

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Employee Engagement Survey

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services

Date response requested:² 23 January 2024

Head of Paid Service Response to report:

That the Head of Paid Service, along with other relevant officers, undertake the following:

- a) That the staff engagement survey is repeated, in full, on an annual basis.

The survey is just one engagement opportunity to understand how engaged and satisfied all colleagues are. The survey results are used to identify further areas for investigation. An annual survey will be undertaken every spring. Every 2 years we will deep dive into specific areas that we need to measure at that given time. A comprehensive view of colleague engagement will be achieved via the annual survey; every year the survey will include measures against the key 8 factors (leadership, management, team, company, personal growth, wellbeing, fair deal and giving something back) with nuanced statements being introduced at listening sessions following the results being published.

The survey for 2024 is live between 27 February and 15 March 2024

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

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- b) That fuller comparative data is requested from Best Companies of the Council's performance against other local authorities and report against this data accordingly in future

Comparative data was requested. Best Companies cannot provide comparative data against local authorities but are able to provide this information against not-for profit organisations.

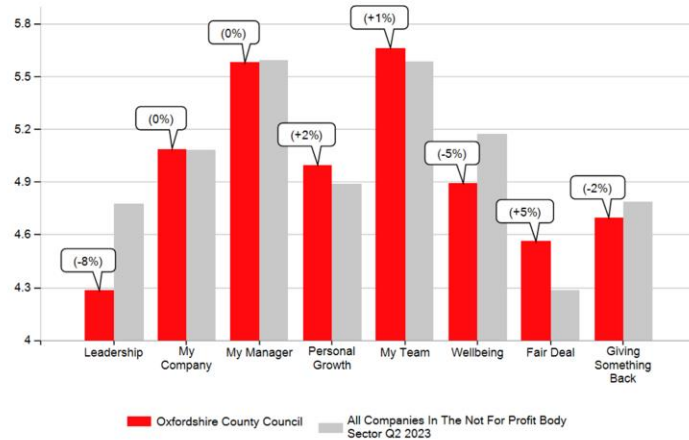
Overall, in 2023 Oxfordshire County Council was aligned with other not-for profit organisations with regard to employees' views of the organisation, management, and team dynamics. Pay and "fair deal" was well above the average benchmarked result but leadership was significantly lower than comparators.

Leadership was highlighted in the 2023 survey as a priority area of focus for improvement. A comparison of OCC's results against the comparator group will be requested following the 2024 survey.

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Classification - Confidential

Oxfordshire County Council vs. All Companies In TheNot For Profit Body Sector Q2 2023



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c) That future staff engagement surveys are able to differentiate between responses from full and part time staff

This is possible and will be a priority request for “deep dive” analysis with our data and insights team and will be included in the report following the next survey.

d) That questions be added to future surveys over whether staff consider their work to be of value, and whether they feel it is valued.

A core statement used in every survey is “I believe I can make a valuable contribution to the success of this organisation”. The data for this specific question will be analysed and incorporated into the next report.

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- e) That work is undertaken to convey the inherent value of staff's work, and the value the organisation places on it.

Our People and Culture Strategy has a project to embed and refresh our Managing for Performance framework (12.3.2). At the heart of this work is ensuring all colleagues have clarity on how their work fits with the organisation's vision. Recognition and feedback is key to this. All senior managers have been invited to attend a refresh seminar regarding the 12.3.2 approach to ensure they are reminded of the importance of acknowledging contribution. A series of recorded bite-size webinars are also planned for all managers.

In addition, OCC have recognised colleagues over the last year through the Apprenticeship awards, Recognition week in September, Hi Five network allowing colleagues to recognise and give a 'shout out' to other colleagues and Director emails recognising excellence in working with the values. Internal Comms have also been working with colleagues to share case studies of their excellent work to acknowledge their contribution and show case great examples to inspire other colleagues.

- f) That the Council develops measures to understand whether it is achieving its intention to become less hierarchical and more of a matrix-working environment

The Our People and Culture Strategy is underpinned by the ethos of empowering and growing the people of OCC. This is being launched to the business during March and April and intends to support the growth of a mutually responsible and adult to adult culture where everyone's work contributes to the success of OCC.

Each Directorate will be working with the strategy to consider specific engagement that will help shape this culture at local level.

Quantitative measurement of this shift is difficult however qualitative measurement through the repetitive engagement survey, employer branding focus groups, case studies and focus groups run by DTFT champions will provide evidence of difference.

- g) That mechanisms are developed to support and develop psychological safety; whereby junior staff feel enabled to challenge senior staff respectfully or pose alternative courses of action in safety without fear of repercussions and that an additional question is added to the survey relating to this

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The Our People and Culture Strategy emphasises the importance of leading through the values and the underpinning behaviours.

These behaviours are being embedded through the 12.3.2. embed and refresh project and are key to supporting the development of psychological safety. This in turn supports adult to adult conversations where challenge is accepted as the norm. A core survey statement "I am often asked for feedback which is actively encouraged and acted on" will be used on an annual basis. This will help monitor whether this is happening across the organisation and enable targeted work if necessary.

- h) That solutions are developed to address the twin needs of moving to a hybrid working model whilst also ensuring that relationships are developed between more junior and senior staff.

The Our People and Culture Strategy encompasses a workstream of Agile working to support the success of working with a hybrid model and to support the development of strong management and team relationships.

In addition, a reciprocal mentoring programme is being launched in Spring 24 whereby senior leaders will be matched with colleagues identifying with protected characteristics to learn from one another and to grow networks that don't naturally form in a hierarchical environment.

- i) That means are developed to allow work which does not deliver value to be dropped, rather than consistently adding to expectations on staff

Since the last survey Leaders have made time to consider the priorities and vision for the organisation to become an employer, partner and place shaper of choice and this is being communicated widely through DTFT champion networks, ELT/SLT briefings, local briefings. In addition, the Transformation Board has been stood up which considers the priorities that OCC should focus on to achieve change. This is providing clarity of focus and expectations for colleagues allowing them to assess the priority of the work they are focusing on.

In addition, on-going work continues to embed the 12.3.2 performance management framework which includes conversations around clarity of roles and task and the value brought.

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j) That stronger steps are taken to clarify expectations of staff members around working outside standard office hours

Managers are encouraged to include a statement on their email signature around flexible working “I work flexibly. It suits me to email you at this time, but I don’t expect a reply if it’s outside your working hours”. In addition, the 2024 survey will provide data around contracted hours versus average working hours, this will be analysed to identify areas where working hours are excessive and targeted discussions and solutions will be identified.

It is also acknowledged that for some working outside of standard office hours may provide flexibility which could be helpful and attractive. This should of course be accommodated so long as business needs are being met.

k) That further work is taken to understand and unlock the skills which the staff members believe are not being utilised.

The Our people and Culture Strategy has four pillars one of which focuses on ‘Grow’. This pillar outlines a desire to grow employee skills and provide opportunities for talent to move around the organisation. Whilst there is aspiration do to more in the area some examples have already begun such as the programme of work which has commenced as part of the transformation programme to implement Communities of Practice. This provide employees with the opportunity to share and grow skills that that are currently not being utilised but are key to transforming the organisation.

Cabinet Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
That the Cabinet monitors the actions and progress made in relation to the measures requested of the Head of Paid Service. ³	Accepted	Cabinet will be monitoring the progress on engagement through the Workforce Report, and progress against the Our People and Culture strategy

³ These are:

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<p>That the Cabinet provides to the Committee as part of its response to this recommendation a statement outlining the actions they are taking from a political perspective to align the Council’s objectives, values and priorities with the Cabinet’s strategic objectives.</p>	<p>Rejected</p>	<p>It is for senior officers to ensure that the council objectives, values and priorities are well embedded and understood across the organisation. Activities such as ensuring consistency of adoption and use of the 12.3.2 Performance Management programme and the Our People & Culture strategy will ensure the council is aligned to deliver to the strategic objectives of the organisation.</p>
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- b) That fuller comparative data is requested from Best Companies of the Council’s performance against other local authorities and report against this data accordingly in future
- c) That future staff engagement surveys are able to differentiate between responses from full and part time staff
- d) That questions be added to future surveys over whether staff consider their work to be of value, and whether they feel it is valued.
- e) That work is undertaken to convey the inherent value of staff’s work, and the value the organisation places on it.
- f) That the Council develops measures to understand whether it is achieving its intention to become less hierarchical and more of a matrix-working environment
- g) That mechanisms are developed to support and develop psychological safety, whereby junior staff feel enabled to challenge senior staff respectfully or pose alternative courses of action in safety without fear of repercussions and that an additional question is added to the survey relating to this
- h) That solutions are developed to address the twin needs of moving to a hybrid working model whilst also ensuring that relationships are developed between more junior and senior staff
- i) That means are developed to allow work which does not deliver value to be dropped, rather than consistently adding to expectations on staff
- j) That stronger steps are taken to clarify expectations of staff members around working outside standard office hours
- k) That further work is taken to understand and unlock the skills which the staff members believe are not being utilised

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