Report title: Second Staff Wellbeing Survey Results

Meeting: Manager's Briefing

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1. Overview

1.1   Following the initial Staff Wellbeing Survey, a Staff Survey Working Group was established in June 2020 with representatives from all divisions to meet on a fortnightly basis and address the key recommendations from the first survey and develop a follow-up survey to be rolled out after six months.

1.2   A second staff wellbeing survey was designed in late 2020 and rolled out to all staff on 29th January 2021 and closed on 3rd March.

1.3   The survey was comprised of 41 questions in the following categories: Contextual Questions, New Starters, Communications, Public Facing Roles, IT Transformation, Remote Working, Changes to Day-to-Day Work, Health and Wellbeing Offer, Equality and Inclusion, and Returning to Work Approach.

2. Executive Summary

2.1.   The staff survey was launched and promoted in the Chief Executive's all-staff emails as well as in the Transforming Bromley newsletter. Further groups were also asked to promote the survey, such as the Department Representatives, Trade Union Representatives, Directors and members of the Staff Survey Working Group. 1041 staff responded to the survey, with a 92% completion rate of all questions and an average response time of 13 minutes. This is slightly higher than the response and completion rates of the previous survey (975 responses and 88%) and slightly lower than the previous response time of 15 minutes despite the follow-up survey being longer (41 questions instead of 27 in the first survey).

Department/Division with Agency Staff	No of Employees	FTE	Number of Responses	Response Rate (%)	2020 Response Rate (%)
Chief Executive's	**207**	**197.12**	**174**	**84%**	**77%**
Chief Executive's Office & Corporate	94	92.30	87	93%	
Finance	55	52.40	44	80%	
Human Resources & Customer Services	57	52.42	43	75%	
People	**1246**	**1085.49**	**546**	**44%**	**53%**
Adult Services	353	320.26	163	46%	
Children's Services	871	740.01	361	41%	
Public Health	27	25.23	22	81%	
Place	**393**	**361.31**	**312**	**79%**	**47%**
Environment & Public Protection	191	173.04	162	85%	
Housing, Planning & Regeneration	202	188.27	150	74%	
Skipped			9		
Total	**1851**	**1637.92**	**1041**	**56.2%**	**55.6%**

2.2. The response rate for the entire Council is 56%, including agency staff. The Chief Executive's Department had the highest response rate of 84%, which increased from 77% in the first survey. This was followed closely by the Place department at 79%, which is a large increase from the 47% in the first survey. The People department had a 44% response rate, which was lower than the 53% response rate from the previous survey.

2.3. The response rate by age (Q2), gender (Q7) and Bromley residence (Q4) are broadly aligned with the Council's latest workforce profiles. 27% of respondents were managers (Q3), which is very similar to the last survey. The response rate by ethnicity suggests an underrepresentation of non-white staff (Asian, Black, Mixed/multiple ethnic groups, or other ethnic groups) in the survey. White respondents made up 76% of respondents (Q5), compared to 64% of the workforce profile. However, 15% of staff are classified as 'declined/unknown' in the workforce profile compared to 5% choosing 'prefer not to say' in this survey, which could explain some of the difference.

2.4. 7% of staff identified themselves as living with a disability or life limiting health condition in the survey (Q6), which is higher than the 4.3% classified as such in the workforce profile.

2.5. Key findings regarding new starters at the Council:
- 106 new starters responded to the survey (Q8), which is around 61% of those of have started since the start of the first lockdown.
- Responses from new starters were generally positive, with 98% answering that Council staff had made them feel welcome and 85% reporting that they enjoyed their induction, although a few respondents reported not having a full or timely induction process.
- The main challenge for new starters was around connecting with teams remotely, with 62% finding this difficult at times.

2.6. Key findings regarding the Council's communications:
- Attitudes towards communications were generally positive, with 97% reporting feeling well informed about the Council's response to COVID-19 (Q11).
- Email updates from the Chief Executive and Directors were the most popular form of communication (Q10), with 90% of respondents wanting these updates, which was also reported elsewhere in the survey. Similarly, 96% of respondents reported receiving enough information from the leadership (Q11).
- A majority of respondents also wanted to receive updates from their line managers and in team briefings (Q10), and 16% and 20% of respondents reported not receiving enough information from their line manager and in team meetings respectively (Q11). 13% of respondents wanted to receive information from departmental conferences, which suggests that their introduction following the last survey has been valuable. 30% wanted to receive communications from the Leader of the Council or elected Members, suggesting this could be worth exploring further.

2.7. Key findings regarding public facing roles:
- 64% of respondents considered themselves to have a public facing role (Q12).
- The experiences of public facing staff were generally positive, with 88% feeling well supported by the Council for public engagement (Q13).
- 46% reported encountering hostility from members of the public, although 94% felt able to handle difficult public encounters.
- The most common suggestions for further supporting public facing staff were conflict management training, improving support from managers, providing written statements to read to hostile customers and further COVID-19 safety measures (Q14).

2.8. Key findings regarding the IT Transformation Programme:
- Staff were broadly positive about the benefits of the IT Transformation Programme: 86% of staff reported receiving IT equipment in the last six

months (Q15), with 88% believing the IT rollout has improved home working (Q16).

- The most commonly identified technical challenge for staff was poor internet connection (37%) followed by faulty or slow IT equipment (23%) (Q17).
- Over a quarter of respondents reported having no technical issues, which is reassuring considering the rapid shift to remote working.
- 28% of respondents chose to specify their own IT challenges. The main problems were with logging into laptops, with the LBB network or N drive, with specific software, most notably IDOX, and with not having access to a second screen or printer.
- 16% of respondents had suggestions for further IT training (Q16). MS Teams was the most common suggestion, followed by general IT training, Excel and Outlook. As with later questions, many respondents suggested they were too busy to take up IT training. A few comments suggested a 'daily IT skills' email or a 'go to' list of contacts for specific problems in lieu of specific training.

2.9.   Key findings regarding remote working:
- 70% of respondents were working remotely all the time, and only 5% of respondents reported doing no remote working (Q19). The percentage of respondent only remote working has decreased since May, when 80% of respondents were always working from home.
- Of those not always working remotely, three quarters were doing some work in the office, with 26% visiting service users and 16% working in the community (Q20).
- Attitudes towards remote working were generally positive: 84% of respondents feeling effective while working remotely (Q21).
- 87% reported having enough contact with their line manager 27% did not feel connected with their colleagues, reflecting comments of isolation raised across the survey.

2.10.   Key findings regarding workplace safety:
- 7% of respondents indicated that they do not always feel safe working for the Council with a further 10% being unsure (Q22).
- Of those that do not feel safe, 81% are women, compared to 74% of survey respondents.
- 14% of those who do not feel safe reported having a disability, compared to 7% of survey respondents in total.
- 105 comments were made regarding workplace safety, with the most common responses highlighting risks from site visits, especially when alone.
- Some comments also suggested lone office working can contain risks, particularly if members of the public can access staff areas. Some comments highlighted issues with site safety, such as poor lighting when

returning to the car park. COVID-19 risks were also highlighted in some comments. A few comments highlighted 'hidden risks' when home working, especially for staff handling difficult conversations with clients.

- Suggestions for how to improve safety at the Council included COVID-19 safety measures, preventing public access to staff locations, having a clear zero tolerance policy for handling hostile customers, providing personal alarms or other techniques to ensure site visits are safe, and improving site or car park lighting (Q23).

2.11.   Key findings regarding changes to day-to-day work:

- Around 40% of respondents reported taking on COVID-19 support work, most commonly as part of their BAU roles (Q24). This is a slight increase since the last survey.
- 83% of those undertaking COVID-19 support work believed they had sufficient training for this work (Q26). Although a quarter of these colleagues were worried about the risks involved, which is higher than in the previous survey.

2.12.   Key findings regarding the Council's health and wellbeing offer:

- 78% of respondents were aware of the Council's wellbeing support (Q27) and 58% believe it has improved their wellbeing (Q28)
- A mixed picture was found about staff wellbeing overall. Three quarters of respondents reported having a good work life balance. However, 53% report having days where they are unable to take breaks, indicating high workloads, as found in comments across the survey. Additionally, 30% reported being lonely or isolated, a result found across the survey.
- 47% of respondents reported struggling to take care of their physical health, which rises to 61% for staff who reported a disability or life limiting condition.
- Half of respondents reported struggling to take care of their mental health, which rises to 64% for those aged under 36 and 76% for those under 25.
- 17% of respondents had suggestions for further wellbeing support, primarily around helping to manage working hours, including breaks and help for those who feel too busy to use the support available (Q29). Some commented that they would like more done to manage expectations from overworked departments, which is raised in numerous questions. Greater wellbeing support within teams or from managers and some want further promotion of exercise or health eating activities were also raised.

2.13.   Key findings regarding training and managing caring responsibilities:

- 11% of respondents had suggestions for further training, primarily for IT and general training, but some wanted greater focus on career development and others help with managing remotely (Q30).

- 73% of respondents had caring responsibilities during COVID-19, with 37% of these being for children and 28% being for vulnerable relatives (Q31). Other responsibilities were to grandchildren, neighbours or partners. 89% were able to work flexibly to accommodate their caring responsibilities, although some did comment that their workload or the nature of their role made this difficult (Q32).

2.13. Key findings regarding equality and inclusion:
- Responses to the equality and inclusion questions were generally positive, with 80% noticing a recent improvement in the Council's approach to equality and 92% perceiving themselves to be treated fairly at the Council (Q33).
- 16% of Black respondents disagree that they are treated fairly at the Council, compared to 6% for White respondents. Black respondents were slightly more likely to recognise a recent improvement in the Council's approach to equality, which suggests progress may have been made.
- Of respondents who reported having a disability, 22% reported not being treated fairly at the Council.
- 13% of respondents had suggestions for improving the Council's approach to equality and improvement (Q34). Many wanted more training in this area, including unconscious bias and around recognising 'hidden disabilities'. Some wanted action to ensure equality messages from the leadership were better embedded within teams and services. Other suggestions wanted better support for career progression, often to create greater diversity in management and some wanted improvements to the system for reporting discrimination or bullying.
- Half of respondents answered that they had attended a REAL seminar, 48% knew their departmental representative(s), and 20% knew their trade union representative(s) (Q35, 36 and 37).

2.14. Key findings for questions regarding the approach to returning to work:
- Attitudes towards working for the Council were very positive, with 98% of respondents being proud of the Council's response to COVID-19 and 97% believing that their work is meaningful.
- Three quarters of respondents want a mixture of remote and office working, with only 15% wanting to work remotely full time and only 7% wanting to return to the office full time. (Q39).
- 558 respondents commented about their preference for returning to work, often stating benefits of both remote and office working.
- Remote working was most frequently praised for its efficiency, often due to less wasted time and distractions. Other advantages included greater flexibility, especially for caring responsibilities, no stressful commuting, a better work life balance and financial benefits, to both staff and the Council.

- The most common advantage of office working was enabling contact with colleagues, largely for the social and wellbeing benefits, such as building relationships and combating loneliness. However, many believed the office benefited collaboration due to easy information sharing and spontaneous conversations. Some stated that they could not work remotely, at least fully, due to the need to be onsite or complete home or school visits. Others liked office work for the divide it creates between home and work and for the equipment available at the office.
- Along with remote and flexible working, many wanted the focus on wellbeing, communications from the leadership and COVID-19 safety measures to continue after the pandemic (Q40). Some respondents also wanted new services created for residents to continue and others the telephone lottery.
- When asked if they had any other feedback for the survey, many chose to praise the Council, their teams and the leadership, especially for their focus on staff wellbeing (Q41). Some respondents did express dissatisfaction with the Council, their teams or the management they receive, with a few suggesting they are not valued at the Council or believe they have been poorly treated or ignored. Many comments repeated concerns found throughout the survey that they were overworked and stressed while working too long hours. Some comment asked for improvements with inter-departmental working or with supporting internal promotions.