Flintshire County Council

Workforce Survey June 2023

The purpose of the consultation:

Split into five sections, employee feedback was invited on the five topic areas below:

- Engagement
- Performance
- · Mental health and well-being
- Communication
- Hybrid working
- Visions and Values

The feedback provided will be used to identify areas where things are working well, along with areas for improvement and will feed into a range of corporate strategies and frameworks.

The period of consultation

The consultation was open between 8th and 21st June 2023.

It reopened 5th to 27th October specifically to boost the response rate of remote employees in Housing and Communities, Social Services and Streetscene.

Who took part

The consultation was open to all employees, with the exception of those based in schools.

Accessible to office based and remote employees the survey was conducted online with the option of paper copies upon request.

When asked to describe their position in the organisation the following responses were received:

	Response Percent	Response Total
Chief Officer	0.4%	3
Senior Manager	6.4%	48
Team Leader	15.4%	115
Supervisor	7.4%	55
Team Member	70.4%	525
skipped question		37

Numbers taking part

A total of 783 employees took part.

Responses by portfolio

Overall responses by Portfolio	Response Percent	Response Total
Corporate Services	16.7%	131
Education and Youth	7.5%	59
Governance	13.4%	105
Housing and Communities	19.0%	149
Planning, Environment and Economy	12.1%	95
Social Services	24.3%	190
Streetscene and Transportation	6.9%	54

Responses by service

Portfolio: Chief Executives	Response Percent	Response Total
Service:		
Capital Programme and Assets	12.5%	16
Chief Executives	5.5%	7
Clwyd Pension Fund	19.5%	25
Corporate Finance	34.4%	44
Executive Support	0.8%	1
Human Resources and Organisational Development	25%	32
Regional Emergency Planning Service	2.3%	3

Portfolio: Education and Youth Service:	Response Percent	Response Total
Archives Service	10.3%	6
Business and Support Services	8.6%	5
Inclusion and Progression	37.9%	22
Integrated Youth Provision	13.8%	8
School Improvement	8.6%	5
School Place Planning and Provision	8.6%	5
Youth Justice Service and Flintshire Sorted	12.1%	7

Portfolio: Governance Service:	Response Percent	Response Total
Customer Contact	21.6%	22
Democratic Services	7.8%	8
Internal Audit, Performance and Risk Management	14.7%	15
IT Business Services	24.5%	25
IT Infrastructure Services	9.8%	10
Legal Services	5.9%	6
Revenues	15.7%	16

Portfolio: Housing and Communities	Response Percent	Response Total
Service:		
Business Performance Management	4.2%	6
Housing & Prevention Services	12.5%	18
Housing and Asset Management	54.9%	79
Housing Management, Benefit Service including Disabled Facilities Grants	23.6%	34
Housing Programmes	4.9%	7

Portfolio: Planning, Environment and Economy	Response Percent	Response Total
Service:		
Business Support and Performance	5.6%	5
Climate Change and Carbon Reduction	4.5%	4
Community and Business Protection	34.8%	31
Countryside Access and Natural Environment	12.4%	11
Enterprise and Regeneration	18.0%	16
Planning Development Management	16.9%	15
Planning Strategy	1.1%	1
Regional Minerals and Waste Planning	6.7%	6

Portfolio: Social Services Service:	Response Percent	Response Total
Children's Services	35.3%	66
Integrated Services and Lead Adults	48.1%	90
Safeguarding and Commissioning	16.6%	31

Portfolio: Streetscene and Transportation Service:	Response Percent	Response Total
Highway Network	24.5%	12
Regulatory Services	26.5%	13
Streetscene Service Manager	14.3%	7
Transportation	34.7%	17

Section 1 - Engagement

Employees were asked to identify to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- I feel valued by the Council for the work I do
- I feel valued by my *Service* for the work I do

Of those who responded to this question 50% agreed/strongly agreed that they felt valued by the Council and 67% felt valued by their service.

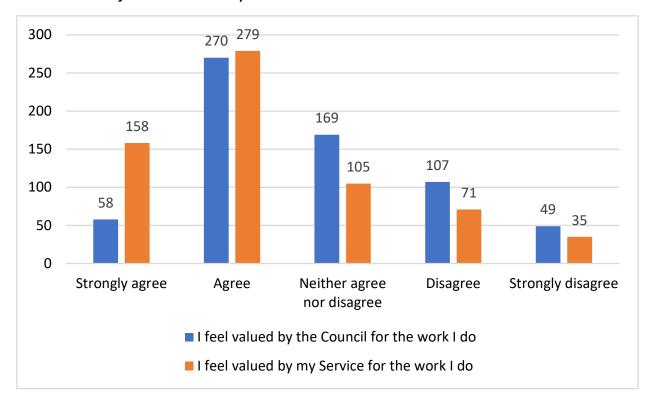


Chart 1 – Sense of Value – overall responses Council and Service level

24% disagreed/strongly disagreed that they felt valued at Council level and 16% at Service level.

26% neither agreed nor disagreed that they felt valued by the Council and 16% by their service.

Employees were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements:

- The work I do positively contributes to the goals of the Council
- The work I do positively contributes to the goals of the Service

Of those employees who responded to this question there was overwhelming agreement that the work they do positively contributes to the goals of the Council (92%) and their service (96%)

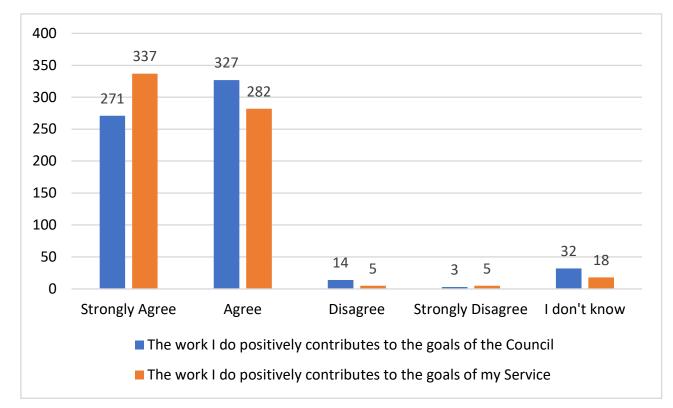


Chart 2 - Positive Contribution - overall responses - Council and Service level

A significantly smaller percentage of employees responding disagreed with these statements – 3% at Council level and 2% at Service level.

However, 5% of employees responding to this question didn't know whether their work contributed positively to the goals of the Council and 3% were unaware at Service level.

In the final statements in this section, of those employees who responded:

- 90% feel a sense of achievement for the work they do,
- 86% feel they are treated with dignity and respect,
- 76% feel empowered to be the best they can be, and
- 78% feel empowered to positively contribute to service improvements.

Employees were invited to leave further comment and a summary of their feedback is listed below:

Employees feel supported and valued at team level, both by colleagues and managers. Feeling valued however is not always experienced outside the immediate team or by the public.

Transparent and consistent application of processes across all services and portfolios is important to avoid employees feeling devalued, disrespected and demoralised.

There would appear to be inconsistencies in access to professional development with some employees being empowered and encouraged to undertake continuous professional development, whilst others experiencing little to no development opportunities.

With ongoing resource challenges (financial and people), employees are feeling overwhelmed, whilst there are expectations to deliver the same or better standards of service. Public perception of poor service delivery is having a detrimental effect on well-being and morale, compounded by a lack of support/respect from councillors.

Reward and recognition for the work people do was considered to be lacking and there was also a feeling that contracted workers were more favourably treated in terms of job satisfaction than Council employees.

There was a mixed response to employee engagement and feelings of value and empowerment. Some responses are very positive about the support received by managers and employees ability to be heard and make a difference. Others however report no visible communication and engagement between chief/senior managers and teams, leading to confusion around key decisions.

More consistent, ongoing communications around key challenges, such as the budget, would be appreciated.

Consistency in application of hybrid working opportunities would be welcomed in order to ensure those who remain the office have equal access to work life balance opportunities.

Often the successful completion of tasks/projects is reliant upon contributions by other colleagues/services, ongoing resource restrictions are impacting the ability to bring tasks/projects to completion in the time, and to the quality, needed.

Pride in the Council and the services it delivers compared with neighbouring authorities.

It was considered that pay and progression opportunities are contributing factors in the loss of experienced professionals which also impacts on the Council's ability to attract quality candidates to vacant posts.

Section 2: Priorities

Employees were presented with a number of statements against which they were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement. Of those who agreed/strongly agreed:

- 88% are clear about the priorities of their Service,
- 87% understand how their service priorities contribute to the priorities of the Council,
- 77% feel their Service has the right policies in place to support the delivery of its priorities,
- 77% feel their Service consistently applies appropriate policies and strategies to deliver on its priorities.

Chart 3 – I am clear about the priorities of my service

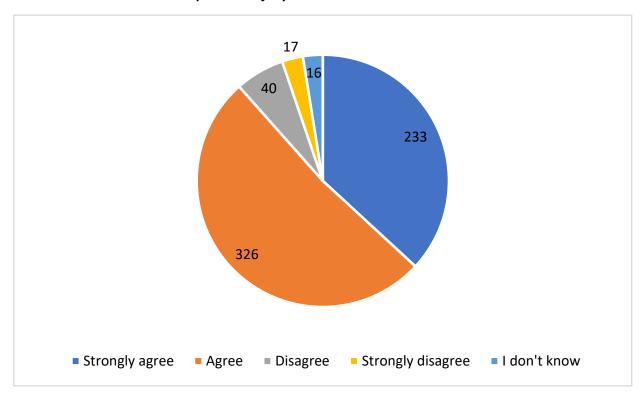


Chart 4 – I understand how my service priorities contribute to the priorities of the Council

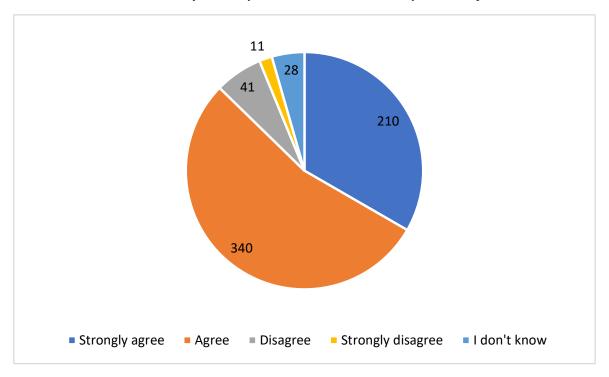


Chart 5 – My service has the right policies and strategies in place to support the delivery of its priorities.

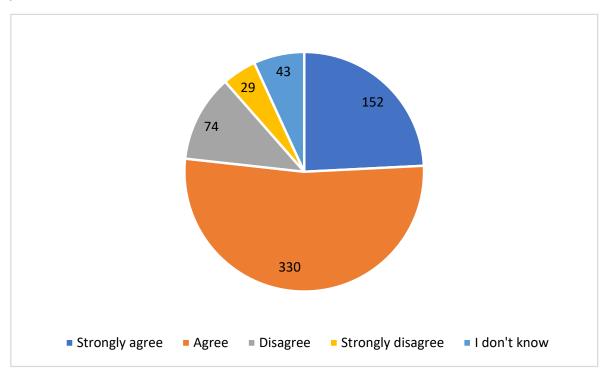
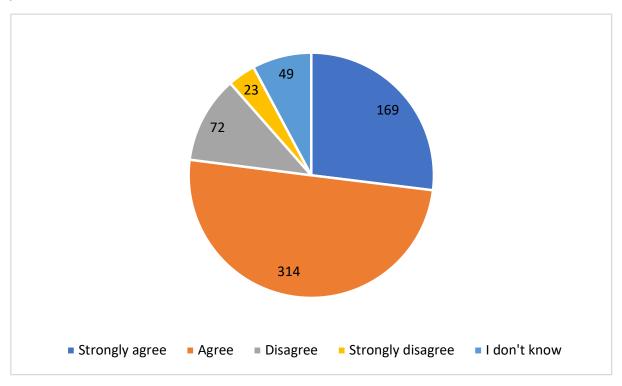


Chart 6 – My service consistently applies the appropriate policies and strategies to deliver its priorities



Invited to leave more information in support of the answers provided in this section, a summary of comments received can be found below:

More work is needed communicating the priorities of the Council to the workforce, along with improving their understanding of how service priorities align.

Involving employees in the setting of priorities could be improved.

Greater/improved alignment of Council/Service priority timescales would be beneficial.

Improved policies and procedures are needed to provide better/up to date guidance around what needs to be done.

Aligning professional/legal obligations to Council/Service priorities is sometimes problematic.

Aligning systems to better integrate with the delivery of service would be beneficial, including development of web-based end to end services.

Improved visibility and communication around existing, updated and new policy, strategies and procedures would be welcomed.

The time taken for policies and strategies to be implemented by services is lengthy.

Changes to policy, strategy, processes, without detailed communication, causes confusion and adds pressure.

Lack of resources (financial and people) to deliver on set priorities is of concern and is impacting upon consistent delivery of core tasks.

Multiple vacancies with an expectation for existing employees to cover duties and maintain existing standards of service is of real concern.

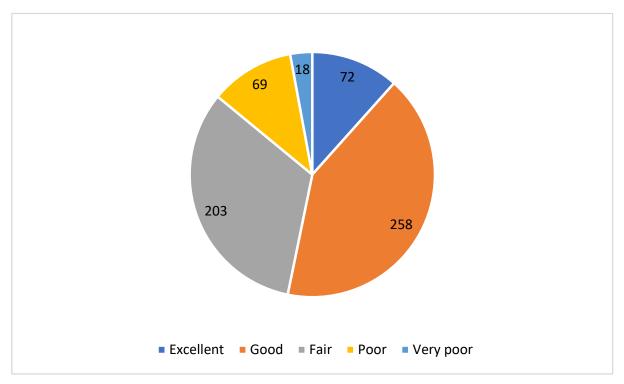
Managing the expectations of the public and elected members could be better achieved through updating existing policies and procedures, including easy read versions of key points.

Other suggested areas for improvement covered lone worker support, modernisation of strategies towards minority groups, more training around diversity and a review of policies to provide equity between office and front line employees.

Section 3: Mental Health and Well-being

When asked how they would rate their current state of mental health and well-being, 53% reported excellent and good, 33% fair and 14% poor or very poor.

Chart 7 - Current state of mental health and well-being



When asked how supported they feel, of those responding, 71% feel supported/fully supported by Council, 85% by their manager and 92% by their team.

29% feel do not feel supported by the Council, 15% by their manager and 8% by their team.

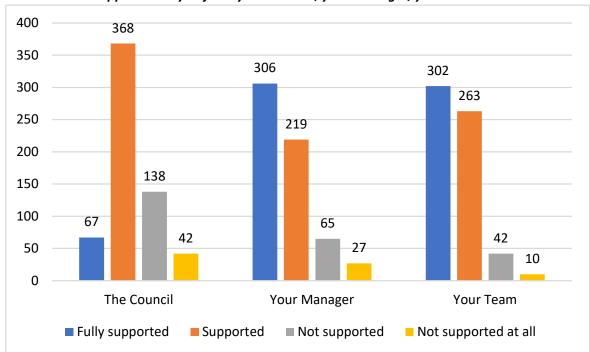


Chart 8 – How supported do you feel by the Council, your manager, your team?

Employees were asked a how often they accessed the Care First, Mental Health and Wellbeing or Occupational health pages on Infonet.

The majority who responded (84%) have never visited any of the pages listed.

Of those that do access the pages, 14% reported doing so once a month, with frequency reducing to 1% at once a week. Those who use the pages were then asked how helpful they find them. However the data collected to this question must be treated with caution as more people responded to how helpful the pages are than reported using the pages.

Chart 9 – How often do you access the Care First, Mental Health and Wellbeing, or Occupational Health pages on Infonet?

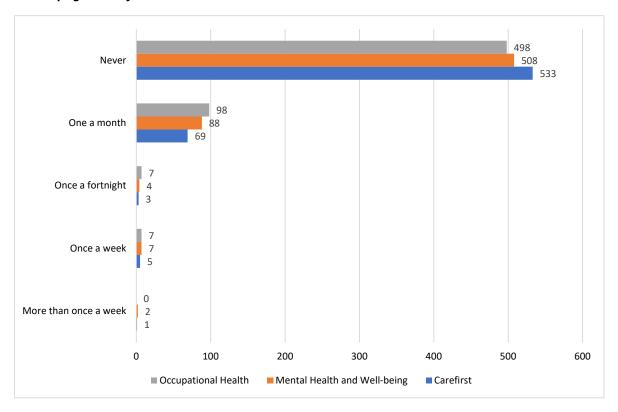
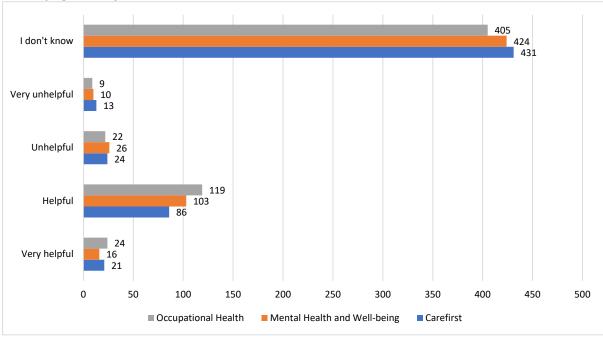


Chart 10 – How helpful do you find the Care First, Mental Health and Wellbeing or Occupational Health pages on Infonet?



Employees who never use the well-being pages on Infonet were asked to tell us why and a summary of comments can be found below.

Unaware of the services on offer.

No need to access the services on offer.

Too busy to access the services on offer.

More training needed for managers to understand certain conditions.

The services provided are impersonal.

Found the services to be unhelpful in the past.

Participate in out of work well-being activities/therapies

A crisis line is needed supported by mental health resources including Counselling.

Access to Infonet and internal IT systems can be a barrier.

Employees are often prevented from accessing Care First being told they contravene the Council's internet usage or Information security policies.

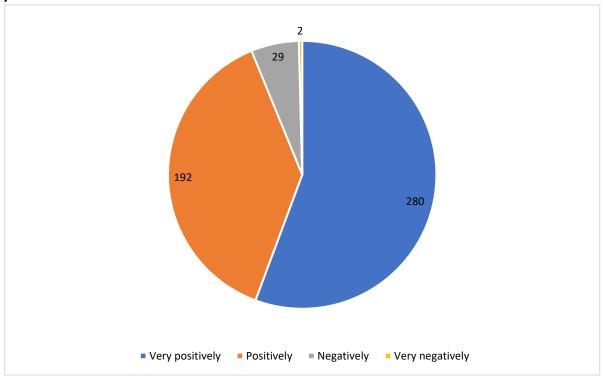
The information provided for mental health services is often too generic and lacks specific solutions or suggestions.

Unaware that the services offered cover personal as well as work circumstances.

Hybrid working and its impact on mental health

When asked if their job allowed for hybrid (flexible) working, 83% of those responding to the question responded yes with 94% finding it had either positively or very positively impacted their mental health.

Chart 11 – To what extent has hybrid (flexible) working impacted either positively or negatively on your mental health?



When comparing the responses from those who answered 'yes' their job does allow for hybrid working, against the question asked earlier in the survey 'How would you rate your mental well-being right now?' – 89% of those whose job allows hybrid working report their health as being fair to excellent, compared to 72% whose job does not allow hybrid working.

Employees were given the opportunity to supply more information about mental health and well-being and a summary of comments can be found below.

Generally it is felt that hybrid working has positively impacted health and well-being, whilst improving the organisation of work priorities and productivity.

Having the flexibility to take time away during the working day to decompress has a positive impact on mental health.

Reduced commute times to work, and journeys to and from meetings, is helping to provide more quality personal time, reducing stress and improving mental well-being, whilst also saving money, improving productivity and reducing carbon footprints.

Flexible working options help support employees with caring responsibilities.

The ability to work flexibly from home and in the office supports employees in the management of medical conditions both minor infections and in managing long term health conditions.

Management and team support is integral to the success of hybrid working, particularly when things are becoming pressured, or are going wrong, which can feel worse if alone. More regular checks on staff by supervisors/managers would be beneficial.

Communications and support for employees returning to the office following extended time away could be improved.

The loss of interaction achieved when in the office with other colleagues has the potential lead to a loss in knowledge and experience.

Equity in the application of policy decisions needs to be considered from both management and employee perspective – with the mental well-being of both being given equal status.

Health and Well-being support services on Infonet need to be more accessible to all employees across the Council including more communications about what's on offer and how to access it.

Section 4: Communication

Employees were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- I am kept updated on Council news
- I receive regular information on things that impact the work I do
- My manager/supervisor keeps me informed
- My manager/supervisor keeps in regular contact with me

Of those responding 84% agreed/strongly agreed that they are kept updated on Council news, 76% received regular information on things that impact their work, 87% are kept informed by their manager/supervisor and 89% reported that their manager/supervisor keeps in regular contact.

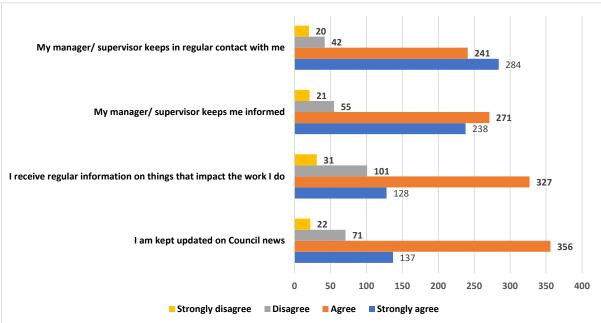


Chart 12: the extent to which employees agreed with the statements below

15% of employees responding did not feel they receive regular information on things that impact the work they do.

Frequency of manager/supervisor contact

Of those employees who responded to this question 41% are in touch with their manager/supervisor on a daily basis, 28% on a weekly basis and 22% as and when required.

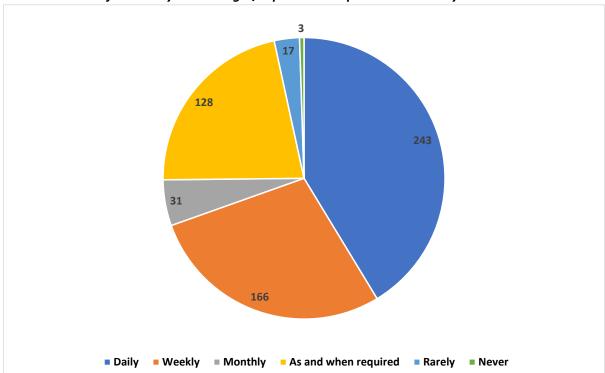


Chart 13 – How often does your manager/supervisor keep in contact with you?

How contact is made

Employees were asked to identify the channels by which managers/supervisors keep in touch.

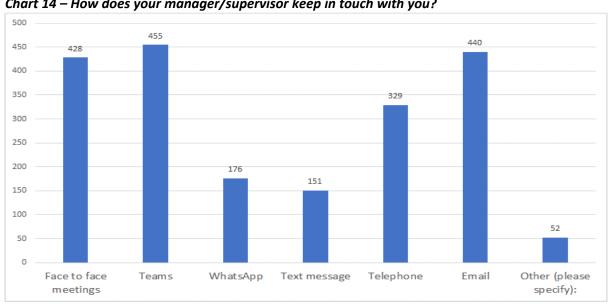


Chart 14 – How does your manager/supervisor keep in touch with you?

Skype was also identified as another channel.

Of those who responded 82% were either satisfied/very satisfied with the frequency of communication from their line manager/supervisor 63% from their service manager. 55% were satisfied/very satisfied with the frequency of Council communications and 41% from their Chief Officer.

However, of those that had no opinion, 45% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the frequency of communication from their Chief Officer, 36% from the Council, 25% from their service manager and 13% from their line manager/supervisor.

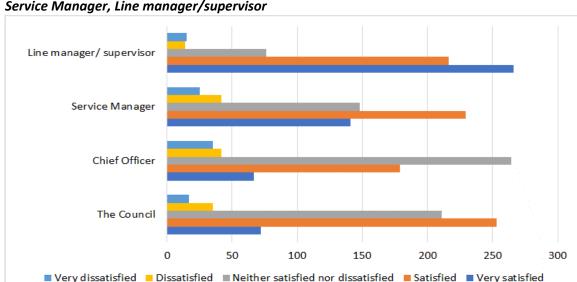


Chart 15 - Satisfaction with the frequency of communication from the Council, Chief Officer, Service Manager, Line manager/supervisor

There is consistency in responses when comparing this with the quality of communications received. Of those who responded 81% were satisfied/very satisfied with the quality of information received from their line manager, 63% from their service manager, 54% from the Council and 46% from their Chief Officer.

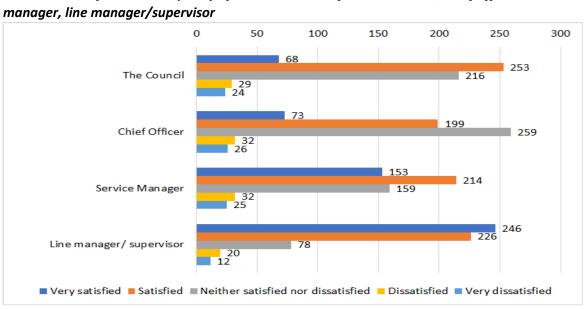
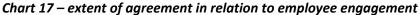


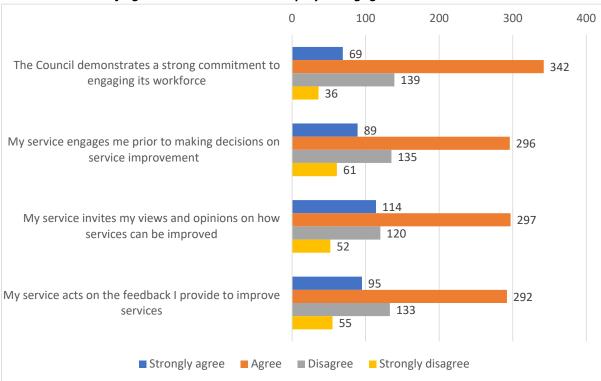
Chart 16 – Satisfaction with quality of communications from the Council, chief officer, service

Employee engagement

Employees were asked to indicate their level of agreement against a number of statements and of those responding who either agreed or strongly agreed:

- 70% indicate the Council demonstrates a strong commitment to engaging its workforce.
- 66% indicate their service engaging them prior to making decisions on service improvements
- 70% indicate their service invites their views and opinions on how services can be improved
- 67% indicate their service acts on the feedback they provide to improve services





Employees were given the opportunity to supply more information about communication and a summary of comments can be found below.

Timely communications can sometimes be lacking, particularly on things that directly impact people's jobs.

Decisions are taken by managers/officers higher up in the organisation without consultation/ engagement with team members.

Cross organisational communications need to be improved – often services are reliant on information from other services to be able to complete tasks / develop solutions - which is often late coming through or not at all.

Improving the quality and timeliness of cross organisational communications would also help to support the development of forward work programmes. With reduced resources in all services this would help to prioritise workloads and reduce the need for urgent unscheduled work.

There is little opportunity for the council to engage the workforce on suggested improvements as services are becoming more and more financially restrained.

Improving transparency of decisions taken and the rationale behind.

Improved communications at service/team level would be welcomed particularly around leavers, new starters and issues that can impact directly on daily work priorities.

Team meetings should facilitate two-way conversation and suggestions/ideas should be acted upon with feedback being provided on the outcomes.

Improved use of social media with the public would help to improve public perception of services.

Good dissemination of Council wide information.

More direct communications from Chief Officers/Senior Managers would be welcomed, including areas of positive news.

The introduction of an employee staff suggestion scheme.

Section 5: Hybrid Working

Beginning by asking if roles allowed for hybrid working, this question returned a slightly lower response rate than when the question was asked earlier in the survey. However, of those responding 83% of roles allowed for hybrid working.

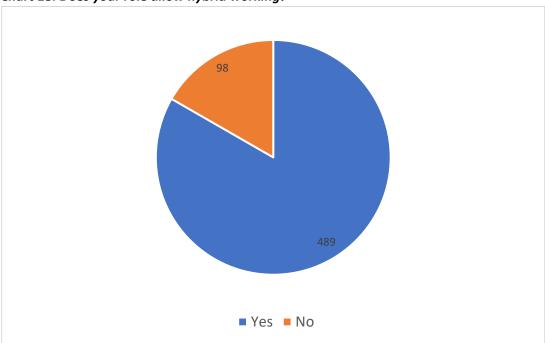


Chart 18: Does your role allow hybrid working?

95% of employees responding advised that they had the equipment they need to work effectively in a hybrid (flexible) way.

Of the 5% who felt they didn't have the equipment they needed, employees who responded referred to lack of appropriate furniture, printers, scanners and mobile phones. It was also reported that there is limited availability of hot desking facilities and equipment at offices in Ewloe and Flint. Long delays in the provision of specialist/adaptive equipment following assessments were also reported.

Of those responding, employees indicated that hybrid working had positively or very positively impacted their work-life balance (97%), their health and well-being (94%), their productivity (98%) and the productivity of their service (96%).

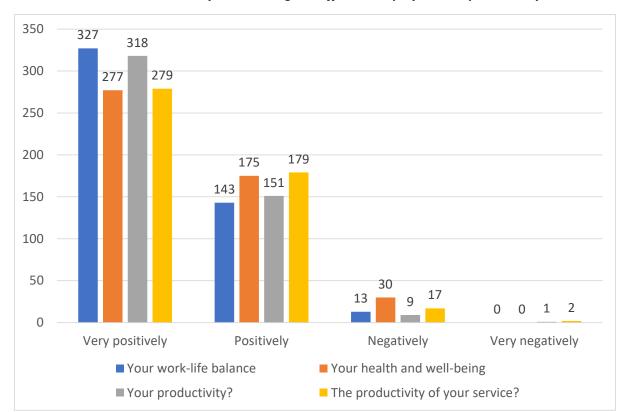


Chart 19 – the extent to which hybrid working has affected employees and productivity

33% of employees whose role allows hybrid (flexible) working attend their designated place of work several times a week, with 23% attending once a week. 32% attend as and when required.

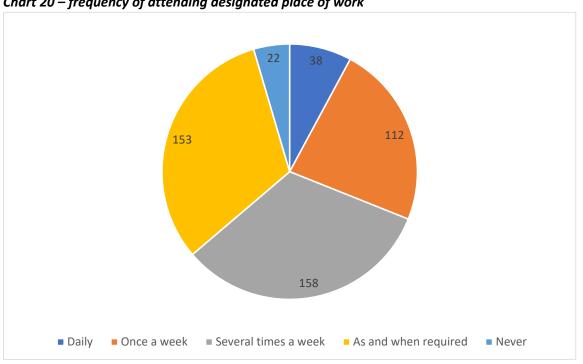


Chart 20 – frequency of attending designated place of work

48% of employees who responded do not have a set day on which they work from their designated place of work with 24% attending on Mondays, 35% Tuesdays, 31% Wednesdays, 32% Thursdays and 15% on Fridays.

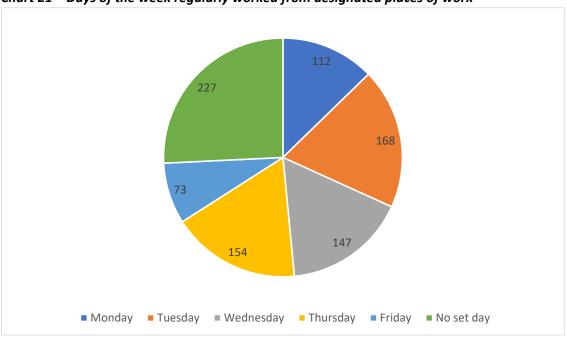


Chart 21 – Days of the week regularly worked from designated places of work

When asked how often they would like to work from their designated place of work, 44% of those who responded would like to work as and when required, 21% would like to attend once a week, 19% several times a week and 7% daily. 9% of respondents would not like to attend their designated place of work at all.

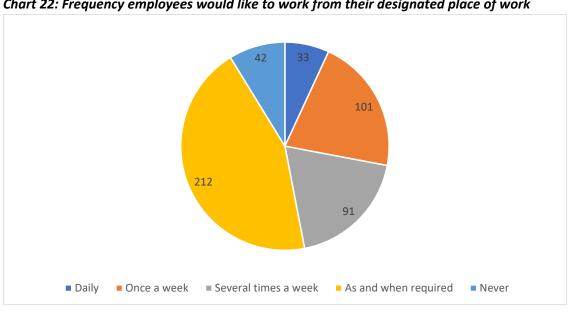
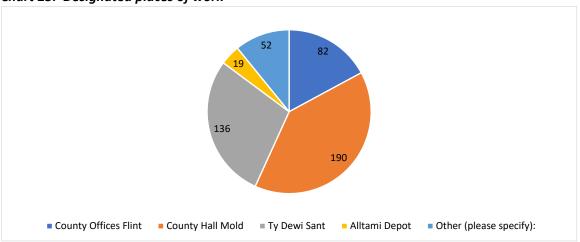


Chart 22: Frequency employees would like to work from their designated place of work

Of those responding to the question 40% of employees were designated to work at County Hall, 28% at Ty Dewi Sant, 17% at County Offices Flint, 4% at Alltami Depot.

Chart 23: Designated places of work



Other locations listed were: Westwood Centre, Aston Centre, Business Parks/Enterprise Centre, Ty Nyth, Flying Start Connah's Quay, Northop College, Connects, Wepre Park and Greenfield Valley, Llwynegrin Hall, Holywell Community Hospital, schools, playgroups and nurseries across the county.

Employees were given the opportunity to supply more information about hybrid working.

Much of the feedback received in this area has already been covered in the Health and Wellbeing feedback section, however a summary of further comments can be found below:

One size doesn't fit all and the application of hybrid working and the frequency of time in the office should be considered around the needs of the service.

For the productivity of the service and to promote healthy working relationships employees should be expected to attend the office at least one day a week.

Hybrid working is an extremely attractive proposition, both for the retention of existing employees and the recruitment of new.

Quiet working spaces, with less interruptions promotes greater productivity.

Regularly touching base with the team improves morale and knowledge sharing.

Positive impacts on health and well-being.

Hybrid working better facilitates working from multiple locations.

Steps are now needed to embed hybrid working into the Council's spatial/structural culture. The office needs to become a hub for collaborative meeting spaces with more rooms provided to facilitate Teams calls.

Section 6: Our Values

In the final section of the survey employees were ask for their views and opinions on a new set of proposed Core Values 'WeAspire' to sit at the heart of everything we do.

93% of all employees who responded agreed with each of the eight themes of 'WeAspire'.

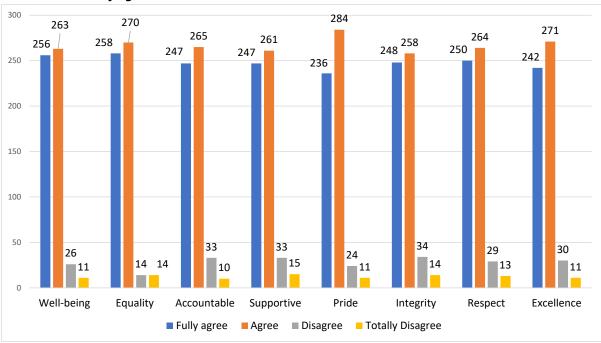


Chart 24: Extent of agreement with the core value themes

When asked where employees would expect to see the core values embedded 95% identified the workplace, 85% in our service delivery standards, 84% in our plans policies and strategies, 79% in our recruitment processes, 76% in appraisals.

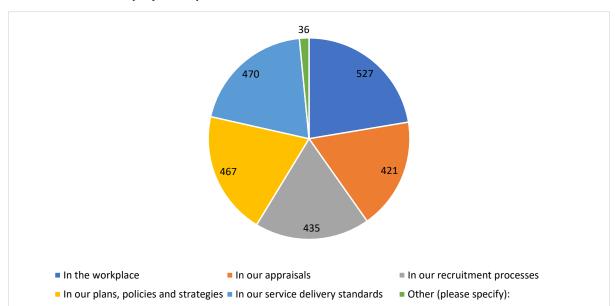


Chart 25: Where employees expect to see these core Values embedded

When asked where else employees would expect to see the Values embedded the general overall feeling was that this is about behaviour and should be demonstrated at all levels of the Council, everywhere and in everything we do. From the way employees treat one another, customers and residents to planning budgets and pay awards.

Other comments put forward were less supportive of some of the themes feeling some had been proposed more to fit the acronym than reflecting the needs of the Council.

When considering the extent to which employees always or sometimes see these core Values demonstrated in the workplace all behaviours scored 86% and above. Equality (91%), Respect (90%), Excellence (89%), Integrity (88%), Pride (88%), Supportive (88%), Well-being (87%) and Accountability (86%).

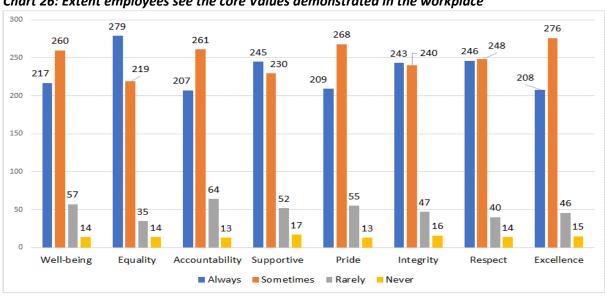


Chart 26: Extent employees see the core Values demonstrated in the workplace

96% of employees responding to each of the eight themes agree or strongly agree that embedding these core values into everything we do will add value to our everyday work.

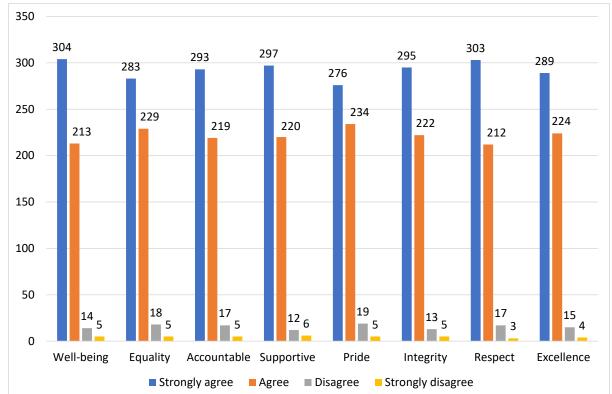


Chart 27: extent to which employees agree the Values will add value to our everyday work

When asked what if anything was missing from the core Values a summary of the feedback can be found below:

- Job satisfaction.
- More employee engagement to demonstrate how service suggestions actually result in positive change.
- Equality and Integrity suggest the same behaviours perhaps combine them.
- Employee reward and recognition.
- Visibility of services out in the community, moving away from a 'contact us' approach.
- Excellence needs to state 'within the resources we have available' to manage expectations.
- Excellence widen the theme to include internal continuous improvement.
- Excellence should reflect performance and innovation.
- Emphasis on the Council 'trust' for employees to do their job.
- Nurture and Care especially for children's services.
- Communication.
- Transparency.
- Honesty.
- Openness.

- Innovative.
- Creative.
- Community.
- Value / Value for Money.
- Transparency internally and externally, we should not be aspiring to do more than we have the resources to deliver.
- Reliability.
- Replace accountable with responsible
- A whole team Flintshire approach needs to be embedded, removing silos and competition.
- Individuality employees circumstances are all different and should be supported.
- Development, learning and training.
- Replace We Aspire with something more recognisable and memorable "Flintshire County Council For People, By People".
- Connected working together understanding each areas priorities.
- Resilient.
- Resourceful.
- Change.
- Consistency of approach.

Employees were given the opportunity to further comment on the proposed core Values, a summary of feedback received can be found below.

Embedding the values consistently across the organisation will be a challenge, yet an opportunity.

Concerns that maybe there are too many, and four key, concise, memorable words/sentences may be more beneficial.

Reward and recognition for the work employees do is also an important factor alongside engaging and involving them in decisions being taken.

It was considered that elected members do not always adhere to these Values in their dealings with employees.

A move away from 'we' to 'I' may be more powerful and promote individual accountability.

Positive, people or place may work better than Pride.

The development of a clear strategy for embedding the Values consistently across all Portfolios, adopting a 'Team Flintshire' approach will be important to success, along with the development of clear consequences for those who fail to meet the Values.

There is need for clear visible leadership the implementation of the Values with buy in at all levels of the organisation and across all Portfolios.

It is important the Values support and underpin the work we do, but not to the extent that it becomes a tick box exercise with an on proving compliance e.g. appraisals.

Being professional, behaving with integrity, recognising good work, rewarding a good work ethic - and ensuring a happy workforce and caring for others is integral to an effective organisation.

Capacity and resource needs to be carefully considered when pledging commitment to these Values, frustration can negatively impact our interactions as services struggle with their own pressures and financial uncertainties.

Flintshire already operates to high standards, going above and beyond what is required of it for its customers and communities.

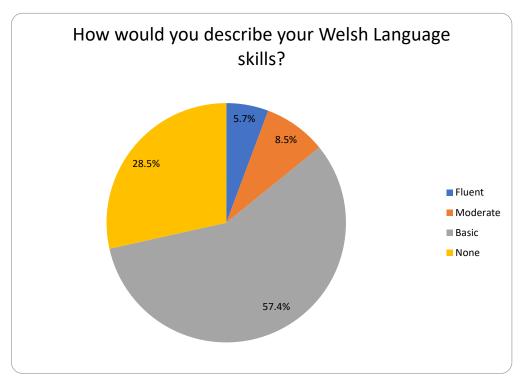
Transforming minds and attitudes can be a very slow process, but Flintshire is on the right track.

Perhaps the term 'We look after ourselves' has the potential to be misinterpreted and taken out of context.

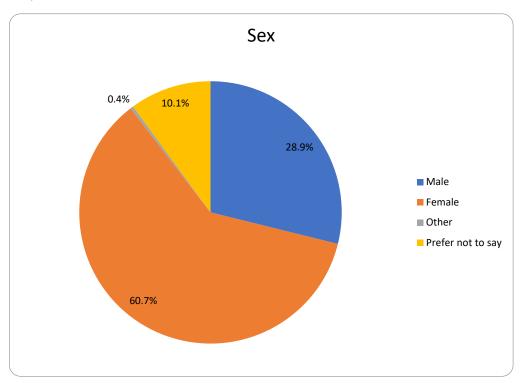
Commitment to lead the implementation and embed the core Values across the whole organisation.

Equality Monitoring

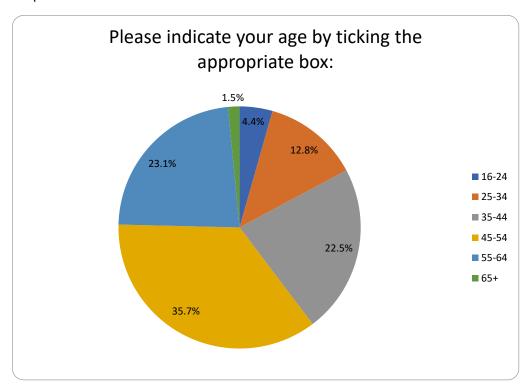
Responses received 544



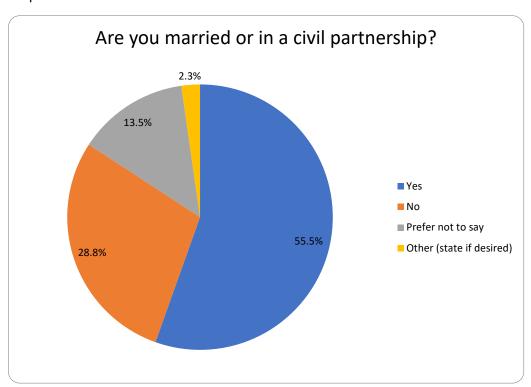
Responses received 537



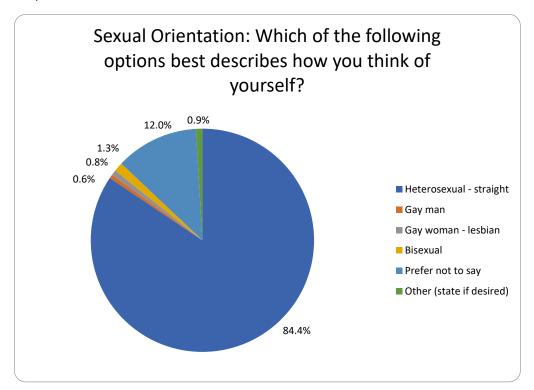
Responses received 524



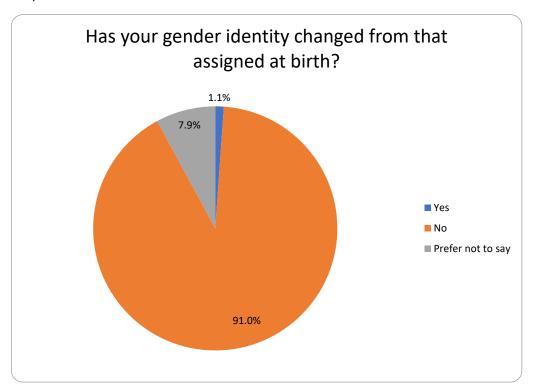
Responses received 532



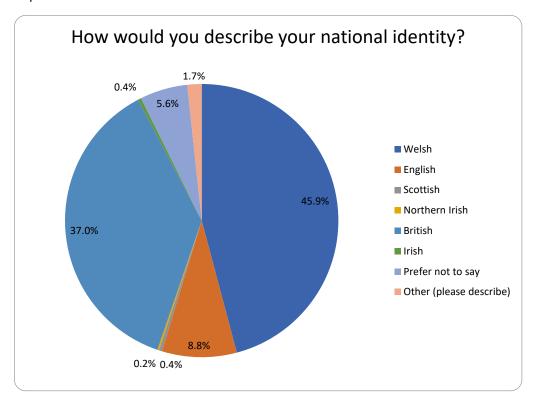
Other (specified): Cohabiting, relationship, living with partner, separated.



Responses received 532



Reponses received 532



Other (specified): Welsh and Scottish, European, British/Irish, British Welsh, Dutch.
Responses received 533

	Response Percent
White	91.2%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.0%
Mixed – White / Black Caribbean	0.0%
Mixed - White / Asian	0.2%
Mixed - any other background	0.2%
Black - Caribbean	0.0%
Black - African	0.0%
Black - any other background	0.0%
Asian - Indian	0.2%
Asian -Bangladeshi	0.0%
Asian - Pakistani	0.0%
Asian – Chinese	0.2%
Asian – other	0.0%
Any other ethnicity	0.0%
Prefer not to say	8.1%
Other (please describe)	0.0%

Responses received 532

	Response Percent
Christian (all denominations)	48.1%
Buddhist	0.2%
Muslim	0.2%
Jewish	0.0%
Hindu	0.0%
Sikh	0.0%
Aethist	4.7%
No religion	32.7%
Prefer not to say	13.3%
Other (state)	0.8%

Responses received 534

