



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

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| REPORT REFERENCE NO. | HRMDC/10/6 |
| MEETING | HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE |
| DATE OF MEETING | 14 APRIL 2010 |
| SUBJECT OF REPORT | STAFF SURVEY |
| LEAD OFFICER | Director of People and Organisation Development |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>(a) <i>that the Member Champion For Equality and Diversity continue to be part of the Project Steering Group for the outcome of staff survey(s)</i></p> <p>(b) <i>that the Committee continue to oversee the progress of actions identified in the staff survey(s)</i></p> <p>(c) <i>that, subject to (a) and (b) above, the report be noted.</i></p> |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | This report contains an update on the progress against the programme of activities identified from the 2008 Staff Survey, and gives details of the methodology, communications plan and time table of the 2010 Staff Survey. |
| RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS | Resources have been contained and planned for within the Corporate Services (Communications) Budget. |
| EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT | The survey includes all staff groups. Arrangements have been made to allow those staff on the Retained Duty System to have additional time during drill nights to complete the survey as this was identified as an under-represented response group in the 2008 survey, and represents the largest part of our workforce. |
| APPENDICES | <p>A. Staff Survey newsletter October 2008 (enclosed separately).</p> <p>B. Staff Survey newsletter March 2009 (enclosed separately).</p> <p>C. Copy of Staff Survey 2010 (enclosed separately).</p> <p>D. Timetable and Communication Plan.</p> <p>E. "You said" "We did" posters (enclosed separately).</p> |

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| LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS | nil |
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In November 2007, the Human Resources Management and Development (HRMD) Committee noted the arrangements for undertaking the first ever Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Staff Survey. As a newly combined fire and Rescue service it was essential that an employee survey was conducted to measure Staff opinion following such a major period of change. It was considered important to conduct a survey to establish how staff felt about being employees of the Service and to identify any issues that may require improvement. Given the significant amount of change that has taken place, (combination, rank to role and job evaluation being some of the major ones) the survey would provide an important baseline to be used in any future assessment.
- 1.2 To ensure that the survey was independent, Opinion Research Services (ORS), the contractor providing consultation services to the Fire Services Consultation Association (FSCA), was commissioned to undertake the initial survey.
- 1.3 The survey was carried out between 18 February 2008 and 21 March 2008. Every member of staff was given the opportunity to complete the survey and 647 were returned. With a total workforce of 2165 this represented a return rate of 30%, which is considered a good response for surveys of this kind.
- 1.4 Statistical analysis of the survey returns began in August 2008 and a working group was established in September with a view to identifying the key issues arising from the results. The working group was chaired by the Head of Human Resource Management and Development and included both uniformed and non-uniformed managers from Human Resources, Training and Development, Equalities & Diversity, Operations Support and Communications. A newsletter was sent out to all staff at the end of October 2008 to provide initial feedback on the survey results and to begin the process of wider staff engagement in identifying key improvement actions.
- 1.5 The initial newsletter was issued to staff in accordance with the planned, published timeframe and meetings were held with Representative Bodies to begin the process of engagement and involvement with work to identify key improvement actions. The full survey results were published on the Service Intranet at the end of November 2008. This is regarded as an important step in demonstrating openness and transparency over the results and that nothing is being covered up.
- 1.6 It was emphasised to staff that employee engagement, including surveys would be an important and essential tool in helping the organisation move forward, and it was made clear that Staff Surveys would be conducted on a bi-annual basis, to ensure a process of continuous improvement and a genuine willingness to listen and learn, and allocate resources and implement initiatives designed to address identified issues. It is important that staff are aware that this method of employee engagement and involvement is supported and valued by Members of The Authority and Senior Management and that the organisation really is keen to hear the views of staff on what it is like to work for Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and to learn about its strengths and areas for improvement.

- 1.7 The improvement activities identified were approved and incorporated into Service Plans and managed as a programme of projects overseen by this Committee. This Committee received regular updates of the programme throughout 2009 and agreed, amongst other things, that the Member Champion for Equality and Diversity should be a member of the Staff Survey Steering Group and contribute to newsletters about progress on actions identified in the Staff Survey. A second newsletter
- 1.8 The organisation is currently embarking on the 2010 second Staff Survey since combination and will be comparing results of both surveys to show areas where we have improved, areas of strengths and areas still requiring further progress to be made.
- 1.9 The communications plan leading up to the launch of the 2010 survey has been more robust, and accompanied by a set of posters, “*you said*” “*we did*” and are attached in the appendices. More consideration has been given to initiatives to improve response rates and encourage involvement and participation.

2. 2008 SURVEY RESULTS

- 2.1 Following the initial analysis of the survey results, a summary of the main ‘high spots’ and ‘hot spots’ was produced together with a brief commentary regarding specific sections. This formed the basis of the October 2008 newsletter that was issued to all staff, a copy of which is attached to this report as an Appendix A for information.
- 2.2 This initial analysis identified some key areas for further work and action but it was also recognised that it is important to involve staff groups so that improvement actions deliver changes that employees will recognise as improving the position from their perspective. The focus of analysis was clearly on the ‘hot spots’ and that is entirely proper because the whole purpose of conducting the survey was to identify things that needed to be done better. It is also important to continue to maintain areas of activity where staff considered the Service to be performing well.
- 2.3 The work with the staff groups allowed open discussion and debate to identify the specific actions to deliver most impact. However, early stages of the survey results indicated that it was evident that specific action was required around the perception of senior management, recognition, communication, levels of consultation and the incidence of bullying.
- 2.4 The existing Corporate Plan in 2008 and supporting Departmental Service Plans already contained some development activities that would address some, or part of the issues identified by the survey responses. Consequently, an important part of the next stage was to focus on the key areas of improvement that would make a real difference to the issues identified by the survey responses.
- 2.5 Improvement action overload is a potential barrier to effecting meaningful change and it was important that this should be avoided. This does not mean that areas that need to be addressed will be forgotten, but it does mean that we will have to be realistic about what can be achieved within the resources available.
- 2.6 Initial meetings have been held with Representative Bodies and they have indicated a willingness to work together with management in identifying the priority areas for improvement action. A cross cutting project team was established to complete this work and the main project deliverable was a clearly defined set of improvement activities, including an assessment of resourcing requirements, which were incorporated within the relevant Service plans for 2009 and beyond.

- 2.7 The Staff Survey Steering Group identified key areas of focus grouped into the following themes as identified in the Staff Survey.
- communications;
 - fair treatment and values;
 - work-life balance and managing pressure and stress at work;
 - recruitment, selection and promotion; and
 - training, development and leadership.
- 2.8 The themes and resulting improvement activities were approved and incorporated into Service Plans and managed as a programme of projects and the HRMD Committee agreed to oversee of the programme and has received regular updates.
- 2.9 A second newsletter, issued in March 2009 (attached as Appendix B to this report), gives give a comprehensive review of progress against the key themes, but particular areas of note follow in sections 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 in this report

3. COMMUNICATION THEME PROGRESS

- Communications Strategy
- Staff Suggestion Scheme “Flaming Good Idea”
- ALERT –single focus topics of interest to inform staff
- Staff forums
- Middle Manager and Watch Manager Workshops
- Regular and improved and larger edition of in-house magazine “Your Shout”
- Improved Branding and Corporate Identity
- Improved Internet and Intranet site (more improvements planned)
- Exit Interviews

4. FAIR TREATMENT AND VALUES THEME PROGRESS

- Refreshed and revised Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Improved Employee Monitoring
- New, simpler Discipline and Grievance Policy including investigation guidance for managers
- Staff Supporters network re-launched and underpinned by professional training
- Mediation Service
- “Making the Connections” Single Equality Scheme
- Terms of Reference of Joint Safety Committee more holistic focussing on the “health of the organisation”

5. WORKLIFE BALANCE THEME PROGRESS



- Managing Pressure and Stress at Work Policy and guidance
- Improved range of flexible working and work life balance policies
- a group taking its roots from the staff survey looking at a range of innovative and inspiring work life balance initiatives and self improvement sessions.

6. RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PROMOTION THEME PROGRESS

- A process to transfer staff between whole time and retained duty systems, the first ever fire and rescue service in the UK to do this for all roles above firefighter
- Assessment and Development Centres for all operational staff
- A more comprehensive, and robust recruitment and selection process
- Innovative Positive Action Strategy and campaign

7. TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP THEME PROGRESS

- Harmonised system in place for conducting staff appraisals for all areas of the Service from April 2010
- Staff Skills Bank
- High Potential Leadership Scheme Pilot
- Restructure of Senior Management Team to be more cross cutting and prevent silo working
- Service Improvement Group
- Flexible Training Strategy
- Risk-Based Training to improve Fire-Fighter Safety
- Flexible contracts for Trainers to enable more localised time critical training
- Information Exchanges for Investigating Officers

8. 2010 STAFF SURVEY

- 8.1 Opinion Research Services (ORS), the contractor providing consultation services to the Fire Services Consultation Association (FSCA), has been commissioned to undertake the second 2010 Staff Survey. The methodology adopted is similar in that there are a range of questions the same as the 2008 survey to allow benchmarking against the initial survey with the expectation that we can ascertain improvement and progress in key areas. Benchmarking will also be available against other organisations where appropriate. A copy of the questionnaire is attached for information at Appendix C.
- 8.2 There are also new questions around our corporate vision and increase emphasis on communication and equality and diversity.

- 8.3 The timetable and communications plan is attached at Appendix D to this report. Staff received the Survey on 1st March with a completion deadline of 30th April. A range of options to complete was also given, including on line and paper based. Circulation was preceded by Service Updates, team briefings, ALERT notices and is being backed up by a range of “*you said*” “*we did*” posters (copies of which are attached as Appendix E to this report) during the consultation period. Staff are being given paid time to complete the survey to specifically encourage more of our Retained Duty Staff to become involved, as this was identified as an underrepresented response group in the initial 2008 Staff Survey. There is a prize of an “experience day” (an exciting option of sporting or leisure/hobby events for the winner to choose from) to incentivise and encourage an improved response rate, as the more staff who participate the more valid and valuable are the results which can be analysed, and more wide ranging commentary of employees views.
- 8.4 The employee survey has been running since the beginning of March and so far feedback from ORS are that 692 questionnaires have been returned to ORS. This number gives a response rate of 31.5%. In 2008 employee survey 647 surveys were returned achieving a 30% response rate, so already the total return rate of the last survey has been exceeded. With four weeks still to go we have the opportunity to inject added impetus to increase the rate of response. The more returns we receive the better chance we have of developing a clearer understanding of opinion and therefore the Service is encouraging any opportunities to promote participation to be maximised. There are posters promoting the employee survey around headquarters and on stations that also identify some of the achievements from the last survey. April 2010 Service Update also contains a few words on the latest numbers received and a reminder to complete the questionnaire. A schedule of further communications to remind staff to complete their questionnaire has been planned for each week until the closing date of the survey on 30 April.
- 8.5 Results are to be fed back to staff in November 2010 and will be reported to the HRMD committee in late autumn, together with initial plans to progress issues identified and celebrate successes
- 8.6 Results of the Staff Survey will be considered alongside the DSFRS Retained Duty System Survey which went to staff and families/partners in 2009. The national RDS survey results recently undertaken should also be available at this time to compare and contrast national and local themes.

JANE SHERLOCK

Director of People and Organisation Development

Timetable & Communications Plan

| | DSFRS | ORS |
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| Agree timescales with ORS | 3 rd December | |
| First amends to ORS | 3 rd December | |
| List of question amends to working group | 2 nd /3 rd December | |
| Email to SMB detailing project timescales and reminding of old survey | 8 th December | |
| Email to Unions detailing project timescales and reminding of old survey | 11 th December | |
| First draft survey received from ORS | | 14 th December |
| Minor amends to initial draft given to ORS | 15 th December | |
| Amended draft received from ORS | | 16 th December |
| First draft survey to SMB | 17 th December | |
| First Draft Survey to unions | 17 th December | |
| Amends from SMB and Unions to AHB | 11 th January | |
| Working group agree final amends by email | 13 th January | |
| Final amends to ORS | 18 th January | |
| Sign off survey | 25 th January | |
| ORS set up and print | | 25 th January – 9 th February |
| AHB and TD meet to look at communications plan | End of January | |
| Surveys delivered to DSFRS | | 10 th February |
| Stuff envelopes | 15 th – 19 th February | |
| Delivery to stations | 22 nd -26 th February | |
| Completion | 1 st March – 30 th April | |
| Data processing | | 3 rd – 7 th May |
| Data Analysis | | 10 th – 29 th May |
| ORS draft report writing | | 1 st – 30 th June |
| ORS report sign off | | 1 st – 31 st July |
| SMB report writing | 19 th July – 16 th August | |
| SMB Meeting | Second August meeting | |
| Working group meet to discuss results | During week 6 th – 10 th September | |
| Development of newsletter to feed back results | 13 th September – 31 st October | |
| Newsletter and results published | November | |