

## I. Executive Summary

Background and Objectives Bracknell Forest Council undertakes employee engagement research every two years to evaluate how employees feel about working for the council and to understand their perceptions of key elements of their role, the way they are managed and the way the council is run. The most recent wave of the research was completed in October 2014 and this report details key findings from it. Overall, the main aim of this research was:

*“To give guidance and direction about what we might do differently in the Council and to help celebrate what we already do well.”*

### Methodology

- A dual approach to undertaking the research was carried out;
  - All employees with an email address were sent an email invitation which included a unique link to the survey which could be completed online. In total, 1,739 email invitations were sent.
  - A small number of employees did not have an email address, so to ensure their participation in the research a paper survey was distributed. This survey was identical to the online survey. A total of 148 employees received a paper survey.
- All employees, regardless of whether they had completed the survey or not, were then sent two reminders to encourage them to participate in the research.
- The first email invitations were issued on Friday 10 October 2014 and the final date for completions was Friday 7 November 2014.
- Of the 1,572 eligible employees who received an invitation to complete the survey, 61% did so, a higher response rate than that achieved in any previous year except 2011
- This means that the total achieved sample was 955 interviews and at the Total Sample level the findings are accurate to within +/- 1.99%.
- Response rates by area were also good, with the highest rate recorded in Chief Executive's (93%), followed by Corporate Services (71%), Children, Young People & Learning (56%), Adult Social Care & Health (55%) and Environment, Culture & Communities (53%).

### About Your Team

The first section of the questionnaire asked respondents how strongly they agreed with a series of statements about their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager.

Generally, levels of agreement declined slightly between 2011 and 2014, with one or two exceptions, but the only statistically significant differences were that employees were less likely to agree that their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘...gives you the information you need to do your job well’ (2014: 74%, 2011: 80%), ‘...involves you in decisions that affect your work’ (2014: 70%, 2011: 74%), ‘...would support you in a crisis’ (2014: 77%, 2011: 81%) and ‘...encourages you to consider the environmental implications of your work’ (2014: 45%, 2011: 55%). Overall, the pattern of response is consistent, with the same areas rated highly and the same areas flagged at being in need of some improvement.

- The only statements that eight-out-of-ten or more respondents agreed with were that their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘...is approachable to talk to when you need them’ (81%) and ‘...treats you fairly and with respect’ (80%).



- That said, only a slightly lower proportion agreed that they ‘...take your health and safety seriously’ (78%), ‘...would support you in a crisis’ (77%) and ‘...encourages you to discuss work problems and issues’ (77%).
- Three-quarters agreed that their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘...encourages you to express your opinions’ (75%) and ‘...usually responds positively to ideas and suggestions you put forward’ (75%).
- At least 70% agreed that their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘...gives you the information you need to do your job well’ (74%) and ‘...ensures you get the training and development you need to do your job well’ (74%), ‘...expresses appreciation for the work that you do’ (73%), ‘...encourages you and your team to work as a team’ (72%) and ‘...encourages you and your team to improve the way you work’ (71%).
- Slightly lower levels of agreement were noted for the fact that each employee’s immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘...explains how your work helps with what your team is trying to achieve’ (70%) and ‘...involves you in decisions that affect your work’ (70%) and a relatively high proportion disagreed that they are involved in decisions (17%).
- Around seven-out-of-ten agreed that their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘... gives you enough opportunities to discuss your personal development’ (70%) and ‘...manages performance by you personally’ (69%).
- Agreement was lower that they ‘...give you regular and helpful feedback about your work’ (63%) and ‘...is good at helping you to learn from your mistakes’ (62%).
- Only just over half of all respondents agreed that their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘...deals with poor performance in your work/management team’ (52%) and almost one-in-five actively disagreed that this was the case (18%).
- The lowest level of agreement recorded for any of the statements at QI related to the proportion who felt that their immediate line manager/supervisor/duty manager ‘...encourages you to consider the environmental implications of your work’ (45%). However, only 15% said that they disagreed and in fact two-fifths (40%) said that they ‘neither agree nor disagree’, perhaps suggesting they don’t have enough information to decide either way.

Respondents were then asked how far they agreed with a series of more general statements about their team and about their present job.

Respondents were generally positive about their role at the Council, but more could be done to improve morale and motivation is an issue for around one-in-five. The only statistically significant difference here between responses in 2014 and 2011 is a decline in agreement that ‘relationships between colleagues are good’ (2014: 78%, 2011: 83%). This represents a return to the level recorded in 2009 (79%).

- In general, respondents did agree that they feel motivated and that they can motivate others, with around two-thirds agreeing that ‘I feel I can motivate others around me’ (66%) and ‘I feel motivated in my present job’ (62%).
- However 20% disagreed that ‘I feel motivated in my present job’, suggesting that one-in-five in the Council lack sufficient levels of motivation.
- There is some suggestion that more could be done to improve morale, as a quarter (27%) disagreed that ‘morale is good in my team’ and almost a quarter (23%) disagreed that ‘my morale in my present job is good’. However, respondents were more likely to agree that ‘my morale in my present job is good’ (61%) than they were to agree that ‘morale is good in my team’ (52%).

- Just over half of all respondents disagreed that *'my job is not particularly stressful'* (52%) indicating that they feel unduly stressed. Of the remainder, 24% agreed with this statement indicating that they don't feel they have a stressful job and a similar proportion said that they *'neither agree nor disagree'* (24%).

In 2011 it was noted that the decline in satisfaction recorded between 2009 and 2011 may have been a result of a change to the way the question was asked. In 2011 and 2014 this question was asked in an identical way and consequently the decline in satisfaction noted here is a genuine year-on-year change. It reflects declines generally since 2011 and is clearly indicative of a workforce that is less contented with employment at the Council.

- In 2014, the majority (60%) indicated that they were satisfied in their *'present job'*, although respondents were more likely to *'agree'* that this was the case than they were to *'strongly agree'* (39% vs. 21%).
- This is a significant decline in agreement since 2011 where a figure of 65% was recorded.
- The overall reduction in satisfaction recorded between 2011 and 2014 is not driven by a decline amongst any one particular type of employee, but by lower levels of satisfaction amongst employees of all types.

### **About Working for Bracknell Forest Council**

This section of the questionnaire asked respondents how they felt about working for the Council;

Very few differences were recorded between findings in 2014 and 2011, but it's clear that over the longer term employees' understanding of how they fit within the Council and of its overall objectives has declined and there is perhaps more that could be done to ensure that all employees are fully up-to-speed, especially for employees based away from Time Square and Easthampstead house.

- Three-fifths agreed that *'I would recommend working for the council to my family and friends'* (60%), and a slightly smaller proportion agreed that *'I feel part of the council'* (58%).
- Just over a half said they *'would rather work for the council than other employers'* (51%), although a relatively large proportion said that they *'neither agree nor disagree'* with this statement (38%), perhaps suggesting that they don't feel they have sufficient knowledge or experience to give an answer either way.
- Slightly lower levels of agreement were recorded that *'senior managers express appreciation for the work that I do'* (48%),
- Opinion was polarised in terms of agreement and disagreement with the statement *'the different services / areas of the council work well together'* with 33% agreeing and 30% disagreeing and the remaining 35% stating that they neither agree nor disagree.

### **About Communication**

This section covered employees' communication with the Council;

It's clear that more could be done to ensure that all employees feel included in the process of change and fully aware of what's happening and the situation has generally declined since 2011.

- Employees most frequently get information about the Council from 'emails' and 'the intranet (BORIS)' and around three-fifths use these sources each week (64% and 62% respectively).
- On a weekly basis, a smaller proportion said they get information from their '...own manager/duty manager/supervisor' (44%) and there is scope to improve this.
- In total, three-fifths (61%) agreed that 'generally the council keeps me well informed', although most said that they 'agree' (52%) rather than 'strongly agree' (9%).
- The majority of respondents (55%) also agreed that 'the council effectively communicates the reasons for major change to employees' and that 'the council provides adequate opportunities for staff to provide their feedback about change' (49%). However, one-in-five disagreed with these statements (18% and 22% respectively),
- the lowest level of agreement was that 'the council gives adequate consideration to staff views' (37%) and a fifth also disagreed with this (22%). That said, more than two fifths answered that they 'neither agree nor disagree' (41%) for this statement, suggesting that many may not fully understand what consideration the Council actually gives to the views of staff.

### About Your Working Area

- The majority felt that their work environment was either 'about the same' (40%) or actually 'better' (33%) than it was 3 years ago, although a fifth felt it was 'worse' (19%).
- Those who felt that their work environment was now worse made comments about it being '...noisy and distracting' (15%), '...unclean' (10%), or that their 'office is too small and cramped' (11%) and that 'hot-desking is a problem' (12%).
- However, the majority of all respondents agreed it was 'safe' (83%), 'clean' (76%) and '...helps me do my job well' (57%), although one-in-five felt that it did not help them do their job (17%).

### Supervision Arrangements

- A high proportion of respondents, but not all, had 'received an appraisal in the last twelve months' (92%) and four fifths had 'team meetings at least every three months' (82%).
- Additionally, three-quarters had 'regular one-to-one supervision with your manager usually monthly / every 6 weeks' (76%).

### Being Treated Fairly

Compared to 2011, employees are now less likely to consider that the Council is a fair employer or that they are fairly paid or have a manageable workload.

- Just over half said that they agreed that 'considering my duties and responsibilities, I am fairly paid for the job I do' (44%), a decline since 2011 (2014: 44%, 2011: 50%).
- Respondents were more positive about '...the other terms and conditions of my job' (70%).
- The majority also agreed that they '...know what policies and procedures exist to support me and how to access support if I need it' (68%) and that 'the council treats people fairly' (61%), although few now believe it is a fair employer than in 2011 (2014: 61%, 2011: 66%).
- Just over half agreed that 'my workload is currently manageable' (55%), although one-in-four felt that it was not (24%) and this has also declined since 2011 (2014: 55%, 2011: 62%).
- Finally, 45% agreed that 'the council provides adequate support for staff through the process of change', and while 16% said that they disagreed that this was the case, it should be noted that almost two thirds said they 'neither agree nor disagree' with this statement (38%), perhaps suggesting that they have insufficient knowledge of this to make a judgement.

## Discrimination Experienced

Questions were included to determine if respondents felt they had 'experienced any incident of unfair discrimination by a Bracknell Forest Council employee' in the last 3 years.

- The majority (79%) did not indicate that they'd suffered discrimination in any way, but a fifth said that they had (21%) by answering that this had happened 'once or twice' or more frequently over the last 3 years. In addition, almost one-in-twenty (4%) said that this had happened 'a lot' during this time period.
- The main causes of discrimination are felt to be an employee's 'age' (8%) and 'gender' (7%) or for 'some other reason' (8%) (note, that these reason were not captured).
- Employees aged 34 or under tended to feel that they had suffered discrimination base on their 'age' and/or 'gender' and almost half (49%) of those aged 16-24 felt they had experienced some form of discrimination.

## About Flexible Working

- In total, 87% indicated that they had some flexibility over their hours or location, although they were more likely to say they had this over their 'hours' (83%) than their 'location' (54%).
- The majority consider that their 'working hours and location' suit both the '...organisation's need's' (85%) and their '...personal needs' (74%).
- In line, with this, only around a third agreed that they would '...like to be able to vary my working hours' (37%) or '...to work from home or work from home more' (39%), and the majority disagreed that 'working from home would be impossible for me' (60%).

## About the 'Good to Great' Programme

- Overall, two-thirds (67%) said that they were aware of the programme.
- Just less than half of those aware of the programme agreed that they '...know someone who has been involved in some way in 'Good to Great' (48%) and around a quarter said that they themselves had '...been involved in some way...' (29%).
- The majority of all respondents were unsure as to the impact of the programme and answered that they 'neither agree nor disagree' that it has '...helped improve the council's services' (61%) and '...helped improve the service I provide' (55%).
- However, they were more likely to agree than disagree that "Good to Great' has helped improve the council's services' (24% vs. 13%), but more likely to disagree than agree that "Good to Great' has helped improve the service that I provide' (27% vs. 16%).

## Conclusions

**Conclusion 1:** Generally, levels of satisfaction are lower amongst 2014 respondents than they were amongst respondents in 2011 and there has been a significant decline in the percentage that indicated that they were satisfied in their 'present job' from 65% to 60%.

**Conclusion 2:** Findings suggest that an employee's dissatisfaction with their present job is not driven by concerns over the direction of their team but more by an individual's own personal motivation, morale and affinity for their job role.

**Conclusion 3:** There is more scope to ensure that employees feel that they get the level of feedback and guidance that they require.

**Conclusion 4:** One-in-five feel they've experienced discrimination from other Council employees over the last 3 years and it's clear that where employees feel they have experienced discrimination this impacts negatively on how they view working at the Council.

**Conclusion 5:** Throughout this survey, differences exist between employees that work full-time and those that work part-time, with part-time employees slightly less likely to feel satisfied with their job and to '*...feel part of the council*'.

**Conclusion 6:** It remains the case that only around three-fifths feel that the Council keeps them well informed and there is clearly scope for improvement here.

**Conclusion 7:** Around three-quarters consider their working environment to be the same or better than 3 years ago. However, a fifth feel it is worse.

**Conclusion 8:** Most respondents reported that they have some flexibility over the hours they work and the locations they work at and doing so seems to have a positive impact on job satisfaction.