

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF: Acting Head of Human Resources  
TO: Joint Staff Employer Forum – 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2005  
WARDS: None directly affected

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### **Staff Attitude Survey and Focus Groups**

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#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report is to advise Members of the Joint Staff Employer Forum of the action plan and communication to staff, following the Staff Focus groups which were carried out in the Autumn of 2004, following the 2003 Staff Attitude Survey.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Joint Staff Employer Forum is asked to note the action plan which has been approved and will be monitored by the Corporate Management Team.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

Staff Attitude Surveys are one way of measuring employees' engagement and are a temperature gauge to identify both positive and negative perceptions within an organisation. Surveys have been carried out within the City Council on a regular basis, and the most recent 'Have your Say' was carried out in June 2003, by BMG Research.

Staff were asked to complete the survey 'on-line' or by hard copy. The response rate overall was 47%. 582 questionnaires were returned (508 in 1999 and 604 in 1997). The initial results indicated significant improvements in many areas and confirmed how far as an organisation the City Council had come in developing a performance management culture.

While the results were generally very encouraging, there were some areas where further investigation was needed and BMG were commissioned to carry out some Staff Focus groups, to get behind the issues. They were asked to cover 3 main themes in the groups ie Working Conditions, Leadership and Communication.

BMG randomly selected 24 staff from across the Council to participate in 3 focus groups in October 2004. Some additional separate consultation was carried out at the depot because of the relatively low response rate in City Services (26% in the main 2003 Survey).

The Focus Groups discussed what it was like to work for the City Council and the good and not so good things.

A report was produced in November 2004 and Corporate Management Team considered this in January 2005. This report indicated that staff were generally positive about working for the Council and Corporate Management Team have now agreed an Action Plan to address the 'not so positive' issues in BMG's report. The action plan is attached for information.

A newsletter for staff was also published giving examples of what Corporate Management team will be doing and points staff to the full reports. This is also attached for information.

#### 4. **CONSULTATIONS**

The recognised Trade Unions have been consulted on the Staff Attitude Survey carried out in 2003 and on the Focus Groups.

#### 5. **CONCLUSIONS**

Following the Focus groups Corporate Management Team considered BMG's research report and were pleased to see that staff were generally positive about working for Cambridge City Council. The action plan seeks to address the issues raised and this will be monitored by Corporate Management Team over a period of time.

- (a) **Financial Implications** arising from this will be met from within existing budgets
- (b) **Staffing Implications** already covered above
- (c) **Equal Opportunities Implications** It will be important to ensure that equal opportunities issues are fully taken into account in implementing the action plan.
- (d) **Environmental Implications** There are no environmental implications.
- (e) **Community Safety** There are no community safety implications.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

BMG Research report, 2003  
BMG Research report of the Focus Groups, October 2004

To inspect these documents contact Vicki Davidson, Acting Head of Human Resources on extension 8108.

The author and contact officer for queries on the report is Vicki Davidson on extension 8108.

**ACTION PLAN – RESPONDING TO STAFF FOCUS GROUPS CARRIED OUT AUTUMN 2004 (Agreed at CMT on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 05)**

THEME	ACTION	WHO	WHEN
<b>Communicating</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review how Vision Statement and MTOs are communicated to staff.</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a one-off newsletter for staff giving examples of how staff contribute to MTOs. Circulate + intranet</li> <li>• Briefing / brief for managers to help cascade MTOs</li> </ul>	HoSP	April 2005
<b>Communicating</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. CMT need to be more visible / accessible</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CMT collectively should:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rotate CMT venue</li> <li>• Review format of City Briefing and place on Intranet</li> <li>• Hold CMT open sessions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Directors' own departments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking the floor more eg back to floor sessions</li> <li>• Attend team meetings</li> <li>• Open door sessions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ruth Batts Ruth Batts  TW /VD (terms of ref for CMT open sessions – attached)  Directors	6 monthly
<b>Prioritising</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Better corporate prioritisation at all levels</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out review of corporate projects and priorities</li> <li>• Feed into service planning process 2006/07</li> <li>• Feed into budget process 2006/07</li> <li>• Feed into individual objectives for 2006</li> </ul>	Buy in for/agree process  HoHR/DoF/Alison Kemp	Feb 2005 CMT away day  Oct 2005 2006

<b>Prioritising</b>	<p>4. Objectives for Directors and Heads of Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree standard objectives to help communicate a consistent and corporate message to staff</li> </ul>	CMT	Jan 2005
<b>Prioritising</b>	<p>5. Role of managers in involving staff in agreeing work programmes and priorities</p>	HoHR (linked to 7 below)	tba 2005
<b>Prioritising</b>	<p>6. Culture of workload management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting that everything might not be achievable</li> <li>• Be open to new ways of doing things</li> </ul>	HoHR (OD Strategy) CMT	tba 2005  Feb 2005 CMT away day
<b>Managing</b>	<p>7. Need to refine / define work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through Member training and the new OD Strategy, clearly define roles and responsibilities of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors</li> <li>• Heads of Service</li> <li>• Councillors</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	HoSP / DCEN (Member training)  HoHR (OD Strategy)	Before March 2005  tba 2005
<b>Managing</b>	<p>8. Consistency in managing people – need guidelines on the minimum standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often to hold team meetings</li> <li>• How / when 1:1 supervision sessions are run</li> <li>• Cascade messages from CMT to all staff</li> </ul>	HoHR	tba 2005
<b>Managing</b>	<p>9. Be better at change management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messages from staff consultation to be taken on board during any future change management processes (e.g. customer access)</li> </ul>	CMT	As required

<b>Managing</b>	10. Reduce perception of inequality between departments (perception that some departments don't adhere to corporate rules and regulations)	See 7 and 8 above (will help to address reality or perception of inequality)	
<b>Processes</b>	11. Better project management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and implement revised guidelines</li> <li>• Training (Corporate Training and Development Plan)</li> </ul>	DCEN / Vicki Davidson	CMT March 2005 CL + DP April 2005
<b>Processes</b>	12. Improvement of business processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gershon</li> <li>• E-government</li> <li>• Customer access strategy</li> </ul>	Joint CMT / Heads of Service Workshop to discuss approach to Gershon & reviews that will be required  Identify process improvements through E-Gov & Customer Access Strategy programmes	March 2005  March 2005 to March 2007
<b>Accommodation</b>	13. Old and cramped offices	DCEN to produce paper for CMT on what is planned and possible options	Feb 2005 CMT away day
<b>Accommodation</b>	14. Shortage of kitchen / rest room facilities		

## **CMT OPEN SESSIONS – PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of the CMT Open Sessions is to help address 2-way communication issues which were highlighted in the staff survey 2003 and staff focus groups 2004.
- 1.2 In particular, the sessions will make CMT more accessible to staff, enable CMT to communicate key messages and Council priorities and give staff the chance to raise ideas and suggestions, or issues of concern directly with CMT.

### **2. Structure**

- 2.1 Sessions will be open to all Council staff.
- 2.2 Sessions will be held at different venues and at different times to suit as many staff as possible.
- 2.3 Sessions will take place every 6 months.
- 2.4 Sessions will last up to 1 hour.
- 2.5 At least 2 members of CMT plus the Chief Executive should run each session. There should be at least one operational Director and one support service Director at each session.

### **3. Content**

- 3.1 The CMT Work Programme will be used to set the agenda. It is suggested that there will be:
  - 15 Minutes on 'looking back' – updating staff of what has gone well and on progress with key projects; 'looking forward' – informing staff of future priorities and challenges and the 'Key Issue' of the day.
  - Up to 45 minutes of questions from staff on any topic.
- 3.2 CMT will agree the agendas of each session beforehand at its regular meetings
- 3.3 Brief notes of the sessions including questions and answers will be placed on the intranet.

### **4. Administration**

- 4.1 The meetings will be arranged by the Chief Executive's PA.
- 4.2 Meetings will be well publicised in advance to staff. CMT will agree the publicity in advance depending upon the venue.

## **Staff Consultation - What you said and what we plan to do about it**

In the summer of 2003 BMG Research carried out a survey to find out what staff thought about working for Cambridge City Council. You can see the findings from this survey on the Council's website:

<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/content/strategy-and-partnerships/policy-officer/city-council-staff-survey-2003.en>

or on the intranet:

<http://intranet.ccc.local/Guidelines/Staff-Survey-Report-22Aug2003.DOC>

In October 2004 BMG ran a series of focus groups with staff from across the Council to explore some of the issues that had come out of the survey. You can see the findings from the focus groups on the intranet:

<http://intranet.ccc.local/Guidelines/Focus-Groups-2004.doc>

BMG also ran some additional focus groups with staff from City Services. You can see the findings from the City Services' focus groups on the intranet:

<http://intranet.ccc.local/Guidelines/FocusGroups-CityServices-2004.doc>

If you would like to see a copy of the reports but you do not have access to the intranet, please contact Amanda Cator on extension 7060 and she will arrange for a paper copy to be sent to you.

**This newsletter gives a quick overview of the key messages coming from the focus groups and lets you know what Corporate Management Team (CMT) intend to do in response to the issues raised by staff.**

## First, the positive messages....

- ☺ On the whole, staff are satisfied with Cambridge City Council as their employer and they feel that the Council has a good reputation.
- ☺ Staff feel that the Council is a relatively good place to work, especially in terms of providing the job security, training and favourable benefit packages typical in local government.
- ☺ Regardless of grade, department or position, most people seem to enjoy their work and find it fulfilling.
- ☺ There is a general acknowledgement that the benefits, such as pensions, training opportunities and flexitime (for some staff) go some way to compensating for the perception that salaries are lower in the public sector.
- ☺ With some exceptions, staff feel that morale is fairly high and most members of staff would recommend a career with the Council to their friends and family.
- ☺ Staff from most departments say that the City Council is good at communication with them and they generally find the different methods used to communicate (such as team meetings, manager's briefings, letters, staff magazines, newsletters and e-mails) useful.
- ☺ Staff in City Services are very positive about the leadership in their department.



## And now the not so positive messages and what Corporate Management Team will do about them...

- ☹️ Staff generally feel that senior management are uninspiring and that neither councillors nor senior management communicate a clear vision or clear priorities.
- ❖ CMT will review how the Council's Vision Statement and Medium Term Objectives are communicated to staff.
- ❖ CMT will try holding open sessions for staff to inform staff about big issues facing the Council and to give staff a chance to ask questions, make suggestions, or raise issues with the Chief Executive and Directors.
- ❖ CMT will also rotate the venue of their meetings so that they are more visible in the organisation.
- ❖ Directors will hold open door sessions for their staff and offer to attend team meetings within their departments so that staff can ask questions, make suggestions, or raise issues.
- ❖ CMT will agree standard objectives for Directors and Heads of Service to help communicate a consistent and corporate message to staff.
- ☹️ Staff said that there needs to be better prioritisation of work and resources. Some staff feel that they are asked to do more and more additional work without stopping any existing work to compensate.
- ❖ Priorities for every Council service are set at the beginning of each year by Executive Councillors. These priorities are published in Service Plans. Staff then have performance reviews where individuals discuss objectives and priorities with their manager. During the coming year CMT will be working with councillors to look at how work is prioritised at all levels within the Council to see if our processes can be improved.
- ❖ The Head of Human Resources will be producing a new Organisational Development Strategy for the Council. This will include work to ensure that managers involve staff in agreeing work programmes and priorities. The strategy will encourage managers to look at new ways of doing things to make better use of resources.

- ☹️ Some staff feel that councillors do not always support officers and do not fully understand what officers do.
- ❖ Councillors set Council policy and it is not their role to get involved in the detail of Council services. We will do some work with councillors and managers to clearly define the different roles and responsibilities and we will make this available to staff.
- ☹️ There is a perception amongst some staff that there is inequality between departments. Some departments stick to corporate rules and regulations and some don't. Staff feel that there needs to be more consistency across the organisation.
- ❖ Later in 2005 the Head of Human Resources will produce guidelines for managers which will include how often team meetings should be held, how and when to hold staff supervision meetings and how messages from CMT should be cascaded through the organisation to all staff.
- ❖ The Chief Executive and Directors will check for consistency in Council policies and processes.
- ☹️ There is a perception amongst staff that change is not always managed well within the Council.
- ❖ CMT agreed that the messages from the staff consultation should be taken on board during any future change management processes.
- ☹️ Some staff complained about poor office accommodation. In particular, old and cramped offices and a shortage of rest room and kitchen facilities.
- ❖ There have been recent improvements for some staff (particularly the move from Downing Street to Lion House).
- ❖ In the next few weeks the Director of Central Services will be presenting a paper to CMT about office accommodation so that Directors can decide what can realistically be done to try and improve matters.

If you have any questions about staff consultation, please contact Vicki Davidson on extn 8108, Trevor Woollams on extn 7061 or Janet Wilson (for City Services) on extn 8297