

STANDARDS & ETHICS COMMITTEE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR GOVERNANCE & LEGAL SERVICES

2019-20 MEMBERS SURVEY

Reason for this Report

1. To provide the Standards and Ethics Committee with the analysis of information gathered from the 2019-20 Members Survey under which falls within the remit of the Committee.
2. For the Committee to identify any trends or matters which require further consideration or action.

Background

2. In 2016, Democratic Services undertook an Exit Survey to enable lessons to be learned about the experiences of Councillors during their five year term of office, and reasons for leaving or not standing for re-election. All Elected Members (81) who had held the Office of Councillor during the period 2012 to 2017 were invited to participate in the Exit Survey in early 2017.
3. The Standards & Ethics Committee in 22 March 2017 (Min No: 30) considered the responses from the Exit Survey 2017 and one of the recommendations was that a repeat survey of the Elected Members from May 2017 be undertaken at the end of the 2017. This would allow the Committee to review and analyse responses and any trends.
4. As part of the 2017-18 Survey all 75 Councillors were invited to complete the survey either electronically or in hard copy from 30 November 2017 to 2 January 2018. 47 out of 75 Councillors (63%) answered all or part of the survey. 21 Councillors of the 47 who responded were newly elected in May 2017.
5. The 2017-18 Survey provided Members feedback mainly on the Members Induction and to establish training and development needs, as well as identify some of the challenges Members may have encountered during the first six months of their term of office.
6. The Standards and Ethics Committee considered the outcomes of the 2017-18 Survey on 5 December 2018. The report was noted but it was requested that future Members Surveys should include a question specifically related to resilience and/or wellbeing. (Min No: 9).

The 2019-20 Survey

7. The latest survey was developed in 2019 and primarily intended to seek Members views on the effectiveness of the services provided to them and the delivery of appropriate member development opportunities. As part of this survey, Members were also asked the same questions about their experiences of bullying, discrimination, and other unacceptable behaviours as in the previous surveys.
8. The survey was launched electronically on 27 January 2020 to all Elected, Independent and Co-opted Members which was a total of 89 individuals. The survey was able to be completed using a range of devices including laptops, tablets and smartphones. Members were also offered assistance to complete the survey should it be needed. Reminders were included on the Members Weekly Diary and targeted emails were sent to those who had not been recorded as completing the survey.
9. A closing date for the survey was set for 9 February 2020 when a review of completions was undertaken. It was considered prudent to leave the survey open and to follow up with individuals who had not been recorded as completing the survey. Democratic Services staff contacted individuals by email and telephone which led to an increase in the total number of completions. The survey was finally closed on 14 February 2020.
10. A detailed analysis of 2019-20 Survey responses to the questions within the remit of the Standards and Ethics Committee was undertaken and are included in the Members' Survey 2019-20 Outcomes Report set out in **Appendix A**. It should be noted that the Independent and Co-opted Members did not respond to these questions and were not considered with the data from Elected Members to ensure that appropriate comparisons could be made with the previous surveys.

The Outcomes

11. Appendix A, (Charts 1 – 5) provides a detailed analysis of the profiles of the Elected Members who responded to the survey by gender, political group, new and returning members and age group. The Committee will note that:
 - a) A greater number of Elected Members (40) completed the “unacceptable behaviours” section of this survey than in previous years (39 & 33). It also shows that a larger percentage (95%) of Elected Members who undertook this survey completed this section compared to the 2017-18 Survey figures (44%).
 - b) The number of female respondents to the 2019-20 survey (15) was slightly higher than in both Exit Survey (14) and the 2017-18 Survey (9) although the percentage of female respondents was reasonably consistent.
 - c) The distribution of respondent by political group is consistent with the political make-up of the Council.

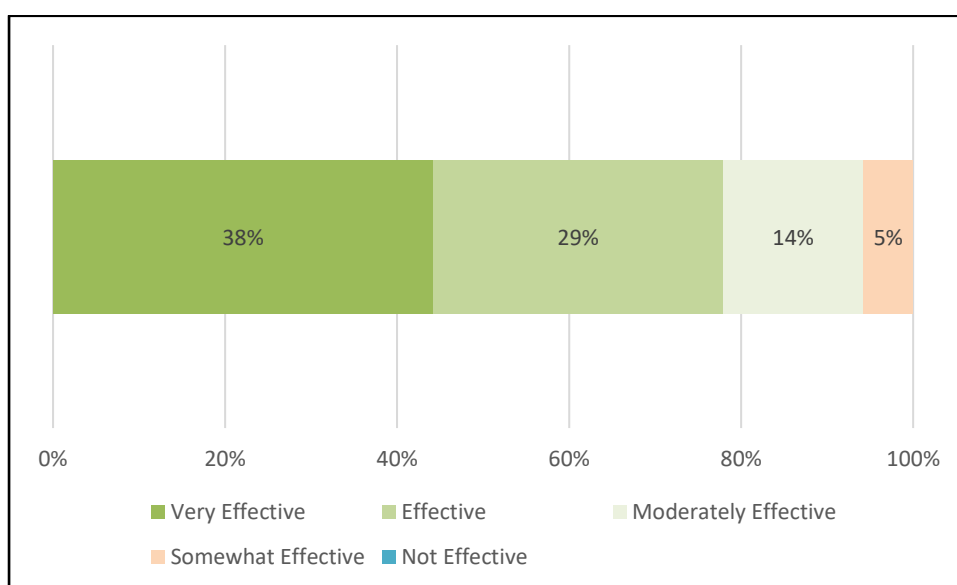
- d) The number of new and returning Elected Members was comparable with the level of responses provided in the 2017-18 Survey.
 - e) The age range of respondents showed an increase in the number of respondents who were in the 35-55 year age bracket which reflects the current average age of Councillors which is approximately 50 years old.
12. Charts 6-9 illustrate the Members' experience of bullying, discrimination and unacceptable behaviours as follows:
- a) The number (12) and proportion (30%) of respondents who have experienced unacceptable behaviours in the 2019-20 Survey is lower than in previous years (45% in the 2017-18 Survey and 56% in the Exit Survey).
 - b) 12% of Members identified that they have experienced bullying since January 2018. This is comparatively lower than those reported during 2017-18 Survey (21%) and the Exit Survey (36%).
 - c) A number (6) or proportion (15%) of respondents confirmed that they have experienced discriminatory behaviours. These figures are comparatively lower than the number or proportion of those who have confirmed experiencing discrimination in the Exit Survey and the 2017-18 Survey.
 - d) The percentage of respondents who experienced other types of unacceptable behaviours which are listed in Paragraph 3.13 of Appendix A, has declined since the Exit Survey and the 2017-18 Survey.
13. Charts 10 - 13 illustrate the experiences of unacceptable behaviours by gender type as follows:
- a) A significant proportion of female respondents (43%) have confirmed that they had experienced some form of unacceptable behaviour including bullying or discrimination. Compared to the previous 2017-18 Survey (5), there is a slightly higher total number of female respondents (6) in the 2019-20 Survey who experienced these behaviours. However, this number is much lower figure when compared to the results in the Exit Survey. It should be noted that the percentage of female respondents who have experienced unacceptable behaviours has reduced from 55% (5) in 2017-18 to 43% (6) in 2019-20.
 - b) Of the total number of female respondents (6) who experienced unacceptable behaviours, most of them (67%) have indicated they had experienced discriminatory behaviours. Half of them (50%) indicated that they have experienced bullying, with one (17%) stating that she had experienced "Other" unacceptable behaviour. This represents a slight decrease in bullying and other unacceptable behaviours identified from previous surveys but a corresponding increase in the level of discrimination experienced.

- c) 20% (5 of male respondents who have experienced some form of unacceptable behaviour. The results show that the percentage of male respondents who have experienced unacceptable behaviours has decreased from 50% in the Exit Survey and 35% in the 2017-18 Survey.
 - d) Of the 5 male respondents who confirmed experiencing unacceptable behaviours, only 1 (20%) indicated that they have experienced bullying whilst 2 (40%) experienced some form of discriminatory behaviours. Three male respondents (60%) indicated that they experienced other forms of unacceptable behaviours. A comparison of the 2019-20 results with the findings from previous years show that the total number and percentage of male respondents who have experienced bullying and discriminatory behaviours has declined.
14. Charts 14 - 18 illustrate the experiences of unacceptable behaviours by age group as follows:
- a) Less than a third of respondents (27%) over the age of 55, identified that they had experienced some form of “unacceptable behaviours”. A comparison of the survey results from previous years show that the number and percentage of the over 55 respondents who have experienced unacceptable behaviours had declined from 72% in the Exit Survey and 54% in the 2017-18 Survey.
 - b) Of the 4 respondents, aged over 55 only 2 (50%) of them confirmed that they experienced bullying whilst 2 (50%) experienced discriminatory behaviours. One of the respondents also indicated that they had experienced “other” unacceptable behaviours.
 - c) The number and proportion of respondents under 55 years of age who indicated that they had experienced bullying and other unacceptable behaviours (33%) was not dissimilar to those reported in the Exit and 2017-18 Surveys.
 - d) 7 respondents aged under 55 in the 2019-20 Survey experienced unacceptable behaviours. Two (29%) experienced bullying whilst 4 (57%) experienced discriminatory behaviours. Three respondents (43%) stated that they had experienced “other” unacceptable behaviours which included: sexist language; patronising condescending behaviours; unwanted attention / friendliness and heckling and goading at Council meetings.
15. Charts 18 – 20 illustrate the reporting of experiences of unacceptable behaviours as follows:
- a) The results of the 2019 -2020 Survey show that more than half of respondents (58%) did not report their experience of unacceptable behaviours at the time. These figures are quite significant as this suggests that more respondents have chosen not to report these incidents.

- b) The percentage of those reporting their experience of unacceptable behaviours in the 2019-20 Survey (42%) showed a marked improvement when compared with the results of the 2017-18 Survey (27%).
 - c) The reasons that incidents were not reported are listed in Paragraph 3.4.2 of Appendix A. Some these incidents were identified as being a political issues or because the incidents were witnessed so did not need reporting.
 - d) A total of 5 respondents in the 2019-2020 Survey reported incidents that they had experienced. Most of these respondents (60%) reported the incidents to the Monitoring officer. Another respondent (20%) reported to their Group Leader whilst one (20%) did not disclose to whom they reported the incident the experienced.
 - e) Of the 5 respondents who reported the incidents they experienced, 3 were reported to the Monitoring Officer with another being reported to a Group Leader. One respondent did not identify who they reported the incident to. All who reported the incident to the Monitoring Officer or Group Leader were satisfied with how this was dealt with by them.
16. Charts 21- 24 illustrate the responses of Members' who witnessed unacceptable behaviours as follows:
- a) 18 respondents confirmed witnessing unacceptable behaviours. This included; 8 respondents (44%) who had witnessed bullying with 9 respondents (50%) who witnessed discriminatory behaviours. A total of 10 respondents (55%) witnessed "other" unacceptable behaviours.
 - b) The number of respondents (18) who indicated that they had **witnessed** unacceptable behaviours (45%) was greater than the 12 Elected Members who stated that they had **experienced** unacceptable behaviours (30%).
 - c) The other types of unacceptable behaviours which were witnessed are listed in Paragraph 4.1 of Appendix A. The majority of these responses related to unacceptable behaviours in Council or other formal meetings.
 - d) Of the 18 individuals who witnessed unacceptable behaviours, only 2 indicated that they had reported the incidents. There were 6 respondents who indicated that they did not report these incidents and a further 10 individuals who did not respond to this question. This suggests that more work is needed to establish the reasons why Elected Members are reluctant to report these incidents and to encourage them to report any unacceptable behaviours that they witness.
 - e) The reasons for not reporting witnessed incidents are listed in Paragraph 4.3 of Appendix A. The respondents identified that the incident had been dealt with by others or had been recorded so that no further action was needed by them,

- f) Of the 18 respondents who witnessed unacceptable behaviours only one (1) reported the incident to the Monitoring Officer and was satisfied with how the matter was dealt with. The other respondent did not indicate to whom they reported the incident they witnessed.
17. A list of suggestions regarding what could be done to prevent bullying and other unacceptable behaviours is shown in Paragraph 5 of Appendix A. The Monitoring Officer has provided feedback on these free text comments which is shown at Appendix B.
18. In the 2019-20 Survey the following question was included:

“Please rate the effectiveness of the support and services provided by the Democratic Services team in relation to your personal safety and wellbeing”.



The responses indicate that although the personal safety and wellbeing of members is supported that further work is needed to identify what support is lacking for some of the Elected Members who responded to this question.

Further Consideration

19. Further consideration may be needed to determine how some of the issues raised in the 2019-20 Members’ Survey could be addressed:
- a) With 42 responses to the 2019-20 survey and only 40 completed responses to the unacceptable behaviours questions, it would be beneficial to identify how more Elected Members could be encouraged to complete all elements of the next survey. The Head of Democratic Services has indicated that the next survey could potentially be held in 2021-22 and be an Exit Survey). However this would need to be discussed in more detail with the Democratic Services Committee. The views of the Standards and Ethics Committee would be welcomed as to when the next survey should be held.

- b) Are there additional questions which could be included in the next survey to enhance or clarify information from the survey. Is greater clarification needed for what constitutes “unacceptable behaviour”.
- c) What measures are needed to further reduce the levels of experienced and witnessed unacceptable behaviours identified in the survey and in particular the small increase in incidents of:
- discrimination experienced by female councillors.
 - bullying experienced by male councillors.
 - discrimination experienced by those under the age of 55.
- d) What measures are needed to increase the levels of reporting for witnessed incidents of unacceptable behaviours and to promote the reporting of incidents to the most appropriate person.
- e) Other than “Members’ Code of Conduct”, “Chairing Skills” and “The Council’s Decision Making Process” identified by the Monitoring Officer in Appendix B as planned learning for Elected, Independent and co-opted members, are there additional Member Learning opportunities which would improve the outcomes from the survey.

Legal Implications

20. There are no direct legal implications arising from the content of this report.

Financial Implications

21. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended

- (1) to consider the analysis of the responses received from the 2019-20 Member Survey which fall within the remit of this Committee;
- (2) to consider potential actions to support responses received; and
- (3) to consider whether any areas require further consideration by the Committee as part of its 2020/21 Work Programme.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance & Legal Services

24 September 2020

Appendix A – Members’ Survey 2019-20 Outcomes Report

Appendix B – Monitoring Officer Responses to Free Text Comments

Background papers: Member Exit Survey (2017)
Member Survey 2017-18
Minutes of Standards & Ethics Committee dated 22 March 2017 and 5 December 2018.