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**To:** Personnel Committee

**Date:** 6 June 2013

**Subject:** Employment Value Proposition

**Classification:** **Unrestricted**

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**SUMMARY:** For information. This paper presents a summary of the findings of the 2013 Employment Value Proposition survey outlining key improvements in the levels of employee engagement.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In May 2012 the Personnel Committee was presented with the Council's Employee Engagement Strategy. A key element of the strategy requires an understanding of how the Employment Value Proposition (EVP) informs levels of employee engagement. A survey of a sample of the Council's staff was conducted in 2012 to measure this with a follow up survey conducted in 2013. This paper presents a summary of the 2013 survey's findings and highlights comparisons with the results from the 2012 survey.

## **2. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

2.1 There are a range of definitions of employee engagement but one that increasingly resonates is that engagement is about the trust that exists between managers and staff. Governmental commissioned and academic studies have shown that high trust organisations, that engender high levels of engagement, experience improvements in performance, find it significantly easier to embrace change, more effectively innovate and deliver a quality customer experience.

2.2 Ultimately employee engagement is about effective performance management. The Authority's Engagement Strategy sets out its approach to achieving levels of engagement and staff motivation that will make significant differences to the performance of the Council.

2.3 The Strategy cannot be delivered in isolation from other initiatives and strategies within the Authority. It very clearly corresponds to elements of the Organisation Development & People Plan and also links to Kent County Council's Customers Services Strategy, Internal Communications Strategy, Equality and Diversity and the Kent Values, Competencies and Behaviours.

### **3. EMPLOYMENT VALUE PROPOSITION**

- 3.1 The Authority has previously surveyed staff to see how they feel about working in Kent County Council. This information has been used to inform approaches to employee relations and the management of staff. In line with a refreshed Employee Engagement Strategy the Council looked to find approach to surveying staff that gave more texture to the data it provided to better help management in developing approaches to employee engagement.
- 3.2 In response Kent County Council is participating in a LGA sponsored national pilot and research programme run by the Edinburgh Institute. This study uses a survey to measure the EVP in an organisation.
- 3.3 EVP introduces a means of presenting and understanding how the 'deal' offered by an employer is set against what is expected from employees in return. This deal should be viewed in the context of the overall employee relations climate in the Authority as it reflects how the organisation and managers engage with and support employees, as much as it is about terms and conditions of service. The value and perception the employees place on that employment experience, and the contributions expected by the employees, inform how staff engage and perform.
- 3.4 The Authority conducted a survey in 2012 with the results reported to the Committee on 6 May 2012. The survey has been repeated in 2013 in order to measure how levels of employee engagement and the component elements that affect it have changed from the initial survey's results and to extend the survey to a wider group of staff.
- 3.5 The survey was sent out to approximately 4,200 staff in Kent County Council (over double the number surveyed in 2012). Each of the Directorates had groups of staff surveyed from specific targeted services or divisions, rather than the sample being spread across the whole directorate. The only exception to this was the Customer & Communities Directorate which sent a survey to all of its substantive employees. The services that were involved in 2012 were included, where possible, in the 2013 survey. The response rate to the survey was c.50% (which is significantly higher than the norm for similar types of surveys) equalling the response rate the Council achieved last year. The management teams received service and directorate specific feedback on their results in April.
- 3.6 The key findings of the 2013 survey are:
  - a) There has been a small but significant improvement in levels of employee engagement in the Council, compared to 2012.
  - b) Kent County Council has a committed workforce which invests time, energies and concentration in their job and feel a sense of pride in doing so.

- c) Results for organisational level engagement have improved but still show weaker levels of loyalty, affinity and advocacy toward the Council than employees show towards the services they work in.
  - d) Employees perceive their contribution to the 'deal' as outweighing that provided by KCC (ideally this should be a balance between the employee and employer) although how the balance is perceived by the employee has improved from 2012.
  - e) The imbalance in (d) above manifests itself in a low trust environment where employees see the 'value of the deal' being eroded whilst being asked to do more with less. However, this has improved since 2012 and the Authority is starting to address this imbalance
- 3.7 The most positive feedback from the survey is that staff continue to feel an affinity with the service they work for and are engaged enough to deliver public services they feel responsible for and proud of. This has increased in 2013 despite starting from a high base in 2012. The relationship with the direct line manager is critical in terms of determining trust in the employment relationship and it would seem that this is working effectively at service and team level.
- 3.8 The disconnect in levels of engagement seems to be more with the Council as a whole. However, this has improved from 2012 despite some of the factors that can affect the employee relations climate in the authority and the engagement of its employees, such as levels of change, not changing significantly.
- 3.9 As part of the response to the levels of employee engagement the 2013 survey highlighted the Council has continued to develop some interesting and successful initiatives at organisational level (Talk to the Top, Because of You, KMail, KMag, Challenger Group etc.) to work with employees in their understanding of the Council's approach, what it is trying to achieve and to try to engender greater employee affinity with the Authority.
- 3.10 At service and team level the organisation has a robust performance management process which engages staff in setting their objectives and rewarding them accordingly for achieving or surpassing them. The Council also supports managers, through Kent Manager and other initiatives such as the Kent Public Sector Engaging Manager event, to develop and reinforce key skills, behaviours and values so they are equipped to work with and engage their staff accordingly.
- 3.11 The EVP survey has demonstrated that the level of employee engagement in Kent County Council is moving in the right direction. It is important, however, that the Council continues to develop and build on the initiatives it has introduced but also to explore other ways to determine how levels of engagement can be improved. Managers play a significant role in building trust relationships with the rest of the organisation and it is critical that they continue to be supported to ensure that employees are engaged at all levels of the organisation.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Personnel Committee is invited to note the EVP survey results and the improvements in levels of employee engagement.

Background documents: Engagement Strategy

<http://knet/ourcouncil/Documents/Our%20KCC%20-%20Working%20Together,%20Shaping%20Our%20Future%20-%20engagement%20strategy.pdf>

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