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**To:** Personnel Committee

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**Subject:** Employment Value Proposition

**Classification:** **Unrestricted**

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**SUMMARY:** An executive summary of the findings of the 2014 Employment Value Proposition survey outlining key improvements in the levels of employee engagement.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In June and September 2013 the Personnel Committee was presented with the results of the Employee Engagement Survey conducted that year. A further survey has been undertaken in 2014 to measure the levels of employee engagement in the Authority. This paper presents a summary of the survey's findings and highlights comparisons with the results from the 2013 survey.

## **2. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

2.1 Organisations which engender high levels of employee engagement experience improvements in performance, find it significantly easier to embrace change, innovate more effectively and deliver a quality customer experience. Ultimately employee engagement is about effective performance management.

2.2 Personnel Committee has shown that it recognised the importance of engagement in driving up levels of employee performance in the organisation. The Authority's Engagement Strategy supports this perspective and sets out its approach to achieving levels of engagement and staff motivation that make significant differences to the performance of the Council.

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

- 2.4 The employee engagement survey provides the Council with an understanding of how employees see their level of engagement and motivation. Alongside the survey results there are other indicators of organisational health in terms of employee engagement. For example KCC has again seen a further reduction in the level of sickness absence. There has also been a shift in the levels of performance recognised through TCP with more staff receiving “above achieving” and “outstanding” ratings than before.

### **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. The Employment Value Proposition (EVP) survey was conducted in 2014, which is the third year that it has been used by the Council, in order to build on the data that it has available to determine how engaged employees are and where improvements are required.
- 3.2 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. This survey very much looks at what employees are telling us about their experience of the organisation.
- 3.3 The survey was sent out to approximately 2,500 staff in Kent County Council. Each of the Directorates had groups of staff surveyed from specific targeted services or divisions (list at Appendix 1), rather than the sample being spread across the whole directorate. If services had been surveyed in the previous two years they were not included in 2014 (although there is the possibility of them being able to participate in a “pulse” check in the autumn). Services that had been surveyed for the first time in 2013, and were still viable following the structural realignment of the Council in April 2014, were surveyed again. Some services that had not participated before were also surveyed. The response rate to the survey was c.52% (which is significantly higher than the norm for similar types of surveys) exceeding the response rate of c.50% the Council achieved last year. The management teams received service specific feedback on their results in July.

3.4 The key findings of the 2014 survey are:

- a) Despite the level of change the organisation has been facing there has been a small improvement in levels of employee engagement in the Council, compared to 2013.
- b) Kent County Council has a committed workforce which invests time, energies and concentration in their jobs and feels a sense of pride in doing so.
- c) Results for organisational level engagement have improved significantly showing increased 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). How the balance is perceived by the employee has stayed the same as 2013.

3.5 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. The survey also shows that with the right amount of focus and input an organisation can maintain its levels of engagement. These results are not only a testament to the role managers have played in this but also to how staff have responded to the challenges faced by them.

#### **4. THE SURVEY RESULTS**

4.1 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 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.

4.2 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

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

4.4 The Employer Contribution is made up of:

- **The Contract** – this consists of the 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

4.5 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** – this element reflects on the level of confidence and competence the individual and their team displays in their job role
- **Organisation Engagement** – the level of staff commitment to the organisation and the level of behaviours championing the organisation’s aims

4.6 The balance of the deal results for KCC in 2013 and 2014 were:

	2013	2014
The Contract	54	57
Perceived Organisational Support	52	52
<b>Employer Contribution</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>55</b>
Job Engagement	80	81
Efficacy	79	79
Organisational Engagement	58	67
<b>Employee Contribution</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>77</b>

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

4.7 The table shows that the Council’s level of engagement has been sustained over the last year. Overall the balance of the deal is seen as being in favour of the employer. This is shown by the difference between the employer and employee contribution (in 2014 this was -22, with individual service scores ranging from -19 to -34). If the employer contribution score was higher this would help redress the balance. However, of particular note is the employee’s

perception of the how they engage with the organisation and are prepared to trust it and advocate on its behalf has increased prominently (organisational engagement score).

4.8 Levels of engagement within the service people work in remain high and have marginally increased since last year (job engagement score). The results also 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 although the scores for how all managers feel supported by the organisation have dropped slightly.

The survey also returns a score for the employees' overall satisfaction with the employment deal. KCC's score comes out at 63. Individual service scores range from 50 to 73.

Overall the improvement is positive but more work needs to be done on addressing the imbalance in the deal as the level it is at will jeopardise future optimum organisational performance.

Conversational Practice

4.9 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.

4.10 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

4.11 The conversational practice results for KCC in 2013 and 2014 were:

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>70</b>
Solution focused	73	71
Performance focused	66	70
Workplace tensions	64	64
Job pressure	65	62

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

4.12 This table shows that there has been an improvement in the efficacy of the engagement managers have with their employees. Compared to the 2012/2013 results the gap between the quality of the solutions focused

discussions and that of the performance focused conversations has reduced considerably (from -7 to -1). This suggests an improvement in how staff 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.

- 4.13 The workplace tensions score has stayed at its 2013 level and job pressure score has fallen slightly but both are still high. This suggests that despite this context management are managing to engage and motivate staff to a degree through the interface they have with them on a regular basis.

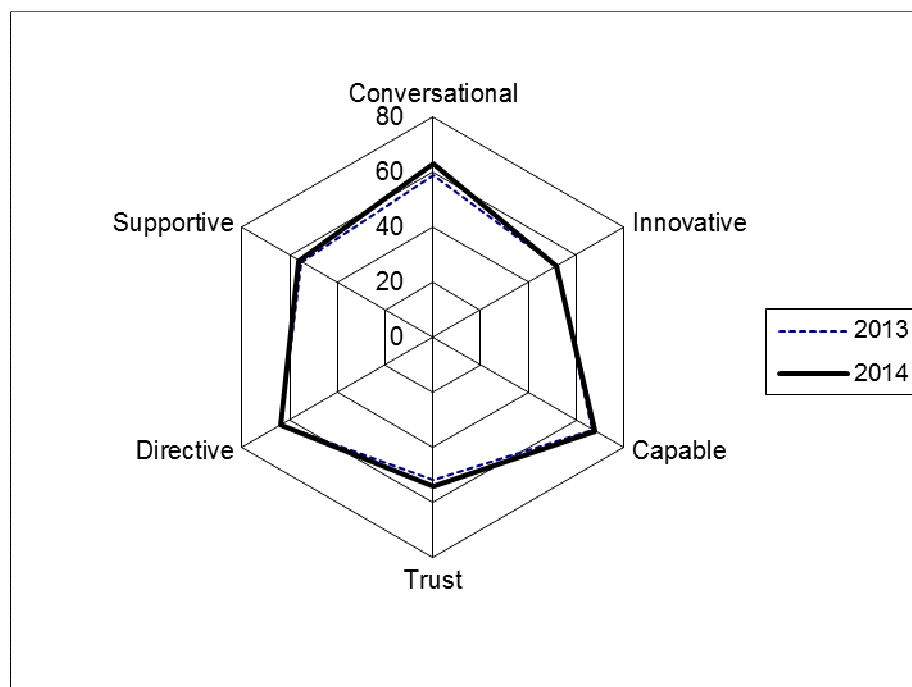
### Personification

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

- 4.15 The "traits" that are measured are:

- Supportive
- Directive
- Trust
- Competence
- Innovation
- Conversational

- 4.16 The personification results for KCC in 2013 and 2014 were:



- 4.17 The main changes were in the conversational score and the trust score, both increasing. These results show that staff now see the organisation as being more respectful of them, likely to listen more and that the levels of trust in the organisation are moving in the right direction. These outcomes are supported by the changes in organisational engagement score and the conversational practice scores.

#### Free Text Analysis

- 4.18 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.
- 4.19 Job satisfaction, interesting work and the opportunities available in the organisation were identified as areas that people really value and spoke positively about their experience. Working in teams, pay and benefits and making a difference were all areas that employees rated as good things about working in the organisation 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. These results were similar to 2013.
- 4.20 The positive aspects of working with line managers that employees described were feeling trusted, new methods of work, exploring new ideas and being supported by them. Those areas the employees were more neutral about were the touch points with managers such as regular meetings, team meetings and supervision.
- 4.21 The main workplace tensions that people identified were volumes of work, pressure, restructures, lack of resources, staff cuts, job security and management. Again these are similar to 2013 and most of them can be seen reflected in the high workplace tension and job pressure scores under conversational practice and will increasingly influence the context in which managers in the organisation will need to keep employee engagement high and corresponding performance levels.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 These results continue to show that despite challenging times in relation to available resources and changes in the way services will be delivered the Council continues to maintain an effective degree of employee engagement. However, the levels of good will, motivation and performance that the organisation currently experiences will dissipate if the organisation and managers sit on their laurels and do not continue to strive for improvements in this area.
- 5.2 Managers of the divisions and services that participated in the survey will be following up with their management and staff teams, having received

feedback on the areas where they need to focus attention, as will directorate management teams. Human Resources will also be using the results to inform activity it needs to initiate to address areas of concern. HR will also use the information when talking to managers about change (including the Service Change Managers) to help their understanding about how to engage with staff and harness this for best effect.

- 5.3 This report demonstrates that the Council has a good base to increasingly develop the important elements of the employment deal that its employees spoke about in the free text element of the survey. It also gives a platform to continue the engagement with staff through the conversations we have with them corporately about change but also those the managers have that translate the organisation's objectives into reality for their employees. This will continue to improve sustainable contributions from employees and can act as a catalyst to promote the development of the formalised deal clearly setting out what is offered by Kent for the contributions staff give in return. All this will help ensure staff are more resilient through change, will continue to perform and ensure the Council's customers receive a good service.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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