



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Employment Committee

23 September 2020

Report of: Councillor Kelham Cooke
The Leader of the Council



Employee Surveys 20/21

This report reviews the delivery, outcomes and actions relating to two internal employee surveys during 2020 and provides an overview of the forthcoming all staff employee survey.

Report Author

Neil Moverley, Senior HR Officer



01476 406135



n.moverley@southkesteven.gov.uk

Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
Administrative	Administrative	All Wards

Reviewed by:	Elaine Pepper, Head of Organisation Development	7 September 2020
Approved by:	Lee Sirdifield, Strategic Director for Transformation and Change	9 September 2020
Signed off by:	Councillor Kelham Cooke, The Leader of the Council	10 September 2020

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

That the Employment Committee:

- i) notes the delivery and outcome of two internal employee pulse surveys carried out in 2020.
- ii) recommends the use of pulse surveys in the future and recommends areas of focus for future pulse surveys.
- iii) notes the forthcoming all staff survey and reviews the areas of focus that the survey will cover.
- iv) receives a report following the forthcoming all staff survey on the analysis of results, action planning and organisation response.

1 The Background to the Report

- 1.1 Prior to 2017 South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) had not conducted an employee survey for a number of years. In the past three years SKDC have carried out two all staff surveys. These are large surveys that are led by the Organisational Development team and conducted by external providers.
- 1.2 Covid19 has brought many challenges for SKDC, particularly around how our employees and the organisation work. Office based staff are now working from home, most for the first time. Leadership, communication and the culture of the organisation have never been more important, as our staff deal with the daily life under lockdown.
- 1.3 A range of measures have been implemented to ensure that staff are engaged with whilst at home by direct line managers and Heads of Service and the organisation in general. This has been through a range of communication tools such as:
- Regular updates and informative emails from The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive
 - Wellbeing Wednesday emails
 - Fun Friday interactive communications from the Organisational Development team
 - Daily team check-ins with managers
 - Regular one-to-one and team meetings
 - Covid-19 risk assessments with teams to update working practices, both at home and when in the community.
- 1.4 In order to ensure communication is a two way process the council's Organisational Development team have designed, conducted, analysed and fed back internal pulse surveys. A pulse survey is a short survey, generally carried out electronically and focussed on one specific topic.
- 1.5 SKDC has carried two internal pulse surveys since lockdown began, the topics were;
- i) Keeping in Touch.
 - ii) It's okay to not be okay.
- The results of the two pulse surveys are contained within Appendix 1.
- 1.6 A third all staff survey was due to take place in March 2020, however due to the onset of Covid-19 the survey was postponed. The delayed survey is now planned to take place in October 2020.
- 1.7 Through a procurement process a new supplier has been selected to carry out the survey supported by an internal project team.

2 Pulse Survey Outcomes

Keeping in Touch

- 2.1 The first survey focused on Keeping in Touch and asked a number of questions designed to find out:
- If our managers are communicating with their staff – and how often.
 - Whether teams are communicating with each other – and how often.

- If teams across SKDC are interacting with each other as and when required.
- What methods, tools, platforms and apps are being used by staff to communicate and stay connected.
- Obtaining feedback on the way SKDC is communicating and if it is effective.
- Information on how staff are feeling, so that HR can respond through Wellbeing Wednesday and Fun Friday.
- Information relating to equipment, system access and ICT connections.

2.2 The survey saw a positive response. There was a total of 317 responses from a possible 376 staff who could respond to the online survey. The survey gave useful insight into individuals' circumstances and feelings through a number of free-text questions.

2.3 Key points from staff were that they are:

- Really happy with the communications between themselves, line managers and teams along with the way managers were keeping them updated.
- Appreciative of the regular/daily communications from the Chief Executive/The Leader.
- Very positive around how SK are doing a great job with communications internally and externally.
- Happy with the amount, variety of communications.
- Aware of how important it is to keep the level of communication going throughout the pandemic.
- Happy with the way they are being kept informed.
- Receptive and appreciative of Wellbeing Wednesday and Fun Friday and felt they are a good way to receive helpful advice, hints and tips and to stay interactive with other staff and the organisation.

2.4 Other comments from staff included:

- Staff liked The Leaders video message and would like to see more video messages from the Senior Team
- Staff would like clarity on whether they should be using Microsoft Teams or Skype.
- Formal communication is great, need to develop more informal coffee catch ups etc.
- Too many emails - not helpful.
- Too busy working to read the communications.
- Don't work Fridays so miss out on Fun Friday.
- Can't engage in Wellbeing Wednesday/Fun Friday too busy working.
- Missing the interaction of other staff and other teams.
- Have to go out and about all day - too tired to read emails when return.
- Need to use calendars/out of office more effectively - difficult to know who is in or out.

2.5 The results of the survey were analysed and fed back to staff through a series of daily emails from The Leader and Chief Executive.

2.6 **You Said – We Did: 6 key areas**

You Said	We Did
<p>You have regular contact with your manager and team but can't always access the systems or equipment you need to do your job.</p>	<p>Line managers carried out regular virtual team meetings to enable close links with colleagues and to pass on key messages and updates.</p> <p>Line managers organised regular one to ones with their staff to discuss work and wellbeing</p> <p>Line managers identified and supported isolated or vulnerable members of staff.</p> <p>Our IT service worked with line managers and their teams to ensure that individuals were provided with the equipment that they needed.</p> <p>Safe practices were introduced for access to equipment at work where required.</p>
<p>You are happy with the way the Council was communicating and enjoyed the variety of communication.</p> <p>However, some of you feel you are unable to as you were too busy to read the communications.</p>	<p>An increased focus on internal messages about different teams in the council.</p> <p>Daily communications from The Leader and Chief Executive gave key messages on work and the wider world (this later moved to more spaced out communications following feedback and a shift in the stage of our response to the pandemic).</p> <p>Wellbeing Wednesday emails tackled areas of concern raised by staff to provide advice and support in future editions.</p> <p>Fun Friday messages became more interactive and regularly encouraged staff to take time out and get involved.</p>
<p>You said that you really miss the social interaction of the workplace having coffee and lunch with colleagues and a catch up.</p>	<p>This has been harder to achieve and as an organisation we have encouraged joint team meetings and for staff to arrange coffee catch ups.</p> <p>This has been to encourage and enable a more organic approach rather than top down.</p> <p>The wellbeing team is looking at possible activities and interaction as social distancing rules change.</p>

<p>You said the amount of emails being sent was increasing and some days felt relentless.</p>	<p>All staff were encouraged to consider the best way of contacting each other including Skype and Teams calls to encourage increased interaction and to not copy in colleagues to emails unless it directly impacted them.</p>
<p>You said that you had concerns with the work that you found difficult to do away from the office environment.</p> <p>Some said that they felt overwhelmed by workloads, timescales, hours of work and inability to take regular breaks and switch off at the end of the day.</p>	<p>Staff were advised to talk to their line managers one to one if they had concerns, about workloads and were encouraged to come up with alternative ways of working that may be more applicable at home than copying what worked in the office.</p> <p>Managers carried out one to one's with staff to encourage discussions about the way we work and identify issues relating to workload.</p>
<p>In general, you said that you liked working from home, felt more productive and that there were many benefits to home working. You said that you hoped this would continue when "normality" returned.</p>	<p>As part of the Covid-19 response Heads of Service conducted meetings with their teams to design a transformation of service plan as to how work in their areas could look like in the short, medium and long-term future. This was fed back to the central project team to create an overall future way of working plan.</p>

It's okay not to be okay

- 2.7 Staff health and wellbeing is a priority for South Kesteven. The council undertook the second survey to evaluate how staff were feeling and how they were coping with the continuation of not being in the office and working from home. The survey provides useful insight into how staff in the organisation are feeling. There were 269 responses from a possible 376 staff who could respond to the online survey.
- 2.8 The key findings of the survey were:
- 83% of employees know where to go to get support with any mental health issues.
 - 80% of employees are aware of the Employee Assistance Programme.
 - 88% of employees did not feel that they needed to talk to a mental health first aider at this point.
 - 75% of employees have found Wellbeing Wednesday articles useful.

2.9 Following the analysis of the results, which is shared in Appendix 1, an all staff email was distributed which detailed the findings and the Council's response:

- Further promotion of the Employee Assistance Programme, explaining what it does, and highlighting that it is there for all staff and their families.
- A reminder of who the Mental Health First Aiders are, what their role is and how to contact them.
- Encouragement of staff to contact the Wellbeing Team, or any member of the HR Team, if they felt unable to talk to their immediate Line Manager.
- Line Managers were reminded to ensure that they make regular contact with all of their staff, to make sure they are okay.
- Staff were encouraged to take time out of the working day, to take a break, to go for a walk or to exercise and to read the communications sent by the Chief Executive, the Leader, Wellbeing Wednesday and Fun Friday.
- A request for future topics to be included in Wellbeing support. The responses are being researched and incorporated in the schedule of information to be shared with staff through Wellbeing Wednesday activities.
- Staff were asked if it would be beneficial to arrange Council co-ordinated activities and examples of what these activities could be.

2.10 Staff were also asked if they would like to participate in or lead the activities. Lots of ideas were shared and they have been fed into the wellbeing team who will co-ordinate and engage with staff.

Pulse Surveys: Next steps

2.11 It is proposed that the Organisational Development team continue to carry out pulse surveys to engage with staff on key topics. It is requested that the Employment Committee give guidance on what topics they believe to be applicable.

2.12 The pulse surveys to date have shown that our Organisational Development staff have learnt from working with external experts in developing engagement through surveys. However, it is important that the team continue to receive feedback on how they can be improved.

2.13 Pulse survey design and analysis can be time consuming and it is important that we do not jeopardise engagement with staff by over surveying them or by focussing on topics that are not of key interest or benefit to the employee or organisation.

3 Annual Employee Surveys at SKDC

3.1 SKDC has previously conducted an annual employee survey in the Autumn of both 2017 and 2018, the third annual survey was due to commence in March 2020, this was postponed due to the Coronavirus and lockdown. The re-arranged survey is due to take place in October 2020.

3.2 Following a tender process, supported by the Council's Procurement Officer, an organisation called Protostar-UK were selected as the independent company to carry out the survey supported by an internal project team led by the Organisational Development section. Protostar-UK are specialists in developing employee engagement and delivering employee surveys to organisations in the private, voluntary and public sectors.

- 3.3 A key aspect of feedback from members, trade unions and employees has been that they value the independence of a third party survey provider when providing feedback. It is important to note that the pulse surveys have been conducted by internal project teams using knowledge and experience from the all staff surveys and that employees have engaged with the surveys.
- 3.4 The survey is proposed to be split into to the following areas of focus:
- The employee's role and how they are line managed
 - Teamwork and how departments work together
 - Leadership
 - Working environment
 - Wellbeing
 - Innovation at the Council
 - Covid-19 response and support
 - Overall Engagement
- In the previous all staff survey's there were 13 separate areas in the survey. Feedback from staff was that this was too many which is why the above consolidates the number of topics into a smaller number of key areas.
- 3.5 The questions within these sections will allow the council to benchmark and report against the key areas identified for development by the Employment Committee previously as:
- Return rate of the survey
 - Career Development
 - Leadership
 - Working Environment
 - Change Management
 - Feeling valued
 - Reward and Recognition
 - Cross Team Working
 - Consistency of management
 - Overall engagement / satisfaction
- 3.6 Protostar-UK will be conducting focus groups with employees following the survey, to enable more in-depth analysis of key areas raised in the survey. The tender includes the opportunity to carry out a second survey later in the year.
- 3.7 Protostar-UK will provide analysis of the feedback to South Kesteven District Council. This will be shared with the Employment Committee, Senior Management Team and all staff at the council. The analysis will be compared against previous results.
- 3.8 An action plan will be created from the results which along with the corporate plan will help to inform the work plan of the Organisational Development team. Directorates and individual departments will use the results to form individual action plans for making change in their areas.

4 Consultation and Feedback Received, Including Overview and Scrutiny

4.1 Data and actions from the pulse surveys have been shared with and reviewed by the Corporate Management Team.

5 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision

5.1 The all employee survey will be conducted in October 2020 with analysis, focus groups, feedback and action planning taking place from the end of October to the end of the year.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial comments arising from this report.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Interim Director of Finance

7 Legal and Governance Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications in this report

Legal Implications reviewed by: Shahin Ismail, Director of Law and Governance

8 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

8.1 The Organisation and Development function will continue to seek feedback on the surveys to ensure that the information that is requested and collected is both legitimately in line with protocols and stored securely.

9 Risk and Mitigation

9.1 With regards to the forthcoming all staff survey, a future lockdown would hamper attempts to engage with employees who do not have access to individual computers and work email accounts, for example employees at Street Scene. Engagement with the relevant departments has begun about how to conduct the survey effectively. This includes engaging with staff who are currently furloughed in the Art Centres.

9.2 It is possible to over survey an organisations employees, with the result that take up rates drop, consideration needs to be given to a variety of options, particularly around Pulse Surveys and whether these should go to all staff or focus on either a targeted or random group of staff and how many should be conducted a year.

10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 N/a

11 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a climate emergency?

11.1 The SKDC Sustainability and Climate Change Officer has been consulted regarding a question in the all staff survey.

11.2 A possible future pulse survey could be on the topic sustainability and climate change and could identify how staff view the council's activities. This would allow for future benchmarking.

12 Other Implications (where significant)

12.1 N/a

13 Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: The results from the two internal pulse surveys

Report Timeline:	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required)	Not applicable
	Previously Considered by: Employment Committee	Not applicable
	Final Decision date	23 September 2020