survey which was undertaken in September 2023 as well as detailing the results. The report also goes on to detail next steps in addressing issues raised within the survey.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board is recommended to:

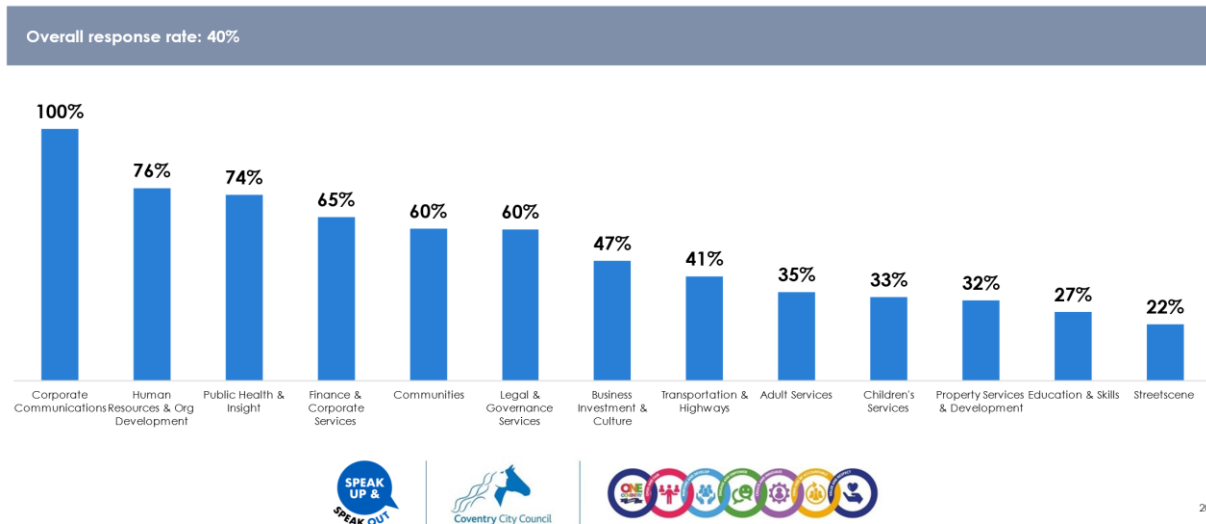
1. note the details of the results of the Staff Survey and the proposed HR response to the findings.
2. identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources)

## 3. Information/Background

- 3.1 A comprehensive staff survey had not been undertaken for some years. The People Plan identified this as a 'need' because of the wider aim to get better and greater engagement with the workforce. This was wanted as there was not a successful mechanism for receiving feedback on the lived experiences of working at the Council, as well as identifying the negative issues that may be impacting on retention. Equally important is to understand and learn of the positive ones so this can be highlighted and built upon, as well as celebrated and promoted as part of recruitment campaigns/initiatives.
- 3.2 The provider selected to support us in the process was DJS, who were successful in their tender submission because of their previous experience of working with a number of authorities and as a result had the advantage of being able to provide wider benchmark data both from the wider public sector and other local authorities, but also in their experience of the process, quality of the survey etc.
- 3.3 The survey was undertaken from 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to the 13<sup>th</sup> of October and was made available to all employees through their active corporate email address, or for those without accounts the survey was sent to home addresses, as well as being available through QR codes. Employees could even ring DJS direct and complete the survey over the phone. All surveys were anonymous.
- 3.4 The survey was live for five weeks and generated 2,178 responses out of approximately 5130 employees equating to 40% of the workforce. Below shows the response rate per service area.

## Response rates: by Director Portfolio

A response rate of 40% is higher than achieved in the recent Health and Wellbeing surveys at the Council, so this sets a standard to build upon in the future, overall and in each Director Portfolio, where the response rate varies widely.



3.5 The objective of the survey was to seek views on the following eleven areas:

- Engagement
- Job satisfaction and their work
- Feelings about the Council
- Trust and culture
- Reward and recognition
- Performance
- Health and wellbeing
- Learning and development
- Line management
- Their Director / Chief Officer
- Equity, diversity and inclusion

## 4. The Survey

- 4.1 The survey itself was broken down into the eleven themes with questions being asked under each of these areas, plus there were two free text questions which between them generated some 3,000 plus responses.
- 4.2 Scoring was across five options; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree, the scores were then weighted with strongly agree equating to a score of one hundred and strongly disagree at 0. This enabled an overall combined score across the block of questions to be generated for that area, so for example engagement had a score of 71.

- 4.3 Data was also collected on protected characteristics but numbers less than 10 were not able to be specifically identified under data protection, as individuals may have been identifiable.
- 4.4 It should be noted that those surveys completed online did require all questions to be answered to enable the user to move through the survey, this was not possible in other formats completed.

## 5. Survey Results

- 5.1 The survey results are detailed and are actually some fifty-five pages in total. For the purposes of this report the main themes and findings are presented below, but the full report is available on the intranet. The survey has been shared with all Directors and the trades unions.
- 5.2 The first graphic shows the highest and lowest scores from the survey based on individual questions.

### Speak Up & Speak Out 2023: strongest responses

Approaching nine in ten colleagues say they feel trusted to get their job done and willingly do more work than is required of them. However, close to half of colleagues disagree that poor performance is dealt with effectively (49%), and a similar proportion disagree that their pay is fair (48%).



#### Strengths: what are colleagues most positive about?

Highest positive scoring questions	% positive (e.g. Net agree)
I am trusted to get my job done	89%
I understand how my work contributes towards the success of the Council	86%
I willingly do more than is normally required of me at work	86%
My line manager is supportive	83%
My line manager cares about my health and wellbeing	81%

#### Areas of concern: what are colleagues most negative about?

Highest negative scoring questions	% negative (e.g. Net disagree)
Poor performance in the Council is dealt with effectively	49%
Considering my duties and responsibilities, I feel my pay is fair	48%
There are opportunities for me to progress in my career at the Council	35%
I believe action will be taken on the results of this survey	32%
I feel line management practices are fair and consistent across the Council	30%

Note: scores to agreement-scale questions only.



- 5.3 These results can also be compared to other relevant results as DJS are able to benchmark against eight other local authorities and thirty-four wider public sector organisations, below is the local authority comparison, the wider public sector comparator is contained within the full report.
- 5.4 The scores in green/black show where we score higher than others, red is where the score is lower.

## External benchmarking: Local Authorities

'I understand how my work contributes towards the success of the Council' is the statement comparing most favourably against the Local Authorities benchmark (+16 percentage points). However, just 51% feel a strong sense of belonging to the Council, which is 13 percentage points below the benchmark.

Variance from Local Authorities benchmark



- Number of questions at least 5% points above the average scores
- Number of questions in line with the average scores
- Number of questions at least 5% points below the average scores

Local Authorities benchmark	Questions scoring significantly above the Local Authorities benchmark			Questions scoring significantly below the Local Authorities benchmark		
		% positive	Variance to benchmark (% point)		% positive	Variance to benchmark (% point)
	I understand how my work contributes towards the success of the Council	86%	+16	I feel a strong sense of belonging to the Council	51%	-13
	The Council is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace	79%	+5	I feel motivated at work	69%	-11
	I feel that change is well managed across the Council	40%	+4	My Director/Chief Officer is leading Coventry City to a positive future	55%	-11
	I feel connected to people within my team	79%	+4	Considering my duties and responsibilities, I feel my pay is fair	35%	-10
	My workload is usually manageable	59%	+3	Poor performance in the Council is dealt with effectively	24%	-8

**Note:** scores to agreement-scale questions only. Scores in the variance columns are highlighted in green and red where they are at least 5% points above or 5% points below the Local Authorities benchmark.



13

- 5.5 The overall strong themes that emerge from the survey, shown by both slides, are trust, supportive line management and that employees understand their contribution to the organisation. This shows that the One Coventry plan and Council priorities have been successfully cascaded as employee know what they are working towards.
- 5.6 The areas of concern raised are not completely surprising, as they relate to pay and a lack of development opportunities which could be attributed to the cost-of-living crisis and wider issues of public sector pay. The issue of performance management was not expected, but this along with inconsistent line management application of policies and procedures are areas for improvement.
- 5.7 A further theme that was consistent, was that there was a belief that no action would be taken as a result of the survey. Scores were lower than other authorities in terms of motivation, strong sense of belonging, and leadership in terms of a positive future but these points do not translate to the overall scores.
- 5.8 Finally, the slide below shows the result of each of the eleven themes of the survey, which again highlights the lower scores for performance along with learning and development.



5.9 These results are also reflected in the external benchmark comparison, but also show that the work that has been undertaken in the last 2 years relating to diversity and inclusion along with health and wellbeing score well, which shows this has been recognised by the workforce.

## 6 Next Steps

6.1 A number of roadshows led by the Chief Executive are being undertaken initially at Friargate, Broadgate House and the Council House over the next few weeks, with the first having taken place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. These will be extended within Whitley Depot and Adults and Childrens locations after Easter.

6.2 These sessions are an opportunity for Julie Nugent to talk to staff, share the results of the staff survey and for them to be able to ask questions directly. These sessions are part of a wider internal communication strategy, which is in the process of being developed, and will be a central element of the staff survey response plan going forward. A wider organisational response will be included in the plan and again, is being created, but from an HR perspective, work has already commenced.

6.3 Appraisal is now embedded within the organisation, but we are taking steps to strengthen the process, so some changes have been made for this year already. However, based on the staff survey results this work will continue into the next year, as we recognise there is more to do in this space if we are to create and develop a performance culture

6.4 We want to develop a talent strategy, both in terms of identifying and then developing talent but recognise the need to ensure that this is a transparent and inclusive process.

- 6.5 An extended managers induction is being introduced later this year, as it had already been recognised that further and better support is needed for new managers which will form part of the addressing inconsistent policy and procedure use. Also, to support this action inclusive recruitment panels will also be part of the recruitment process in the Autumn and this work commenced this month.
- 6.6 Although the values are recognised with the Council, there is still further work to be done in relation to the 'lived' behaviours, and there are already plans to change the senior leadership behaviour framework in recognition of this. We are also framing our training offer in line with the values, and our recognition scheme already operates on this basis, which we will continue to build on this further. We have just held our first 'best of the best' awards but there are further improvements we can make to this.
- 6.7 In terms of wider learning and development offer, we are reviewing statutory and mandatory training to ensure that it meets the organisational needs. There is a need to be creative with the resources and time we have available, in order to meet the challenge of organisational need and individual want. Management development training is available through traditional methods and online, we have access to a great resource called Coaching Culture which, if used correctly can be really beneficial. Part of the challenge is to encourage employees to invest in themselves and find the time to access what support is available by the organisation, again this will form part of the response to the survey.
- 6.8 The 'OneCovSquad' is a new initiative we have launched to create a pool of employees that can be called upon to provide essential support in delivering the Council's organisational and transformational ambitions. It is open to grades 1-10, employees will be working within their existing grade, but this provides an opportunity to do something different, within a new area and hopefully learn new skills. There is a short application process available via a number of different ways for example a short video, it's purpose being to support a matching process to the different projects, rather than a traditional selection process. The aim is to give all those who apply an opportunity. We accept that this is a new and different approach, but this is in direct response to some of the feedback received from the staff survey.
- 6.9 HR will be just one area providing a response in relation to the feedback from the survey, this will be developed into a single plan by May and then shared with the organisation.

**Name: Susanna Newing**

**Job Title: Director of HR**

**Contact Details: [susanna.newing@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:susanna.newing@coventry.gov.uk)**