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To: Personnel Committee

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Subject: Employment Value Proposition

Classification: **Unrestricted**

SUMMARY: An executive summary of the findings of the 2015 Employment Value Proposition survey outlining key improvements in the levels of employee engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2014 the Committee was presented with the results of the Employee Engagement Survey conducted that year. A further survey has been undertaken this year 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 2014 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; more effectively innovate and deliver a quality customer experience. Ultimately employee engagement is about effective performance management.

2.2 The Authority's Engagement Strategy recognises the importance of engagement in driving up levels of performance in the organisation. The strategy 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 Organisation Development Plan and also links to Kent County Council's Customers Services Policy, 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, e.g. 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 2015, which is the fourth 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 2,000 staff in Kent County Council. 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. If services had been surveyed in the previous consecutive two years they were not included in 2015. Some services that were surveyed for the first time in 2014 were surveyed for a second year running. Also some services that had not participated before were surveyed. The response rate to the survey was c.48%. The applicable senior manager for each division/service received service specific feedback on their results in August.
- 3.4 The EVP survey has demonstrated that the level of employee engagement in Kent County Council keeps 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. 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 The questions asked by the survey are structured in a way that enables 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 and the key drivers underpinning the most significant elements within the balance of the deal.

Balance of the Deal

- 4.2 This element of the survey looks at how staff feel about the contribution made by the organisation to the employment relationship compared with what the employees feel they bring to their job and the organisation. 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.

- 4.3 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
- **Perceived Organisational Support** – how employees see their organisation valuing their contribution and caring about their well being

- 4.4 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 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

4.5 The balance of the deal results for KCC in 2014 and 2015 were:

	2014	2015
The Contract	57	60
Perceived Organisational Support	52	53
Employer Contribution	55	57
Job Engagement	81	83
Efficacy	79	79
Organisational Engagement	67	71
Employee Contribution	77	77

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

4.6 The table shows that the Council's level of engagement has increased slightly over the last year. Overall the balance of the deal is still seen as being in favour of the employer. This is shown by the 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 that the employees' perception of the how they engage with the organisation and are prepared to trust it and advocate on its behalf has increased again in 2015 (organisational engagement score).

4.7 Levels of engagement with the job role people work in and service they provide continue to 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. The scores reflecting how managers feel supported by the organisation have increased slightly following a small dip in 2014.

Overall the improvement is positive but more work does need to be done in addressing the imbalance in the deal as the level it is at is not sustainable in the long term.

4.8 The directorate data for the 2015 survey is as follows:

	KCC	GET	SCHWB	EYPS	S&CS
The Contract	60	58	62	56	61
Perceived Organisational Support	53	54	56	47	54
Employer Contribution	57	56	59	52	58
Job Engagement	83	84	84	84	81
Efficacy	79	81	80	77	78
Organisational Engagement	71	70	73	68	71
Employee Contribution	77	78	79	76	76

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** – idea generation and problem solving conversations
- **Performance focused conversations** – discussions about how solutions and services will be delivered and how ideas/solutions can be put into practice
- **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/deadlines.

4.11 The conversational practice results for KCC in 2014 and 2015 were:

	2014	2015
Overall score	70	71
Solution focused	71	73
Performance focused	70	71
Workplace tensions	64	65
Job pressure	62	67

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 2014 results the gap between the quality of the solutions focused discussions and that of the performance focused conversations has reduced again. This suggests an improvement in how staff view 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 increased very slightly but the job pressure score has increased significantly. Both scores remain high. This suggests that, despite this context, management are engaging and motivating staff to a degree through the interface they have with them on a regular basis.

4.14 The directorate conversational practice figures for the 2015 survey are:

	KCC	GET	SCHWB	EYPS	S&CS
Overall score	71	61	73	68	72
Solution focused	73	65	74	71	73
Performance focused	71	57	73	69	73
Workplace tensions	65	66	69	68	61
Job pressure	67	69	65	68	62

Personification

4.15 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 individuals view the type of organisation they work in.

4.16 The "traits" that are measured are:

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

4.17 The main changes were in the conversational, competence and supportive scores, which all fell. This suggests that despite the relationship staff have with their managers the corporate body is more distant to them compared to last year. This is in contrast to the organisational engagement score having increased. This may suggest that staff advocate based on their local experiences of working for KCC.

Free Text Analysis

4.18 The free text questions focused on what is best about working in the organisation, how employees work with their manager to get something done and the workplace tensions that employees face. This information was analysed to represent the number of times certain elements were written about and the level of sentiment expressed about those subjects.

4.19 Job satisfaction, support, working in a team/with colleagues and the opportunities available in the organisation were identified as areas that people really value and which individuals spoke positively about. Job variety, pay and benefits and management 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 2014.

- 4.20 The positive aspects of working with line managers that employees described were contact with their manager, regular meetings, exploring new ideas and being supported by them. Those areas the employees were more neutral about were some of the touch points with managers such as supervision, performance management and problem solving.
- 4.21 The main workplace tensions that people identified were volumes of work, pressure, restructures and a lack of resources. These are similar to 2014 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. TREND ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Kent County Council has used the EVP survey for four years. This data enables the Authority to get a sense of how levels of engagement have changed in this time.
- 5.2 The following table shows the figures for the balance of the deal over the four years the survey has been undertaken.

	2012	2013	2014	2015
The Contract	46	54	57	60
Perceived Organisational Support	45	52	52	53
Employer Contribution	46	53	55	57
Job Engagement	79	80	81	83
Efficacy	78	79	79	79
Organisational Engagement	50	58	67	71
Employee Contribution	69	75	77	77
Balance of the Deal	23	22	22	20

These figures show a steady increase in how positively employees view the employer's contribution to the deal (from 46 to 57). Staff's view of what they bring to the deal has also increased (from 69 to 77). The most startling movement has been in the level of organisational engagement from a score of 50 to 71 – which represents an increased level of commitment to the organisation and an increased propensity by employees to champion the organisation's aims.

The balance of the deal has always been in favour of the employer. However, this has slowly fallen recognising that there is gradually less tension in the deal but also points to their being more work required to close the gap further to make the relationship between employer and employee even more productive.

5.3 The next table shows the trend in relation to conversational practice.

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Overall score	65	69	70	71
Solution focused	69	73	71	73
Performance focused	62	66	70	71
Workplace tensions	68	64	64	65
Job pressure	66	65	62	67

The overall efficacy of the types of conversations managers have with their staff, and consequently, how effective these are in engaging employees in the delivery of their work has gradually increased over the last four years.

Employees are telling us that despite how they felt about the level of workplace tension falling slightly between 2012 and 2013 this has not really changed much. The level of workplace tension experienced by staff is still too high to maintain a consistent level of engagement across all staff.

In 2015 the level of job pressure felt by staff is at the highest it has been in four years. This is also at a level that cannot be sustained in the long term without it effecting engagement and performance across all jobs.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The key findings of the 2015 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 2014.
- 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 again showing increased levels of loyalty, affinity and advocacy toward the Council.
- 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 improved slightly on 2014.
- e) Employees' view on the level of work pressure they are experiencing has increased.

6.2 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.

- 6.3 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. Human Resources will 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 to help their understanding of how to engage with staff and harness this for best effect.
- 6.4 This report demonstrates that the Council has a good base to further develop the important elements of the employment deal that 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.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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Background documents:

Personnel Committee – 14 September 2014

Services which participated in KCC's EVP Survey 2015

Education & Young People's Services

Early Help & Preventative Services

Social Care, Health & Wellbeing

Specialist Children's Services – East Kent County Council

Integrated Care Homes and Day Centres – Older Person's & Physical Disability

Strategic & Corporate Services

Finance & Procurement

Growth, Environment & Transport

Economic Development