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To: Personnel Committee - 10 September 2013

Subject: Employment Value Proposition & Employee Engagement

Classification: Unrestricted

SUMMARY: The report presents findings of the 2013 Employment Value Proposition staff survey and outlines interventions to enhance levels of employee engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

In June 2013 the Personnel Committee was presented with a summary of the results from the Employment Value Proposition (EVP) survey. Members of the Committee asked for more detail of the results to be brought to its next meeting. This paper presents KCC level detail of the survey's findings and highlights activities that KCC and its Directorates are undertaking to address and improve levels of employee engagement.

2. MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

- 2.1 The EVP survey has shown that between 2012 and 2013 the level of employee engagement in Kent County Council has increased. The way the data is presented enables the organisation to identify the areas it needs to concentrate on to ensure that this improvement continues.
- 2.2 Alongside the EVP results there are other indicators of organisational health in relation to employee engagement. Levels of engagement have increased, whilst at the same time there has been a reduction in sickness absence and staff turnover (outside of those resulting from reorganisations). In addition, there has been a shift in the levels of performance recognised through TCP with more staff receiving "above achieving" and "outstanding" ratings than before. The level of employee engagement can also be viewed in the context of the service customers receive and their feedback. Between the two surveys the number of customer compliments has increased and the level of complaints has fallen to its lowest level in four years. An increasingly engaged workforce will continue to perform and deliver for its customers.

3. EMPLOYMENT VALUE PROPOSITION

- 3.1 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 its

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.

- 3.2 The questions asked by the survey are structured in a way that encourages employees to rate their experiences against certain categories. Other questions provide staff with opportunity to provide free text answers.

Using these questions EVP measures three elements of engagement:

- Balance of the deal
- Conversational practice
- Personification of the Council

Kent County Council also received detailed analysis of responses to free text questions.

Balance of the Deal

- 3.3 This element of the survey contrasts what staff feel about the contribution made by the organisation to the employment relationship with what the employees feel they bring. There will always be a difference between the two and the optimum in terms of levels of employee engagement is when the balance is not significantly in favour of one party to the deal.

- 3.4 The Employer Contribution is made up of:

- **The Contract** –employees’ perspective on such things as terms and conditions of service, development opportunities, working environment and whether the employer delivers on its promises in relation to the contract
- **Organisational Support** – how employees see their organisation valuing their contribution and caring about their well being

- 3.5 The Employee Contribution is made up of:

- **Job Engagement** – how committed and engaged employees are with their job role and the service they work in
- **Efficacy** –the level of confidence and competence the individual and their team displays in their job role
- **Organisation Engagement** – staff commitment to the organisation and the level of behaviours championing the organisation’s aims

3.6 The balance of the deal results for KCC in 2012 and 2013 were:

	2012	2013
The Contract	46	54
Perceived Organisational Support	45	52
Employer Contribution	46	53
Job Engagement	79	80
Efficacy	78	79
Organisational Engagement	50	58
Employee Contribution	69	75

Note: Scores of over 70 are considered good and scores below 50 are poor.

3.7 The table shows that the Council's level of engagement has improved from 2012. Overall the balance of the deal is seen as being in favour of the employer. This is shown by the big difference between the employer and employee contribution. If the employer contribution score was higher this would help redress the balance. However, of particular note is the employee's perception of the employer contribution has moved significantly and is no longer in the range of a poor score.

3.8 Levels of engagement within the service people work in are high (job engagement score) but the level of organisational engagement needs to be improved. Increasing this score can also help balance out some of the employer contribution scores as well. The results show that there have been improvements in levels of engagement across groupings of staff by grade. The levels of engagement tend to increase with seniority.

3.9 Analysis was done of the key drivers that affect the employee contribution score and specifically the organisational engagement score. The positives that helped maintain these scores were employees being proud of the team they work in and the services they deliver to their customers. Areas that require more work included employees' view of the contract/deal, job pressure and people's ability to influence key work targets. The elements that require significant improvement in order to change the organisational engagement score were increased support to staff from the organisation, improved levels of trust in the organisation and senior management and being better at valuing employee achievements.

Overall, though, the improvement is positive although the imbalance in the deal is not at a level that is sustainable in the medium to long term.

Conversational Practice

3.10 This element of the survey measures the quality of conversations between managers and staff to see how employees are engaged by their managers in meeting their job role. It also reflects on the context within which those conversations are had.

3.11 The survey measures:

- **Solutions focused conversations** – problem solving conversations
- **Performance focused conversations** – discussions about how solutions and services will be delivered
- **Job Pressure** – a measure of the level of perceived excessive workload
- **Workplace tensions** – measures competing pressures on staff such as delivering more with less and the impact of timescales

3.12 The conversational practice results for KCC in 2012 and 2013 were:

	2012	2013
Overall score	65	69
Solution focused	69	73
Performance focused	62	66
Workplace tensions	68	64
Job pressure	66	65

Note: Scores of over 70 are considered good for the conversation scores but too high for the tensions and pressures scores.

3.13 This table shows that there has been an improvement in the efficacy of the engagement managers have with their employees. However, there is still disconnect between the quality of the solutions focused discussions and that of the performance focused conversations. This suggests a degree of disaffection from staff in how they see their involvement in making suggestions and finding solutions for developing the way services are delivered and these actually being made a reality by management.

3.14 The workplace tensions and job pressure scores have fallen slightly but are still relatively high. This suggests that managers are managing to engage and motivate staff to a degree through the interface they have with them on a regular basis.

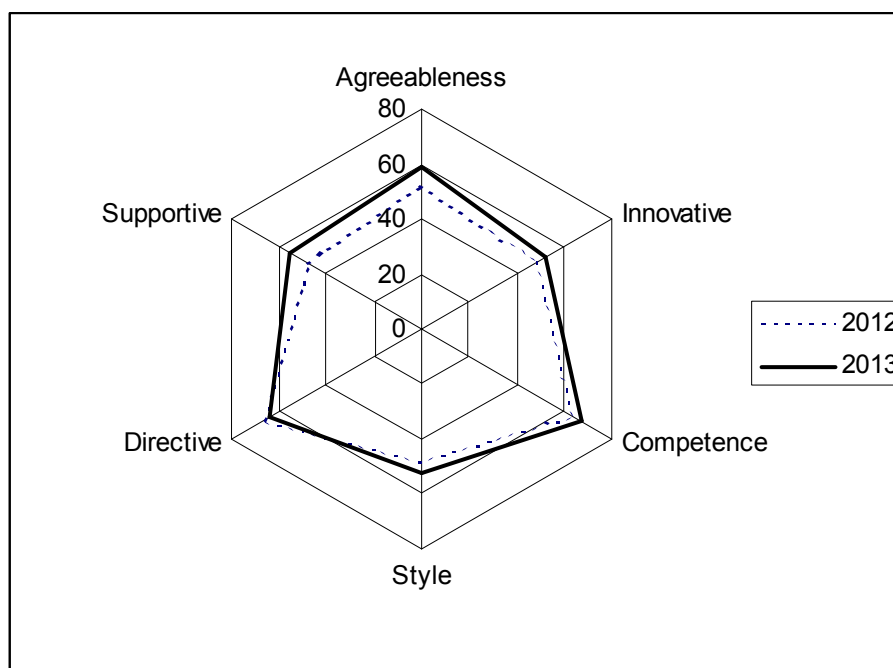
Personification

3.15 This part of the EVP survey asks employees to score the organisation against certain traits which then show how, in the employees' eyes, the organisation presents itself. This shows how staff view the type of organisation they work in.

3.16 The "traits" that are measured are:

- Supportive
- Directive
- Style
- Competence
- Innovation
- Agreeableness

3.17 The personification results for KCC in 2012 and 2013 were:



3.18 These results show that staff now see the organisation as less directive and more supportive. Staff also see the organisation as more innovative and competent than at the time of the previous survey.

Free Text Analysis

3.19 The free text questions focused on what is best about working in the organisation, what works well for people in the organisation and the workplace tensions that employees face. This information was analysed to represent the numbers of times certain elements were written about and the type of sentiment expressed about those subjects.

3.20 Working in teams, pay and benefits and making a difference were all areas that employees rated as good things about working in KCC but the language they used was not overly positive. This would suggest that these are things that people value but the organisation needs to do more to employ them as drivers to support employee engagement. Job satisfaction and the opportunities available in the organisation were identified as areas that people really value and spoke positively about how they experience this.

3.21 The elements that people described that worked for them were working together, support from their manager and that their managers were available to them. However, the numbers of times these were mentioned were lower than the ability to regularly meet with managers and discussing solutions and outcomes. Staff valued the latter two most but didn't use highly positive language about their experiences.

3.22 The main workplace tensions that people identified were volumes of work, pressure, staff cuts, job security and management. Most of these can be seen reflected in the relatively high workplace tension and job pressure scores under conversational practice and will increasingly influence the context in which managers in the organisation need to keep employee engagement, and corresponding performance levels, high.

4. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

4.1 As a result of the surveys in 2012 and 2013 the Council has worked on a number of initiatives to address levels of employee engagement. It has concentrated on initiatives that can address aspects of the survey that require improvement and maintain other aspects of engagement. There have been a number of corporate wide initiatives and directorates have also responded by looking at what areas of their activity they can change.

Corporate Initiatives

4.2 A key message from the EVP survey was the need to improve the level of commitment by employees to KCC. We aim to change this by demonstrating support for employees and providing them with a voice in the organisation.

4.3 **Because of You** and the **Staff Awards** are squarely aimed at improving the level of engagement. Both of these initiatives are key in showcasing the achievements of staff organisation wide. They are effective in motivating and inspiring staff to deliver services and have generated a great deal of interest.

4.4 The organisation also has a number of ways it is engaging with staff and enabling them to express their views and suggestions. The Council has seen iterations of **Talk To The Top**, a **Reward Survey** and a recently launched **Staff Suggestion Scheme**. These approaches have allowed staff to articulate concerns and issues but to also inform practice and service delivery. Also, in response to Doing Things Differently, ICT, HR, Property, Customer Services and Corporate Communications have worked together to deliver a number of engagement sessions for staff covered by the changes to buildings and ways of working in West Kent. This was an integrated approach that enabled staff to learn about and influence the changes that are coming.

4.5 Managers play a critical role in the interface between individual employees and the organisation. The Council has introduced a number of initiatives aimed at supporting managers in developing their practice and skills in the areas of conversational practice, performance management and leadership.

4.6 The **Engage for Success Conference** was delivered for KCC managers and partner organisations in Kent. It provided an opportunity to hear from leading exponents of employee engagement, such as David MacLeod, and share practice on how other organisations motivate and inspire staff.

- 4.7 The new strategic **Management and Leadership Development Framework** identifies key development priorities for managers for the next five years. A comprehensive plan will be developed to deliver these – with many of the interventions being sponsored and owned by senior managers in the organisation. Key objectives will include the development of a future manager programme to build the capacity and capability of potential leaders and managers and expert conversational practice to achieve outcomes through dialogue rather than process.
- 4.8 Effective engagement, particularly in times of change, can turn on the resilience of staff and their ability to move with the organisation and adapt to how it works and the way services will be delivered. The Council's **Workforce Development Plan and Strategy** sets out how it will develop a workforce that is flexible and adaptable to change with the skills and capability to deliver the transformation and integration programmes essential to future service delivery. Directorate **Organisation Development Groups** play a critical role in supporting and delivering the strategic workforce development framework and the OD and People Plan.
- 4.9 The **Kent Staff Standard** is being introduced for all support staff across the organisation. The framework is designed to assist recruitment, induction, performance management and development planning in a systematic and strategic way. The framework is based on competencies and will have a range of development activities reflecting core skills and knowledge required. This framework, alongside **Kent Manager** which is being further developed, will not only ensure staff and management have the skills and experiences required to deliver services but also set the competencies which form the basis for establishing an engaged workforce.
- 4.10 In October Kent County Council is due to be assessed against the **Investors in People** standard. This continues to be a nationally recognised standard for organisations with a genuine commitment to supporting the learning and development of staff to achieve business goals. It also sets out approaches that ensure employees are engaged and empowered with the right skills and knowledge to deliver a high standard of performance.
- 4.11 Ensuring the Council's staff are appropriately skilled and trained is a key element in the Efficacy part of the balance of the deal. If staff feel they have the skills to deliver, and that those skills are being used, they become more engaged with their work. The component elements of some of these interventions will also target skills that are required to enable an engaged, highly performing workforce.
- 4.12 Commitments to staff development form part of the contract offered and contribute to how staff feel they are supported by the organisation. These blend in with the changes KCC have made through the terms and conditions review in which it has moved to modernise and consistently apply enhanced rates of pay and the development of Kent Rewards. There has also been a co-ordinated approach with OD and Public Health in working on establishing a programme of well being activity for staff.

Directorate Initiatives

- 4.13 All the Directorates have been working on meeting the challenges the survey results presented. Positive and effective activity already happens in directorates but managers have been charged with looking at how to use the results to develop initiatives to improve levels of employee engagement. A selection of what the directorates are doing in face of the survey reports follows
- 4.14 Each Head of Service in the Customer & Communities Directorate has been required to develop an action plan and report back to DMT on progress. A “Getting the Best from People” session involving the broader management team agreed a set of values focused on improving levels of employee engagement.
- 4.15 The divisions in Business Strategy & Support have been actively engaged in pulling together action plans which will address the key areas for improvement.
- 4.16 Feedback to staff in the Directorates enables them to understand the outcome and see what is working well and what needs to change. As a result, staff are able to have an input into Planning & Environment, in the Enterprise & Environment Directorate, used a staff development day to solicit suggestions on how to further improve. Families & Social Care are working with the teams involved in the survey to find ways to address levels of engagement. Some teams in Education, Learning & Skills and the Customer & Communities Directorates have created ways for staff to better inform problem solving. They have used a virtual suggestion box (ELS) and are ensuring “events” that involve staff and managers encourage collective problem solving (C&C).
- 4.17 Across the Directorates there is a concentration on using supervision sessions as a tool for engagement and performance management. Also, Directorates are looking at how to communicate and involve staff in the development of services. Teams in Business Strategy & Support, such as Policy & Strategic Relationships and Economic Development, are using regular team meetings, appraisal and other discussions with staff to ensure they are engaging as much as possible and particularly ensure staff are involved in the development of business plans. A team in ELS have also looked at how they can make the links between the organisation’s objectives and those of their employees more meaningful. Finance has been working with representative staff groups and managers to address a number of issues including employee engagement.
- 4.18 A team in Education, Learning & Skills have reminded their staff to ensure they keep up to date with organisational activity but have also worked with managers to filter information from DMT/SMT through team meetings. HR managers are regularly briefed and communicate this information to their staff. Libraries, Registration & Archives have worked on the visibility to staff of its management team and set out clearly its expectations of their managers in relation to employee engagement whilst looking to ensure

they were skilled to deliver this. The service also undertook a complete review of its internal communications.

- 4.19 Some teams are supporting staff through their development by setting up action learning sets for Kent Manager (ELS and BSS). ELS has also looked at identifying time to enable people to undertake self study for a range of development activity such as apprenticeship training, professional development, Kent Manager, leadership qualifications.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Personnel Committee is invited to note the EVP survey results and the activities being undertaken to improve levels of employee engagement.

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