



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 17/27

MEETING	Finance, Governance and Audit Committee
DATE OF MEETING	7 July 2017
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Staff engagement survey 2017
STATUS OF REPORT	Open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	To note the key findings of the staff engagement survey conducted in February 2017
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>As Members may be aware, following the establishment of the new Service in April 2016, the first staff engagement survey has been conducted. The survey has indicated a number of positive areas for celebration and some key issues for improvement.</p> <p>The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) has established a clear programme of developing actions at both a corporate and departmental level. These will be monitored through Sycle, our performance management arrangements.</p> <p>This work is also part of Priority 5 'Supporting and Developing our People' and accordingly a risk control measure against the Strategic Risk 001 '<i>Failure to secure a one team approach across the new Service</i>'. This strategic risk is monitored by the SLT on a monthly basis and through the Finance, Governance and Audit Committee at each of its meetings.</p> <p>It is intended to benchmark our performance by undertaking a further survey in 18 months' time to allow the actions to be delivered and to have shown some positive impact.</p>
RISK ASSESSMENT	Failure to ensure an engaged workforce may impact on staff retention and morale which in turn undermine both the performance of the Service and wider governance arrangements of the Authority.

COMMUNITY IMPACT	None for the purpose of this report
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	None with this report
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. note the key findings of the staff engagement survey conducted in February 20172. monitor the identified improvements arising from the survey as a risk control measure against the Strategic Risk 001' <i>Failure to secure a one team approach to the new Service</i>
APPENDICES	None for the purposes of this report
BACKGROUND PAPERS	None for the purposes of this report
REPORT ORIGINATOR	<p>Derek James, Director of Corporate Services.</p> <p>Email: derek.james@dwfire.org.uk.</p> <p>Tel 01722 691072</p>

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the Service's continued commitment to employee engagement and the development of a one-team culture, an independent company was commissioned to conduct a staff survey at the beginning of 2017. The main purpose of the survey was to better understand how staff feel about working for the new Service and to identify the areas that need improving. The survey was branded "eyes and ears" and was a simple electronic survey, accessible to all staff from any device at work or home. It took about 10 minutes to complete and was conducted during February 2017. It was supported by a significant internal communications campaign to encourage a high response rate including specific calls for completion by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO). This included:
- Regular weekly updates in the run up and during the survey
 - CFO reminders in his podcast
 - Managers consultation and briefing days in February
 - CFO coffee mornings
 - SLT Question Time sessions
 - A text message to retained staff sent through the Gartan system
 - Heads of Department at the Working Together Forum to further disseminate to their management meetings
 - Alerts on the staff site home page
 - Emails to all staff with a link to the survey
 - Frequently asked questions on the staff site
 - A reminder in pay slips with a link to the survey
 - Flyers sent to all workplaces
 - Engagement at the staff Change Forum
- 1.2 The results were independently collated and analysed by the company and were presented to Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and Heads of Department in May. The results have been benchmarked against other local authorities who use this survey. The findings have also been broken down to both a corporate and departmental level. This has enabled a more targeted analysis to identify more specifically focused improvement actions. Managers are currently in the process of communicating to their teams what these results mean and engaging them in developing local solutions to address the key areas for improvement within their departments.
- 1.3 It is important to remember when the survey was conducted that the new Service was less than one year old. The results show significant positive organisational attributes and these are a good reflection on the current position for the Service. As would be expected from such a significant all-embracing change, which is one of the largest of any in the fire and rescue sector, there are things that need to be improved.

2. Key findings

- 2.1 The survey indicated a staff engagement score of 68% which is higher than the UK norm at 66%. In this way there were good levels of engagement and participation with the survey. This helps to demonstrate that staff feel broadly engaged in the development and delivery of the Service. There were two general features stemming from the survey namely a large number of responses showing a high neutral 'neither strongly agree or disagree' score and a lack of confidence that action would be taken as a results of this survey.
- 2.2 These high 'neutral' scores are perhaps unsurprising given that the creation of the new Service was less than 11 months old when staff completed the survey. As actions are taken during the coming year, we would hope that future surveys will show a more decisive position.
- 2.3 The key headline findings from the February 2017 survey can be broadly set out as in Figure 1 below.

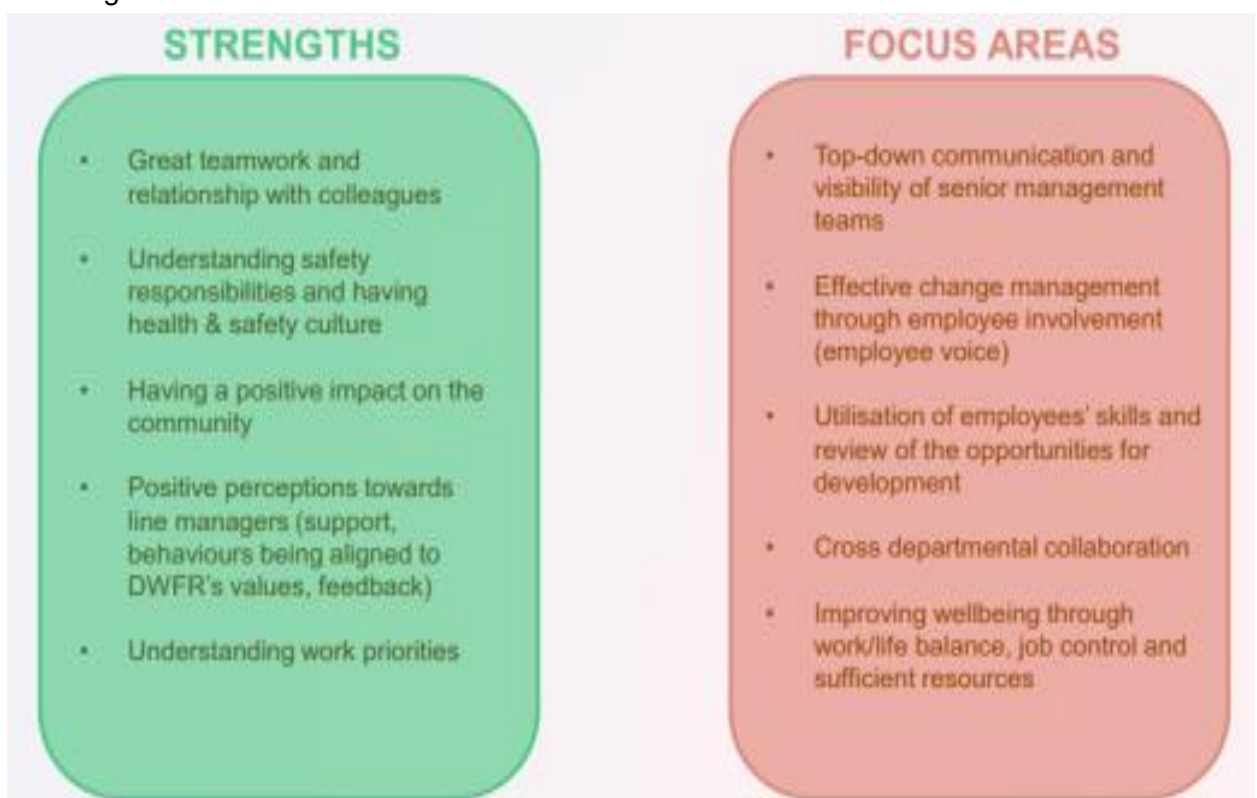


Figure 1 Key positive messages from the staff engagement survey Feb 2017

- 2.4 There are many positive statistics stemming from the survey such as;
- 82% of staff would speak positively about the work of the Service
 - 74% of staff would like to working for the Service a year from now
 - 67% feel motivated to go the extra mile to help the Service succeed

- 2.5 As one would expect, whilst the survey indicated many positive traits, the results identified key development areas.
- a. **Top-down communication and visibility of the Strategic Leadership Team and Heads of Department.** Staff felt that more open and transparent communication is needed across the Service to ensure senior managers are more connected with staff. As Members are aware the Service has a comprehensive internal engagement strategy that is overseen by the SLT on a quarterly basis. Measures currently include monthly and weekly newsletters; monthly CFO staff videos promoted through the intranet and through the newsletters; quarterly teleconferences with the SLT; departmental and team meetings; workplace visits; change forums amongst others. Internal auditors have recently audited these arrangements and provided a '*substantial*' assurance. The key issue that we are currently exploring within the SLT and Heads of department is how to further strengthen the structure of departmental and team meetings and wider departmental engagement.
 - b. **Effective change management through employee involvement.** Change is perceived by many staff as too fast and not sufficiently engaging staff. Given the pace of the combination process and the need to establish single ways of working to foster a one-team approach, it is understandable that staff felt this way. The results specifically indicate that staff feel their managers listen to them (77%) and value their contribution (77%) however, staff feel that there are not sufficient opportunities to contribute their views and that Service needs to be more open to new ideas and suggestions. SLT and Heads of Departments are strengthening cross-departmental working arrangements; departmental/team meetings; establishing a staff suggestion scheme and revamping the change forum that is comprised of employees from across the Service.
 - c. **Using employees skills and review of the opportunities for development.** The results showed that around half of respondents felt more needed to be done about future career progression, the equality of opportunity to succeed and the effective use of their skills. This was less of a concern for staff in corporate departments. This work is being addressed through work being undertaken under the strategic priority '*Developing and supporting our people*'.
 - d. **Cross-departmental collaboration.** Staff were positive about the support and relationships they had within their teams, but less positive about inter departmental collaboration. Measures that have already been put in place include: establishing a Working Together Forum with SLT and Heads of departments meetings every two months; revamping the change forum mentioned above; revamping the Operational Delivery Effectiveness Group; and strengthening the performance management framework including project management arrangements.

- e. **Improved wellbeing and work-life balance.** There was concern in some corporate departments that staff have insufficient resources to meet the desired performance expectations. The Service is currently undertaking a review of departmental resourcing to ensure that staff have the sufficient resources to undertake their role and that overall the departments are sustainable.

3. **Delivering the improvements**

- 3.1 The Service is committed to seeing a difference from the survey and ensuring that there is real value in the actions we take to improve. The SLT and Heads of departments are closely engaged in taking action to make improvement to themes. A clear programme of support has been established for managers to communicate and engage with their staff. There are clear timescales around the process and actions to include within departmental action plans.
- 3.2 In addition, the Service has established a Working Together Forum whereby SLT and Heads of departments meet every two months to corporately monitor and coordinate our response to these important issues. Feedback will be reported back to staff on a quarterly basis and at a local level on a monthly basis through departmental and team meetings where specific local action is necessary. The feedback from teams will be considered at the forum so that a clear set of actions for improvement can be established.

4. **Summary and key points**

- 4.1 As would be expected from any public (or indeed private sector) merger, the staff engagement survey has identified many 'normal' change management issues associated with such whole scale reform to establish the new Service. It is pleasing to note that there are many positives results arising from the feedback. There are a number of clear areas for improvement over the coming year that were already either in place or in the pipeline to be achieved.
- 4.2 The Service has established a clear programme of developing and delivering actions at corporate and departmental level. A communications process has been agreed to regularly feedback to staff what improvements are being made so that we can more visibly show a cause and effect associated with the findings of this survey. These improvements will monitored through Sycle, our performance management tool, and through a newly formed Working Together Forum involving the SLT and all Heads of Department.

Ben Ansell

Chief Fire Officer
July 2017