

REPORT TITLE: UPDATE ON EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE SURVEY 2023

11 OCTOBER 2023

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: CLLR NEIL CULTER, CABINET MEMBER FOR  
FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the second Employee Attitude Survey (EAS) which took place in June 2023. Following this committee, the results will be published on the HR intranet site and shared with colleagues via an article in City Voice in early October.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report of the 2023 Employee Attitude Survey be noted including the action points at Section 12.

## IMPLICATIONS:

### 1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The engagement and performance of the Council's workforce is critical to the delivery of all outcomes set out in the Council Plan.

### 2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 None. The survey was undertaken 'in-house' so no additional budget was required.

### 3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

### 4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Employees are critical to the delivery of the council's services and priorities and monitoring and reporting on employee attitudes enables enhanced employee engagement and performance.

### 5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

### 6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 The results have been shared with senior management, Unison and the Staff Forum. Results will be published on the intranet and colleagues will be made aware of the results through an article in City Voice.

### 7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 None.

### 8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 This was an internal survey. An equality impact assessment was completed and indicated that carrying out the survey did not impact on any group with protected characteristics.

### 9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 This raw data from individual employees was subject to the council's data protection controls. The results published are anonymised and therefore can have no impact on an individual's privacy rights under data protection law.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Financial Exposure <i>Low employee engagement leading to high staff turnover and increased recruitment and agency costs.</i>	Ongoing employee attitude and engagement monitoring to enable early identification and remedial action to avoid retention difficulties.	Promotion of the council as an employer of choice.
Exposure to challenge <i>Spend of public money on an internal survey.</i>	Survey conducted in-house to minimise cost.	Positive results from survey can be used in recruitment materials.
Reputation <i>Failure to deliver public services and the Council Plan due to reduced workforce capacity, leading to public criticism and/or adverse local media coverage.</i>	Ongoing employee attitude and engagement monitoring to enable early identification and remedial action where retention difficulties could impact on the Council's ability to deliver public services and the Council Plan.	Identify and implement targeted employment initiatives and actions to increase employee engagement and minimise staff turnover.  Promote the council as an employer of choice.
Achievement of outcome <i>Low employee engagement leading to poor performance and high recruitment &amp; retention difficulties.</i>	Annual employee attitude survey to monitor trends and identify and address potential issues.	Early identification of emerging negative attitudes to inform timely initiatives and actions to avoid these becoming business critical.

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 The 2023 Employee Attitude Survey (EAS) ran for four weeks over the period 12 June – 7 July 2023. The purpose of the survey is to find out how employees feel about various aspects of their working lives at the council and to inform senior managers and elected members how engaged employees are with their work and the Council as a whole.
- 11.2 This is the second survey managed internally by HR following the accepted recommendation to the Audit and Governance Committee that a survey be undertaken every 12 months. Repeating the survey at the same time each year allows the council to monitor trends and identify areas of concern and intervene accordingly. It also provides a means of measuring the impact of

any initiatives implemented because of issues identified in the previous year's survey.

- 11.3 At the time of the survey, the Council employed 450 staff (headcount). The survey achieved a participation rate of 65% which is considered good by industry standards.
- 11.4 The survey was hosted on 'Citizen Space', a digital platform widely used across the public sector for the design, publication, management, and analysis of consultation activity. All staff received a link to the survey via their work email address and were able to complete the survey during working time. To facilitate participation, HR would have provided the survey in an alternative format if requested.
- 11.5 The survey asked employees to consider the same 14 statements as those used in the 2022 survey and indicate if they strongly agree; agree; neither agree or disagree; disagree; or strongly disagree. This allows for direct comparison of results between both surveys. The statements cover four key employment areas: **employee engagement; a good working environment; the working relationships that allow employees to perform effectively; and how involved employees feel in the priorities of their service and the council as a whole.** The results for each of these areas will be considered in more detail in this report.  
Demographic data was extended this year to include gender, age and length of service in addition to service area. HR will analyse the demographic data. This will allow any issues concerning Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to be addressed.  
A summary of the results is attached at Appendix 1.
- 11.6 There was a high participation rate by industry standards at 65% (67%).
- 11.7 For convenience, this report will combine the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to give the percentage of positive comments; and, equivalent 2022 data is shown in red.
- 11.8 Appendix 2 shows a comparison of 2022/2023 results showing changes of more than 3%.

### ***Employee engagement***

- 11.9 The statements about enjoying working for the council; pride in the council; and recommending the council as a good place to work are based on a concept called "employee engagement". Gallup defines employee engagement as the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace.
- 11.10 Research shows that organisations with high employee engagement also enjoy high levels of performance and productivity and lower levels of sickness and grievances. Therefore, it is good news that the council scored highly on these statements, with increases on 2022 results in all cases: 84% (79%) positive response for "*I enjoy working at the council*"; 72% (61%) positive response for "*I would recommend the council as a great place to work to my*

*family and friends*"; and, 73% (71%) positive response for *"I am proud to work for the council"*.

- 11.11 Most employee surveys will include a statement about intentions to remain as this is a strong indicator of whether employees are happy with their current employer. This is particularly salient given the widely reported recruitment and retention challenges in the public sector.

The good news for the council is the increase at 71% (69%) on employees giving a positive response to *"I will still be working at the council in 12 months' time"* compared to this same time last year. Encouragingly the number of employees who do not see themselves working for the council in 12 months' time has decreased from 10% to 6%. This is slightly at variance with the increased annual turnover (16.7%) reported in the A&G102 Workforce Report 2022/23 and it is assumed this is an early indication of the positive impact on staff engagement and retention of the grading structure changes implemented in April 2023. This data strongly suggests that employee turnover will drop in 2023/24 and a figure closer to 12% would be welcome.

### **Working Environment**

- 11.12 Turning to a good working environment, the policies that an employee might expect to see in a modern high performing organisation are training and development; equality and diversity; health and safety; and provision of good quality equipment.
- 11.13 A positive response rate of 71% (71%) was recorded for *"I am able to get the training and development I need at work"*. It is still too early to expect scores to reflect the positive impact of a renewed post-pandemic corporate focus on learning and development. Encouragingly however, staff disagreeing with this statement has dropped to 8.5% from 12% in 2022 and most likely reflects the interim work HR has been doing with managers to foster training and development at a local level.
- 11.14 *"The council is committed to ensuring equality at work for all its employees"* received a 75% (69%) positive response. This is important as a workplace committed to equality, diversity and inclusion is more successful and less likely to have issues such as bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- 11.15 Ongoing wellbeing initiatives managed by HR, the new corporate health and safety group and the work of the Health and Safety Manager has clearly had a positive impact with 74% (67%) responding positively to *"the council takes the health and wellbeing of its employees seriously"*.
- 11.16 The council continues to facilitate hybrid working through the provision of the right equipment, whether that be working in the office or remotely, and scores for *"I have the equipment I need to be successful in my work"* have remained high at 75% (73%) positive.

### **Working relationships**

- 11.17 Turning next to the working relationships that allow employees to perform effectively, the HR literature shows that people are motivated to do their very best work if they have good working relationships with their colleagues and especially their line manager.
- 11.18 *“My manager cares about me as a person”* might possibly be the most important question in the whole survey. The continued positive response of 85% (86%) indicates managers are continuing to embrace and successfully navigate the hybrid working challenges and highlights the positive culture at the council where the well-being of employees is regularly discussed by managers.
- 11.19 The parallel statement *“my line manager gives me regular feedback on my performance at work”* received a 76% (77%) positive response from employees. It is too soon for this score to reflect the expected positive impact of the revised appraisal form and accompanying training for managers from April this year. The result should be slightly higher next year.
- 11.20 The other dimension of satisfaction at work is the working relationships employees enjoy with their colleagues. The positive response for *“The colleagues in my team are supportive and friendly”* is again very high this year at 95% (94%), which is a very pleasing result given that hybrid working means fewer opportunities for employees to spend time together at work.

### **Council and service priorities**

- 11.21 Turning finally to how involved employees feel in the priorities of their service and the council as a whole: employees need to understand what the organisation is trying to achieve; how they fit into that journey; and notice the communications that keep them informed of progress.
- 11.22 81% (72%) of employees responded positively to *“I understand the top priorities of Winchester City Council”* and 90% (92%) responded positively to *“I understand the key objectives of my service”*. It is not unusual for employees to know and care more about their immediate objectives than the higher priorities of the overall organisation.
- 11.23 The final statement to consider is *“I would say that changes at work are communicated to employees quickly and clearly”*. Compared to the rest of the survey this statement received a positive response of 55% (45%) and a slightly lower negative response compared to last year at 20% (24%) (the remainder were ‘neither agree nor disagree’). This shows that there has been some positive impact of efforts following last year’s survey to improve communications. This is an area for continued discussion with relevant key stakeholders to ensure that the 10% improvement since last year continues to improve next year.

11.24 The survey also included a free text section to provide employees with the opportunity to add any comments they wished to make, and a summary of the comments received is attached at Appendix 3. Individual comments are not provided because of the risk of identification of the employees who submitted comments.

## 12 Action Points

12.1 Overall, the survey indicates positive feedback for the Council as an employer. The results are better than last year which is a reason to celebrate the results with employees.

12.2 The following action points will be taken as a result of the survey:

- Executive Leaders Board (ELB) and Corporate Heads of Service (CHOS) will continue to monitor their teams to ensure that regular appraisals, six-month review meetings, one to one meetings and team meetings are taking place.
- HR will analyse the demographic data to see if any issues arise concerning equalities and report back to ELB.
- The IT service will review the comments sent in by eight employees to see if any improvements in their service can be made as a result.
- Efforts to continue the improvement in the rating for Communications to employees will continue including a standing item on the regular Unison/HR meeting agenda.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

### Previous Committee Reports:-

AG079 Workforce Report 2021/22, 29 June 2022

AG085 Update on Employee Attitude Survey and Related Matters, 10 November 2022

AG102 Workforce Report 2022/23

### Other Background Documents:-

None

## APPENDICES:

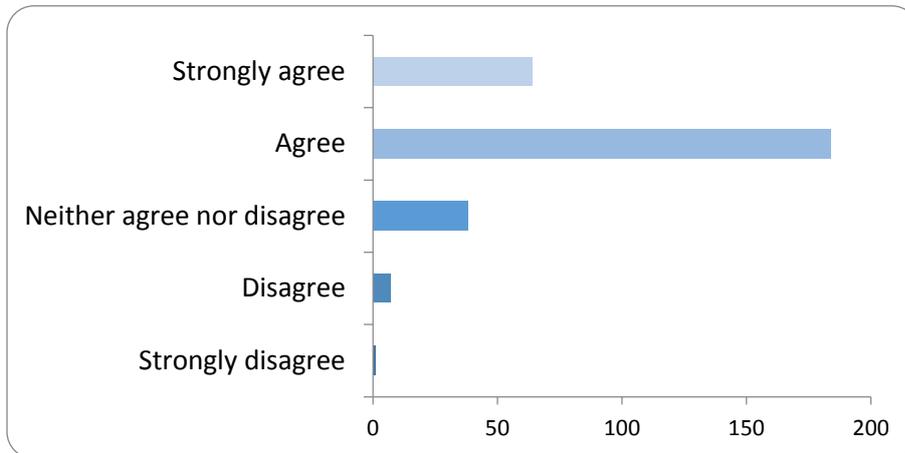
Appendix 1 – Employee Attitude Survey 2023 – summary of results.

Appendix 2 – Comparison of 2022/2023 results showing changes of more than 3%.

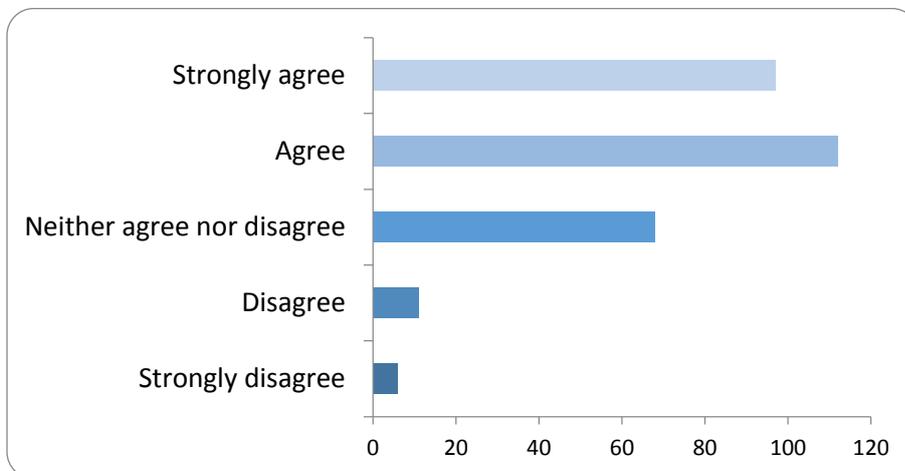
Appendix 3 - Summary of employee comments added to survey response.

## Employee Attitude Survey June 2023 – summary of results

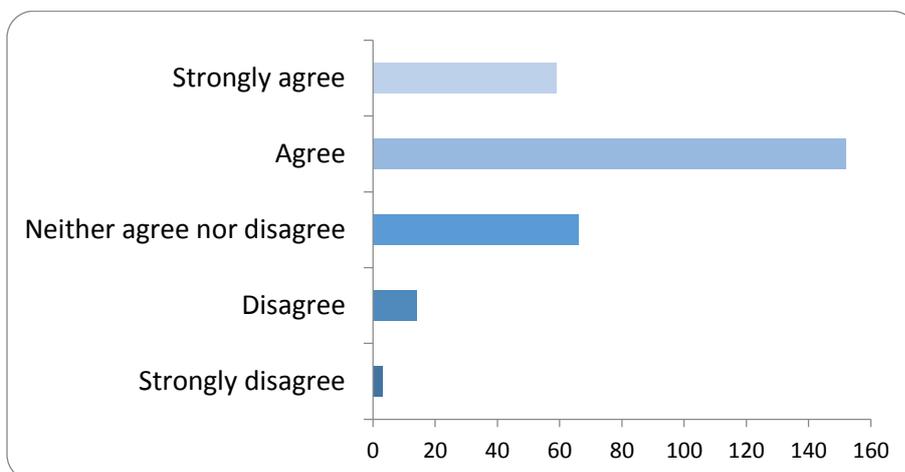
1. I enjoy my work at the Council:



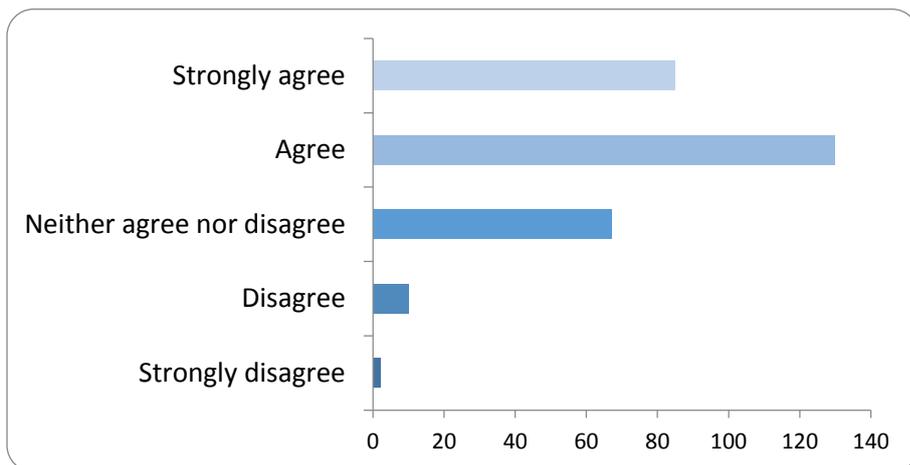
2. I will still be working at the Council in 12 months time:



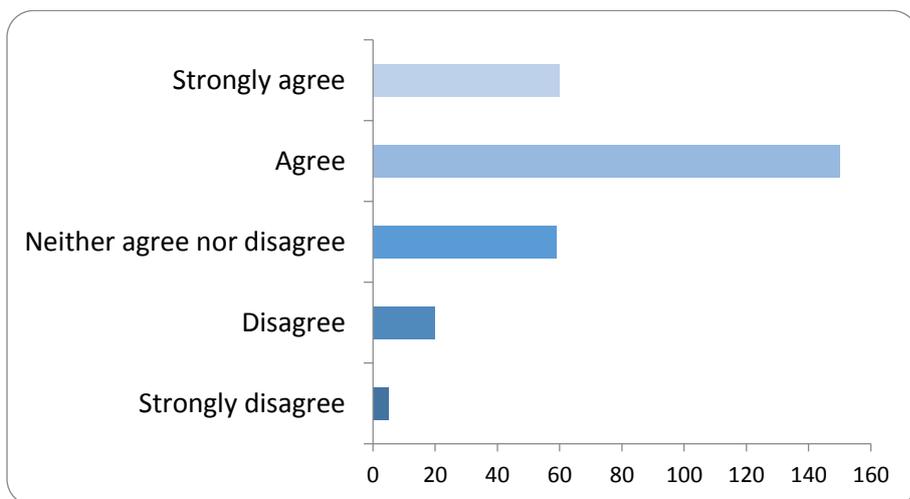
3. I would recommend the Council as a great place to work to my family and friends:



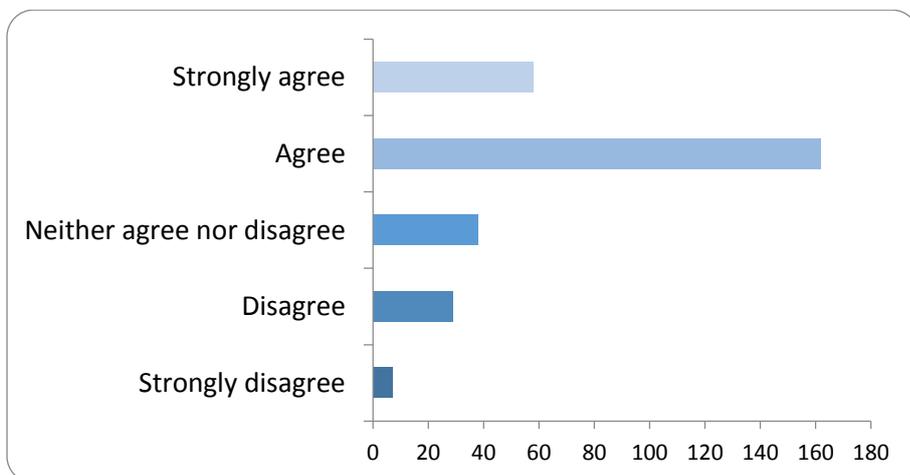
4. I am proud to work for the council:



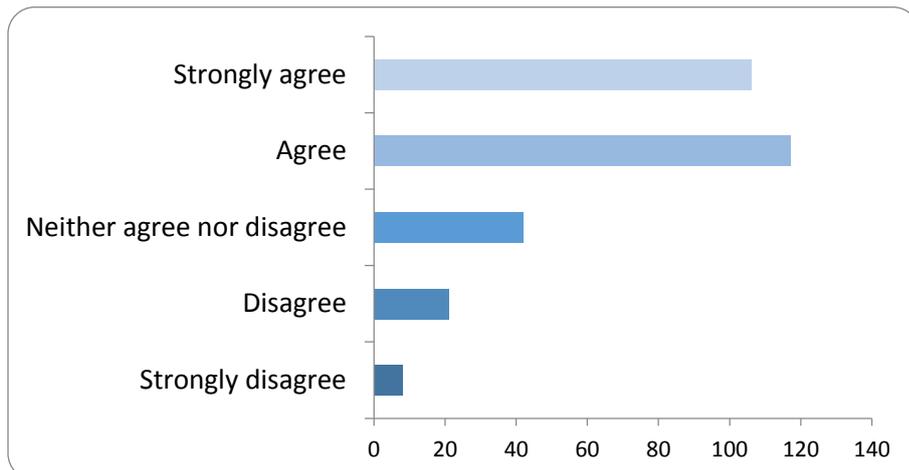
5. I am able to get the training and development I need to be successful at work:



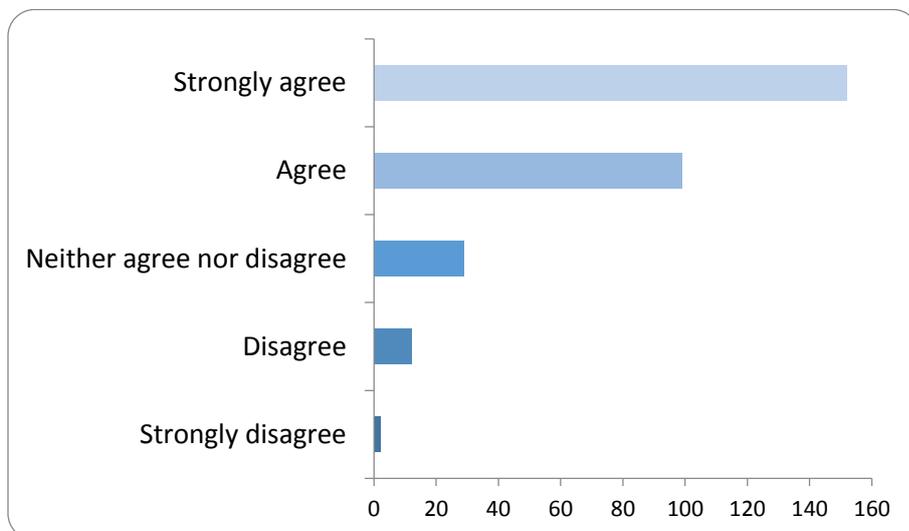
6. I have the equipment I need to be successful at work:



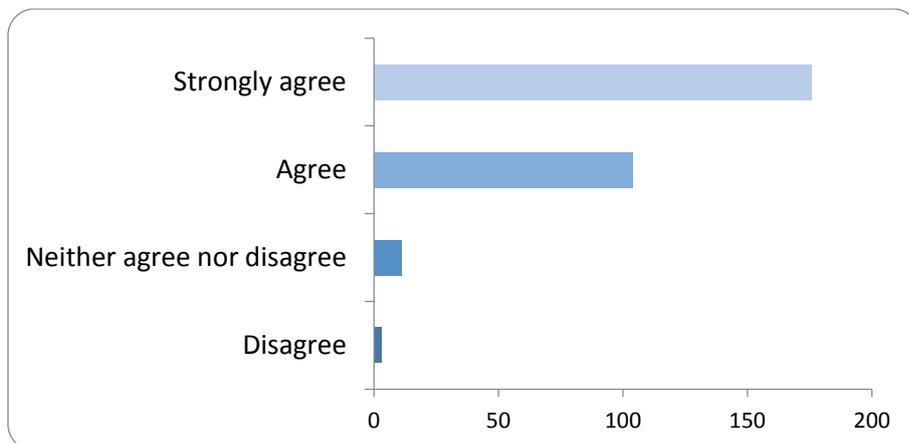
7. My line manager gives me regular feedback on my performance at work:



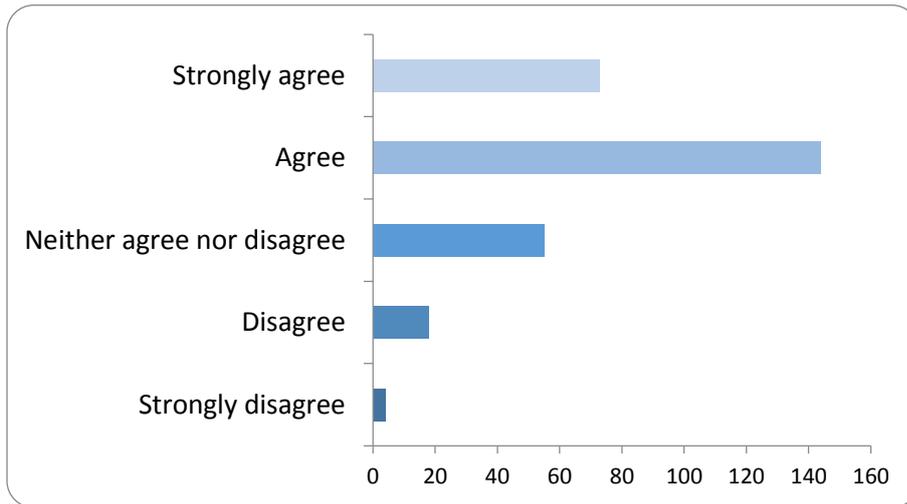
8. My line manager cares about me as a person:



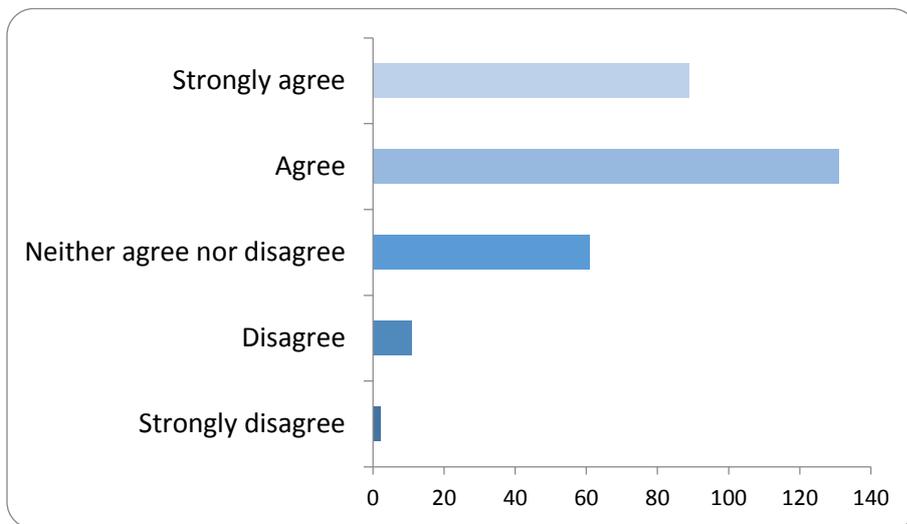
9. The colleagues in my team are supportive and friendly:



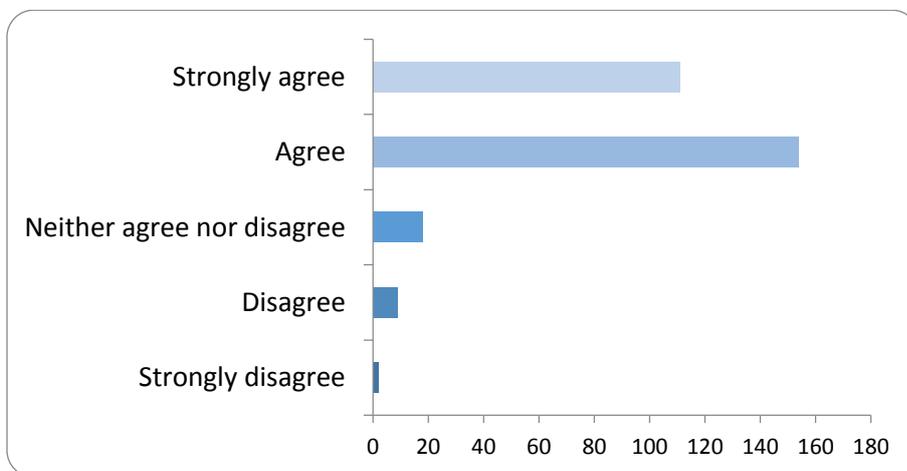
10. The Council takes the health and well-being of its employees seriously:



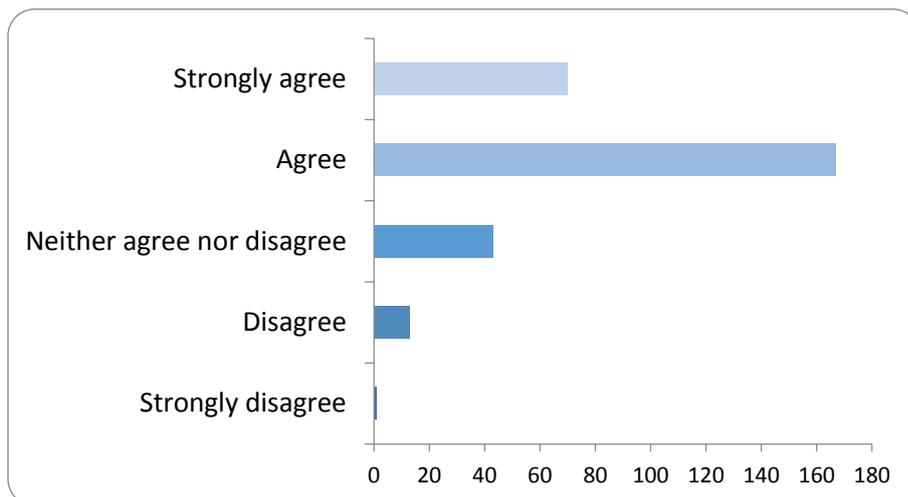
11. The Council is committed to ensuring equality at work for all its employees:



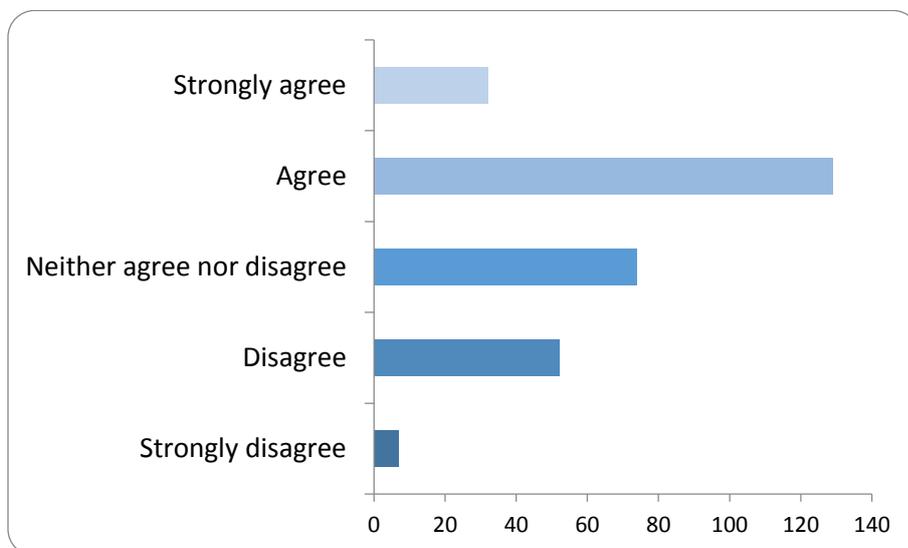
12. I understand the key objectives of my service:



13. I understand the top priorities for Winchester City Council:



14. I would say that changes at work are communicated to employees quickly and clearly:



## Comparison of 2022/2023 results showing changes of more than 3%

## Strongly agree/agree

Survey question	2022 (287 responses)	2023 (294 responses)	Direction of travel only where more than 3% difference (based on combined total)
	Combined strongly agree and agree total %	Combined strongly agree and agree total %	
1. I enjoy my work at the Council.	78.74	84.36	↑
2. I will still be working at the council in 12 months' time	68.99	71.09	
3. I would recommend the council as a great place to work to my family and friends.	60.98	71.77	↑
4. I am proud to work for the council.	71.08	73.13	
5. I am able to get the training and development I need to be successful at work.	71.42	71.43	
6. I have the equipment I need to be successful at my work.	72.82	74.83	
7. My line manager gives me regular feedback on my performance at work.	76.66	75.85	
8. My line manager cares about me as a person.	86.41	85.37	
9. The colleagues in my team are supportive and friendly.	93.73	95.23	
10. The council takes the health and wellbeing of its employees seriously.	67.60	73.81	↑
11. The council is committed to ensuring equality at work for all its employees.	69.34	74.83	↑
12. I understand the key objectives of my service.	91.64	90.14	
13. I understand the top priorities for Winchester City	72.13	80.61	↑

Survey question	2022 (287 responses)	2023 (294 responses)	Direction of travel only where more than 3% difference (based on combined total)
	Combined strongly agree and agree total %	Combined strongly agree and agree total %	
Council.			
14. I would say that changes at work are communicated to employees quickly and clearly.	44.95	54.76	↑

### Strongly disagree/disagree

Survey question	2022 (287 responses)	2023 (294 responses)	Direction of travel only where more than 3% difference (based on combined total)
	Combined strongly disagree/disagree Total %	Combined strongly disagree/disagree total %	
1. I enjoy my work at the Council.	4.18	2.72	
2. I will still be working at the council in 12 months' time	6.62	5.78	
3. I would recommend the council as a great place to work to my family and friends.	9.76	5.78	↓
4. I am proud to work for the council.	4.88	4.08	
5. I am able to get the training and development I need to be successful at work.	12.20	8.50	↓
6. I have the equipment I need to be successful at my work.	11.50	12.24	
7. My line manager gives me regular feedback on my performance at work.	10.45	9.86	
8. My line manager cares about me as a person.	11.15	4.76	↓
9. The colleagues in my team are supportive and friendly.	0.70	1.02	
10. The council takes the health and wellbeing of its employees seriously.	3.49	7.48	↑
11. The council is committed to ensuring equality at work for all its employees.	7.67	4.42	↓

Survey question	2022 (287 responses)	2023 (294 responses)	Direction of travel only where more than 3% difference (based on combined total)
	Combined strongly disagree/disagree Total %	Combined strongly disagree/disagree total %	
12. I understand the key objectives of my service.	2.79	3.74	
13. I understand the top priorities for Winchester City Council.	5.58	4.76	
14. I would say that changes at work are communicated to employees quickly and clearly.	24.05	20.07	↓

## Summary of employee comments added to survey response

83 employees took the time to add a written comment.

All the written comments have been examined in detail by HR.

*The text of the comments sometimes allow the respondent to be identified and for this reason they are not published in full in this report.*

- **Hybrid Working:** favourable comments = 3; unfavourable comments = 2.
- **Line Manager:** favourable comments = 2; unfavourable comments = 13.
- **IT Systems/support:** unfavourable comments = 8.
- **Facilities/working conditions:** unfavourable comments = 8.
- **Working for WCC:** favourable comments = 14; unfavourable comments = 4.
- **Communications:** unfavourable comments = 10.
- **Career Opportunities/Training:** unfavourable comments = 4.
- **Strategic Management/Council policy:** unfavourable comments = 12.

### Commentary

**Hybrid working** - some employees like hybrid working, others would like to work at home for more than 50% of their contractual hours.

**Line managers** - unfavourable comments about line managers are typically a failure by the manager to do tasks that are meant to take place regularly (appraisal, one to one, feedback).

**IT/Systems** - comments about the speed and effectiveness of the systems the Council has purchased rather than the quality of the service provided by the IT team.

**Working conditions** - comments on working conditions ranged from the desire for individual lockers to the desire for air conditioning.

**Working for WCC** - most comments on working for WCC were about 'what a great place to work'.

**Communications** - comments were often about messages passed 'down the line' not getting to the front-line employees in a timely manner. City Voice was not criticised.

**Career opportunities** - some employees felt that career opportunities in the Council are limited (which is true in some areas as WCC is a small local authority).

**Strategic management and council policy** - comments were mixed. Some comments were about too much emphasis on a policy and others were about not enough emphasis on a policy.