

Staff Survey 2007/2008
(November /December 2007)

Rating South Hams DC as a service provider and employer.

An increased number of those of you who responded, 71% in total, rated South Hams DC as being good or excellent as a local authority with just over three-quarters saying they were satisfied with their job overall at South Hams DC, despite only 48% feeling that their job was secure.

59% of those who answered would recommend working for South Hams DC to a friend. A fall of 5% since the 2005 survey.

Improvements in the next two years

Common themes for what could be improved in the next two years are:

- improved communications,
- honesty,
- there mixed views on Shared Services and sharing the Senior Management Team, with the majority being suspicious, and having a general feeling that customer service and frontline delivery is suffering and that efficiency needs to be improved.

Good things and bad things that have happened

The most consistent view of 'a good thing' that has happened in the last year is that the new Chief Executive has improved communications within the organisation.

Delays regarding Job Evaluation and Single Status are the biggest cause of negative feelings followed by

- (conversely) the appointment of a 'part-time' Chief Executive,
- the lack of visibility of the Senior Management Team,
- Shared Services in general with echoes in the further comments section for a desire to have more clarity regarding the future.

Appraisals and Absences

A disturbing number of you had not had an appraisal – some 32% - a decline since 2005. Despite this 80% thought they were able to use their skills and 76% agreed that they were able to maintain and develop their skills despite 42% not being able to consider all the training available to assist their career development through a Personal Training Plan.

It is also disturbing that of those of you who had an absence in the last year only half had a return-to-work interview from short-term sickness and 16% had a return-to-work interview from long-term sickness.

Relationships with Members and Senior Management

Most felt that Members treated them with respect when they came into contact with them however, only just over half (52%) thought that Members valued them and 37% felt that Members did not understand the pressures that their service operated under.

89% of those of you who responded thought the Chief Executive set a positive and professional example although many had not as yet had the opportunity to meet him and therefore could not comment.

The Strategic Directors fared less well. 45% felt that the Strategic Directors did not make them feel valued and 42% that they did not explain the broad direction of the Council, or the specific direction of their service in simple and understandable terms. A relatively high proportion of respondents answered 'don't know' to all aspects regarding the Strategic Directors.

Relationships within services and teams

Heads of Service came out quite well with 83% saying that their Head of Service treated them with respect.

The response on your Line Managers was more positive than in previous surveys. 88% thought that their Line Manager was courteous, polite and professional at all times, with 80% thinking that they are listened to and provided with feedback on suggestions that they make. However only 47% said that they had regular team meetings they could prepare for and contribute to.

Respondents are generally very positive about their team, with between 85% and 91% agreeing with all five statements in the questionnaire.

Overall the feeling was there could be better communication from managers, more team meetings and more manpower in their team to help with the workload.

Single Status and Shared Services

Single Status is generally seen in negative terms; three-quarters did not know what the benefits are likely to be although there is a perception it will be more beneficial to manual workers (77%) than for office workers (45%). In all 79% thought of it as a threat, compared to 47% who think it also provides an opportunity. Only about half knew about full range of Single Status policies although the Compassionate and Supported Leave Policy was thought good overall.

Shared Services is viewed with suspicion. Over a third of respondents (36%) said that they did not know what the proposals about Shared Services were, with 45% saying that they did not know which services were on the agenda. 89% are concerned about the uncertainty of it all with 73% seeing it as a threat. 75% are concerned about being taken over by another authority. Only 23% think that it will benefit them personally compared to 76% who think that it will benefit the Council. Only 17% think Shared Services will have a positive outcome with 52% neutral and 32% negative.

Respondents were almost equally split over whether communication regarding Shared Services had been adequate or not. Newsletters, the intranet and small face-to-face groups were the methods of communication most favoured by respondents regarding communication for both Shared Services and Single Status.

Discrimination

The highest levels of respondents feeling that they had been discriminated against in the last two years were according to:

- age (15%) with a wide range of age groups feeling discriminated against but the below 24 having the larger percentage and
- gender (8%) spread across female / male at the ration of 2 / 1.

Racial discrimination and discrimination on the grounds of an offending past were too high considering the sample size.