

Report of the Director of Environments and Neighbourhoods

Report to Scrutiny Board Resources and Council Services

Date: 23rd July 2012

Subject: Environment and Neighbourhoods Appraisal and Engagement Results

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. On 25th June this Scrutiny Board considered reports on appraisals and employee engagement. Members requested further information on results in the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate.
2. This report details results by Division. It also explains the service and work-force context behind the results and sets out further actions being taken to make improvements.
3. This report includes how appraisals will be improved in terms of relevance and quality, as well as numbers completed.
4. Employee engagement results in November 2011 were low. However, Quarter 1 Engagement Survey results show a 2% increase in engagement scores across the Directorate with E&N being one of only two Directorates to improve. Significant improvements have been seen in Employment and Skills (7%), Statutory Housing (6.1%) and Environmental Services (4.5%). These results are taken as emerging evidence that the plans that are being applied to improve engagement are working.

Recommendations

5. Members are asked to note the report and ask questions accordingly.

1 Purpose of this report/Background

1.1 To present the position on appraisal and employee engagement in Environment and Neighbourhoods.

1.1 On June 25th 2012, this Board considered reports on appraisals and employee engagement. The lower results in Environment and Neighbourhoods were challenged and a report was requested. Following further clarification this report:

- Gives results for different services
- Explains why targets have not been met in terms of service context
- Explains why different approaches to appraisal have been used in some areas
- Sets out improvement plans and reports the latest positions.

2 Main issues

Appraisals – Context/Results

2.1 Environment and Neighbourhoods has the following service results:

	Employee count as at 31.03.12	Total full annual appraisals 31.03.12	% staff with full annual appraisals 31.03.12	Total 6 month reviews 31.03.12	% staff with 6 month reviews 31.03.12
Leeds City Council	15668	14409	92%	10289	66%
Environment & Neighbourhoods	1439	1219	85%	1014	70%
Community Safety	145	123	85%	128	88%
Employment & Skills	64	63	98%	62	97%
Environmental Services	926	743	80%	544	59%
Strategy & Commissioning	62	62	100%	58	94%
Regeneration	33	31	94%	25	76%
Statutory Housing	208	196	94%	196	94%
Parks and Countryside	545	534	98%	534	98%

(Note – Parks and Countryside result is currently separate to the overall E&N result and will be incorporated into E&N from July. Environmental Services combines both Refuse and Streets services which came under a single Chief Officer until April 2012. Employment and Skills and Regeneration transferred to City Development with effect from July 2012).

2.2 It is recognised that most services perform in line with Council average positions, but that performance in Environmental Services (Streets and Waste) needs improving.

2.3 Environmental Services employ a dispersed/mobile frontline work-force. Some 65% staff fall into this category; mostly working as Drivers, Refuse loaders and De-litterers across different routes and beats in all parts of Leeds. Many of these individuals do not come into an office base or location, travelling from home direct to their work in districts and also do not see other colleagues as a matter of course during the working day. This, combined with shift working and a low ratio of supervision means contact with employees is radically different to that experienced by office based staff.

- 2.4 In addition, both Environmental Services operational staff have historically not had any form of appraisal whatsoever. The work which commenced in 2011 therefore started from a very low baseline. It will continue to take time to build up familiarity and trust in this new process and for staff to value the appraisals and see them as a beneficial experience with which they readily participate.
- 2.5 For the Refuse Collection teams within Environmental Services it is problematic to build appraisal into part of a normal day. The service interfaces weekly with all Leeds households and consequently there is constant pressure to deliver; relying on the team skills and considerable knowledge of crews who use around 70 vehicles.
- 2.6 As part of the appraisal process a full-day session was introduced in November incorporating both an employee's appraisal and a development session. This was the first time such an arrangement was used, at a cost to provide relevant cover to maintain scheduled refuse and recycling collections (through the use of overtime and agency cover). This is when staff who operate garden waste collection are available to backfill on regular collection routes. This minimises the need for agency cover costs, and importantly means experienced drivers who know routes can avoid service disruption. The service has set aside £36,000 in 12/13 to use for 1 days training/appraisal.
- 2.7 The approach to half yearly reviews conducted at the kerbside has not been well received and the service needs to revisit its approach to these. Feedback received suggests that without dedicated down time discussing progress with staff was problematic and did not provide a quality engagement opportunity.
- 2.8 The experience of undertaking appraisals for streets staff was less challenging, as the group appraisals in the summer of 2011 were managed by standing down cleansing routes at the time. Also, the focus of the appraisal reviews was to conduct these on a one to one basis via the supervisors visiting staff at their place of work, wherever that happened to be. Of course the service remains accountable to Area Committees for the missed routes, but local conversations continued, to explain the nature of this requirement and its impact. It was stressed that the time spent on appraisals is a good investment to impact well on performance levels across the year.
- 2.9 A number of themes and learning points have arisen and these are detailed next.

Move to 1-1 Appraisals

- 2.10 In June, the Council's performance and learning system (PAL) went live and will be used to manage appraisal performance for all staff with email access. As the system beds in real-time information will help managers meet their obligations to appraise staff. It is expected that high levels of performance will be maintained and extended for staff on the system.
- 2.11 PAL will also be used by Appraisal Co-ordinators to record appraisal results for all other staff who cannot access PAL. For front-line staffs within Parks and Countryside and Street Cleansing, who are non ICT users, the normal appraisal cycle will be expected. These staff will all have a one-to-one appraisal.
- 2.12 For Refuse Collection teams, standard appraisal objectives are being set for the staff and are being communicated. This focuses on the common job requirements for either Refuse Loaders and Drivers. Objectives include the need to work safely, report issues and incidents and customer care.

- 2.13 The opportunity to add to these objectives and individualise them will be incorporated into the development sessions, which are again being planned for November. A team-based approach is still being used presently. This is critical as good performance relies on teams jointly understanding their roles and working together. For example, crews need to support one another to provide back-up should problems occur on routes e.g. a vehicle breakdown. Nevertheless more time will be made available for staff to have a follow up one-to-one appraisal discussion with their supervisor if they wish. Examples, include where staff may want to discuss wider personal development or accessing the Union Learning offerings.
- 2.14 It is also planned to provide individual feed-back regarding a combined half-yearly and final year end feedback (see service timescales) . Given the common job roles and approach to performance supervisors will be able to give feedback based on issues. For example overall performance in terms of bins emptied on routes, customer feedback and safety performance, which in turn will be cross referenced to Council values.

3 Timescale for Waste Management Service Appraisals 2012/13

Time period 2012/13	Appraisal for:	Format
May – July 2012	Supervisors / Managers	Full appraisal – one to one
September 2012	Household Waste Staff	Group appraisal
November 2012	Refuse crews	Team feedback
October – Dec 2012	Supervisors / Managers	6 month appraisal mid year review one to one
February 2013	Refuse crew staff	One to ones
May 2013	Refuse crews	6 month appraisal mid year review crew by crew
May – July 2013	Supervisors / Manager	Full appraisal review – one to one

3. Employee Engagement – Context/Results

3.1 Results are as follows:

	Nov 2011	Quarter 1 2012	Variance
Council Wide	71%	69.1%	- 1.9%
Environments & Neighbourhoods	66%	67.7%	+ 1.7%
Community Safety	72%	66.9%	- 5.1%
Employment & Skills	76%	83.9%	+ 7.0%
Environmental Services	60%	64.4%	+ 4.5%
Regeneration Programme	73%	77.0%	- 4.0%
Statutory Housing	73%	66.7%	- 6.1%
Strategy & Commissioning	64%	63.8%	- 0.2%
No Service Area	N/A	69.1%	N/A
Parks and Countryside	70%	76.05%	+ 6.05%

3.2 Response rates

Service Area	Response %
Environment and Neighbourhoods	43%
Community Safety	31%
Employment & Skills	93%
Environmental Services	30%
Regeneration Programme	55%
Statutory Housing	57%
Strategy & Commissioning	100%
Parks and Countryside	28%

(Note – Parks and Countryside result is currently separate to the overall E&N result and will be incorporated into E&N from July. Environmental Services combines both Refuse and Streets services which came under a single Chief Officer until April 2012. Employment and Skills and Regeneration transferred to City Development with effect from July 2012).

3.2 The Quarter 1 engagement scores showed that Environment and Neighbourhoods are one of only 2 areas that have increased their engagement scores across the Authority (other being Customer Access and Performance), with E&N achieving the highest increase of 2%. Within the Directorate, Environmental Services has increased its engagement levels by 4.5%

3.3 Whilst November 2011 baseline result for the Directorate is concerning, most services perform above Council average positions. Likewise in terms of issues raised and performance gaps, common themes applied across all services e.g.:

- Managing change better
- Ensuring that work benefits from good leadership
- Employees feeling able to challenge the way things are done at work.

3.4 In terms of low results, Strategy and Commissioning's position was interpreted to reflect a recent, demanding restructure on-going at the time of the survey. Around 25% savings were needed and staff were concerned about job security.

3.5 However the biggest concern is the result for Streets and Refuse. In part the work-force context has already been explained e.g in terms of working patterns and supervision. But it is also necessary to stress the industrial relations challenges in the service that no other service in the Council has experienced. The service continues to work hard to deal with some basic HR issues but trust in management has inevitably taken time to improve.

3.6 Given the size/weighting of these services, it was agreed that these would be the Directorate focus for improvement. As a result, the following is now in place:

- A regular (mainly monthly) staff newsletter to all staff
- Recognition of the value of informal, unplanned engagement and undertaking this regularly.
- Managers 'going back to the floor'.

- Twice yearly half day engagement sessions for streets staff.
- All environmental services managers attending a tailored managing change course.
- Managers raising their visibility with staff from the Director downwards.
- Special events with trade union stewards to ensure more involvement in planning changes to explain engagement plans.

3.7 It is believed these actions have created an impact in improving the position.

3.8 The Senior E&N Leadership Team (SLT) have also received the Q1 results and have re-explored issues priorities, especially where performance has reduced. Overall it is felt that results need to be further explored with staff to get further feedback on issues that may be a concern. In particular this includes understanding why the themes relating to the widest performance gaps have changed. This is about “taking the temperature” and is something many other services in LCC now need to do.

Improvement Plans

3.9 Whilst, Q1 Results are encouraging, further improvements are needed. This includes response rates, which are still low regarding postal returns. To achieve improvements the following has been planned.

- SLT have agreed to consider the practical actions that can be taken to address the key issues from Quarter 1 Engagement Survey.
- SLT have identified middle Managers and Supervisors require additional support with engagement activities. Managers need to listen to their staff and encourage two way feedback. SLT have committed to understanding how these middle managers feel about engagement themselves, as they can be a key and pivotal point in the process.
- SLT have also committed to ensuring that they continue to implement the Service Engagement Plans and continue to ensure these are communicated to staff. This is working well, so there is a commitment to continue doing this.
- To supplement response rates, focus groups are taking place with front line staff to ensure regular two way feedback is obtained.
- Parks and Countryside have agreed to share existing practices to understand any lessons learnt particularly in relation to front line workforce.

3.10 Focus groups for Street Cleansing operatives are taking place to provide an opportunity for these front line staff to feedback. SLT will consider if this should be rolled out to other Service areas.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Through JCCs and special events, the trade unions have been fully consulted on both the position on appraisal and engagement. Their feedback has been incorporated into plans. This includes ideas on response rates and how to make appraisal relevant to front-line staff .

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Baseline reports have been analysed to see if any particular staff groups are disproportionately affected. Overall there is limited deviation. The findings however have been shared with the E&N BME group at their annual conference

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The results that have been achieved by the Directorate need improving. There are some special circumstances regarding how services and management has been organised in the past. Changes are being made to address this and move forward. Most recently Q1 results on employee engagement are showing evidence of a turnaround. Existing and new plans will be applied to ensure this continues.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are asked to consider this report.

7 Background documents

- 7.1 N/a