

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

7TH DECEMBER 2021

CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HR & CORPORATE SERVICES : COUNCILLOR MIKE HALLAM

Report Title	2021 Employee Survey Results and Draft People Strategy
Report Author	Alison Golding, Assistant Director HR, alison.golding@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

West MO	Catherine Whitehead	19/11/2021
West S151	Martin Henry	18/11/2021
Other Director/SME	Sarah Reed	19/11/2021
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Marie McCormack	15/11/2021

List of Appendices

- Appendix A** – Best Companies Survey Overview
- Appendix B** – Draft People Strategy – themes and activities
- Appendix C** – Early Impact Paper
- Appendix D** – Headline Employee Survey Results

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the activity that has been underway since June 2021 specifically relating to staff engagement. This has involved commissioning an in-depth Employee Survey through an independent professional provider using, academic, psychologically designed questions which will also enable the organisation to be benchmarked against other employers.

The headline results from the first Employee Survey for West Northants Council are shared in the report.

- 1.2 The report also delivers an update on the development of the council's first People Strategy and summarises the themes which have been drafted following organisational wide staff and manager focus groups as well as the early findings from the employee survey.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 West Northants Council's Corporate Plan sets out the ambitious plans for the new unitary to provide great services to residents. To be a high performing council relies on our employees and we aspire to be an employer of choice. Part of our journey is getting the culture right and living our THRIVE values. Culture reflects the shared assumptions about what is important, how things are done and crucially how people behave. Cultural assumptions are taken for granted and rarely spoken of directly and as such these can be difficult to identify.
- 2.2 WNC is a new organisation, formed from four different sovereign councils and their associated cultures, these associated cultures are likely to contain a few additional subcultures, including countercultures. The development of one organisational culture and the delivery of cultural change is deemed necessary to ensure the council can respond to the changing environment and support the delivery of the transformation and improvements that are required, enabling the organisation to operate more effectively.
- 2.3 The design and delivery of our first People Strategy for the council is vital to support the development of one culture. We want our workforce to feel engaged and committed to the delivery of the six corporate priorities from the Corporate Plan, to understand how they and their team contribute to their delivery, to be clear on the expectations and ensure their behaviours are aligned to the organisational THRIVE values. Ultimately, we want to enable an engaged, motivated, highly performing, and skilled workforce for West Northants who are open to innovation to drive service improvement.
- 2.4 The development of the People Strategy commenced in June 2021. There has been a significant amount of engagement across the workforce to understand the current employee perspective. A key part of this activity has been the commissioning of the first, fully independent, academically/psychologically rigorous employee survey for West Northants. The themes arising from the engagement over summer and autumn 2021 are being used to shape the draft People Strategy.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet
- a) Note the findings of the activity to date around employee engagement
 - b) Note the development of the draft People Strategy
 - c) Note the headline Employee Survey results
 - d) Agree to receiving a finalised People Strategy in early 2022.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 To enable the Head of Paid Service to have a robust strategy in place to support all employees and help to become an employer of choice
- 4.2 Our people are our key asset, and we need to ensure we support all our employees in their development in West Northants Council to help maximise their productivity and to support the delivery of the key priorities for the council.
- 4.3 To share with Cabinet all background information and a position statement on employee views as part of this information paper before further activity is undertaken.

5. Report Background

5.1 Employee Survey Update

- 5.1.1 As a new council it is important that we commence with a baseline of employee views for the following reasons:
- i) Asking employees about their views is a powerful engagement activity and gives encouragement that WNC is looking for change.
 - ii) It informs the People Strategy design
 - iii) To understand the immediate focus areas for employees and longer term aims by obtaining a raw reflection of employee opinion.
 - iv) To contribute to the council working toward becoming an employer of choice - employee engagement and acting on the responses will support growth towards this.
 - v) To base line post transfer employee views and feelings toward the new organisation which will provide areas for immediate action and as a baseline for future improvement measurement
- 5.1.2 Following a procurement exercise, Best Companies who are employee engagement specialists were selected to undertake the survey because they offered an academically rigorous methodology (designed with the University of Plymouth with help from the DTI) which also powers the national 'Best Companies to Work For' list and accreditation. It was felt that their survey offer would enable us to understand in detail where opportunities for improvement lie and would enable benchmarking. The company has over 20 years' experience in this field. Appendix one provides further information on the methodology.
- 5.1.3 The employee survey was launched on 11th October and closed on 27th October 2021 with significant effort between internal communications team and the HR team to publicise the

reasons for the survey and to encourage engagement. It is recognised that consistent engagement across the workforce is a challenge due to the high number of front-line operational roles that are harder to reach through an online communication strategy.

- 5.1.4 Whilst the survey did have to be completed on-line, it could be accessed from any personal smart phone, or laptop in addition to work devices. Staff not on email were provided with their log in details via letter which we asked managers to hand to them. We also asked managers specifically to ensure they encouraged complete of the survey by these groups, including setting time aside at the start or end of shifts and ensuring there was equipment available on site for them to complete it on.
- 5.1.5 The survey closed with a 54% completion rate, which was circa 1500 responses. Whilst the level of response was good across services who had been provided with online log ins to complete the survey, it was clear that those services with large numbers of operational roles had been unable to fully engage their teams on this. For example Adults, Communities and Wellbeing closed the survey with a 36% response rate overall. It also raises the question of whether those staff feel fully engaged as an employee of West Northants and suggests that significant further activity is required in this area as staff engagement and feeling part of one workforce is a powerful recruitment and retention tool.
- 5.1.6 In terms of completion rates by job grade, 49% of respondents classed as employees engaged in the survey, this rose to 63% at team leader/supervisor level and between 71 and 87% for managers, Assistant Directors and Directors. We were advised by Best Companies at the outset that a response rate of around 40-60% was usual.
- 5.1.7 WNC has overall got a good level of workforce data from our first employee survey, and the package offered by Best Companies means that we can run unlimited 'pulse surveys' over the next 12 months. We can use these to further target areas where engagement has been low, or where the results particularly show high areas of opportunity when benchmarked to the rest of the organisation or externally.
- 5.1.8 **Early Feedback**
- 5.1.9 At the time of writing and the December cabinet reporting deadline, Best Companies are analysing all the data including the thousands of free text comments from our workforce. Initial feedback was received on 17 November 2021.
- 5.1.10 First indications are that given the context of national results about the effects of COVID on engagement levels, and the fact that we are eight months in, and also a new the Council, our results are positive, with strong leadership and clarity across the senior management (Director and AD/heads of service) on our vision, plan and tasks. This sense of belonging and clarity weakens as we move down the organisation and there is work to do to engage managers and make sure they are bought into the plan and vision and they feel enthused to motivate others. This will require a focus on how we support staff development and personal growth, and the analysis helps us target where we need to do this. Our strategy will focus on how the Council can ensure everyone sees how they contribute to the plan and will form part of our people

strategy. But the overall response is we have a strong base to build on and have a good understanding of what we need to do in order to create a strong, engaged and happy workforce.

5.1.11 A further update on the full employee survey findings can be provided to cabinet once the data has been analysed. In addition, action planning will need to be undertaken by senior officers and their directorates, based on their individual survey outcomes to ensure that we take the necessary action now to intervene where there are areas of concerns and opportunity across our workforce.

5.2 **People Strategy Update**

5.2.1 The aim is to design a People Strategy for WNC that clearly sets out the strategy and practices that will enable our people to deliver the council's corporate plan and vision. It will need to be future proofed and designed so that it delivers both for our workforce as well as enabling us to get what we need from our workforce. The strategy will cover years 1-3 as a new organisation and should lay a solid base for our longer-term requirements.

5.2.2 HR ran 14 people strategy engagement sessions over July and August including sessions with ELT, ADs, trade unions, staff networks, change champions and all staff sessions. We communicated the sessions through Directors, Assistant Directors, Communications, the Chief Executive's blog and on MS Teams to invite as wide an attendee list as possible, and sessions were held both online and face to face (at Northampton, Daventry and Towcester offices).

5.2.3 We obtained a huge number of views from the focus groups with several consistent themes emerging including

- i) development (career pathways, graduate development, apprenticeships, talent management and succession planning)
- ii) pay and terms
- iii) recruitment
- iv) diversity & inclusion
- v) leadership
- vi) agile working
- vii) engagement
- viii) employee lifecycle.

5.2.4 We have taken the themes that emerged and are now developing these into a People Strategy. Appendix 2 summarises the key themes of the developing strategy. To deliver the People Strategy each of the themes will have supporting activities aligned underneath which will be delivered over the next three years. The final piece of activity connected to the development of the People Strategy is the analysis of the employee survey data which is imminent. At that point the People Strategy can be finalised and signed off.

5.3 **Early Impact**

5.3.1 As a result of initial feedback from the People Strategy sessions an Early Impact paper went to senior leadership in early September (See Appendix 3). This had been not been planned at the

outset of the programme of work however it was clear the staff who had been attending the sessions that there were some immediate areas for improvement requiring intervention, mostly based around transitioning employees to West Northants.

- 5.3.2 It has been noted that the focus for the Future Northants programme in the run up to transfer had been delivering 'safe & legal' which for the HR workstream had included the disaggregation of over 3000 NCC employees and ensuring the legally compliant transfer of staff under TUPE. But it was evident that this approach meant that much of the normal staff engagement activity to transition the workforce to a new employer had not been done on prior to day one. It should also be noted that due to the decision to restructure Tiers 1-3 on the lead up to vesting day, on 1st April there were new Directorate leadership teams in place, who only commenced in their new roles on 1st April, and have immediately had to focus on service stabilisation activity as the priority.
- 5.3.3 The Early Impact proposed that all senior managers undertook a number of immediate interventions (some had already done this), including publication of structure charts by directorate, directorate networking events, 'toolbox' talks so that employees understood their service and role in relation to delivery of the corporate priorities, more frequent updates on the transformation programme and re-setting of management expectations.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 Work is continuing finalising the People Strategy and there will be choices made in terms of its key themes and activities once the employee survey data has been analysed.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

There are no resources or financial implications arising from the update currently.

7.2 Legal

A robust People Strategy supports the Council in delivery its wider legal obligations to staff

7.3 Risk

There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. The work on assessing the workforce and developing the People Strategy are positive interventions in relation to our corporate risk around our workforce.

7.4 Consultation

- 7.4.1 Significant engagement and consultation has been undertaken with employees and wider staff groups as well as the employee survey being sent to all employees for their views.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 The finalised people strategy will go to overview and scrutiny.

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 This is a key consideration in relation to agile working that will be picked up in the People Strategy

7.7 **Community Impact**

7.7.1 This is a key consideration in relation to recruiting and retaining local talent and will be picked up in the People Strategy. This is also in relation to the employee's benefits scheme.

7.8 **Communications**

7.8.1 Considerable communications with employees has been a key element of the approach, in order to work with all employees and ensure two-way conversations.

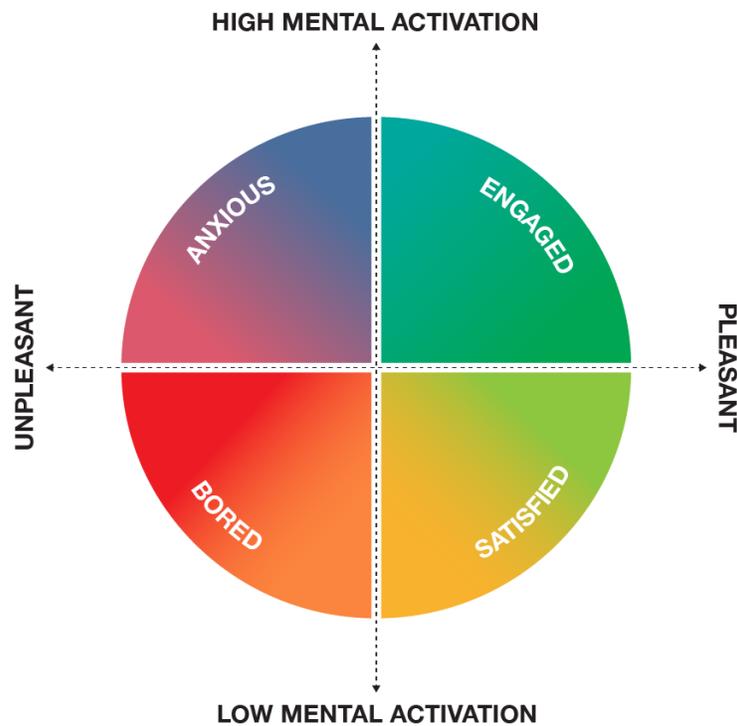
8. **Background Papers**

None

Appendix A – Best Companies Survey Overview

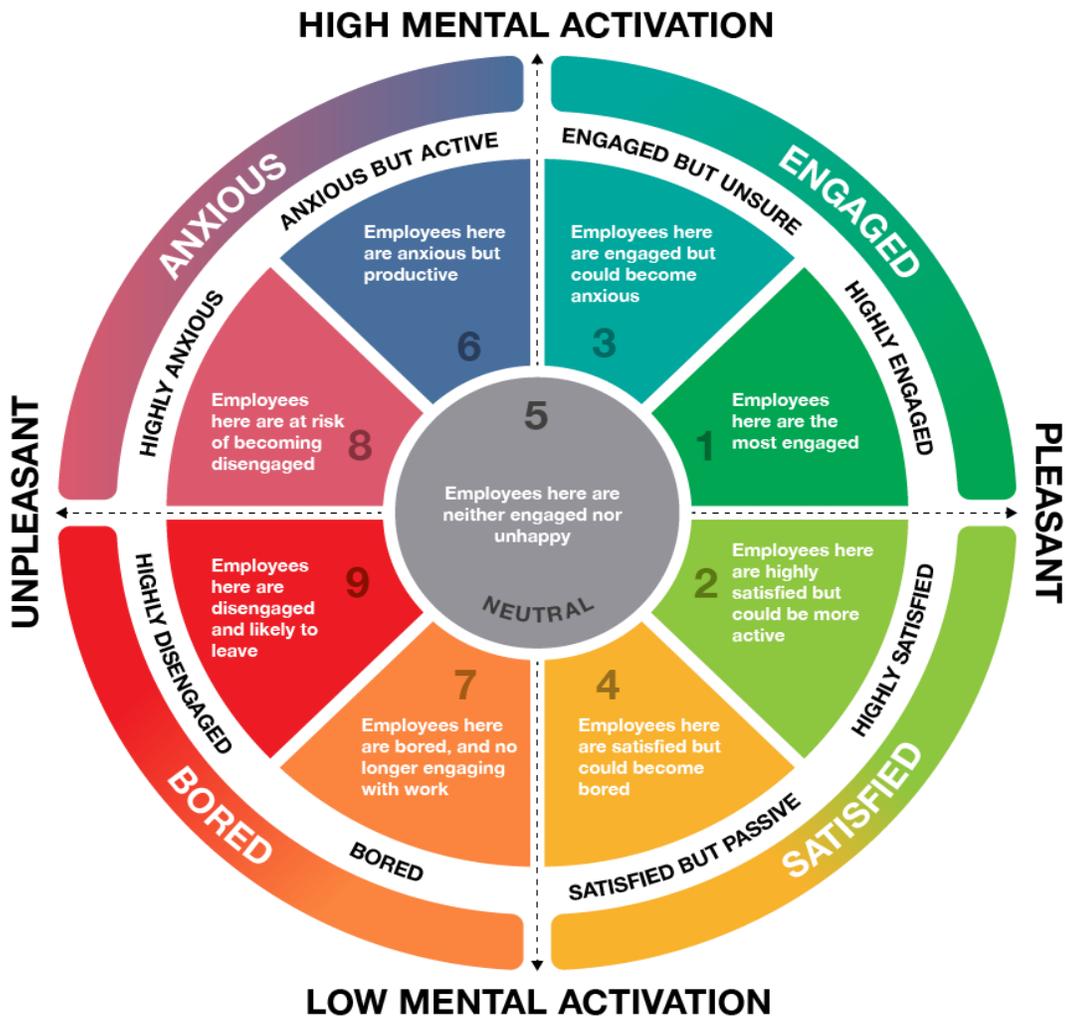
Engagement vs Satisfaction - Russell's Circumplex Theory of Affect (1980)

Engaged employees is the optimum place we need our employees to be, where they are experiencing high mental application but its pleasant as opposed to unpleasant and creating feelings of anxiety.



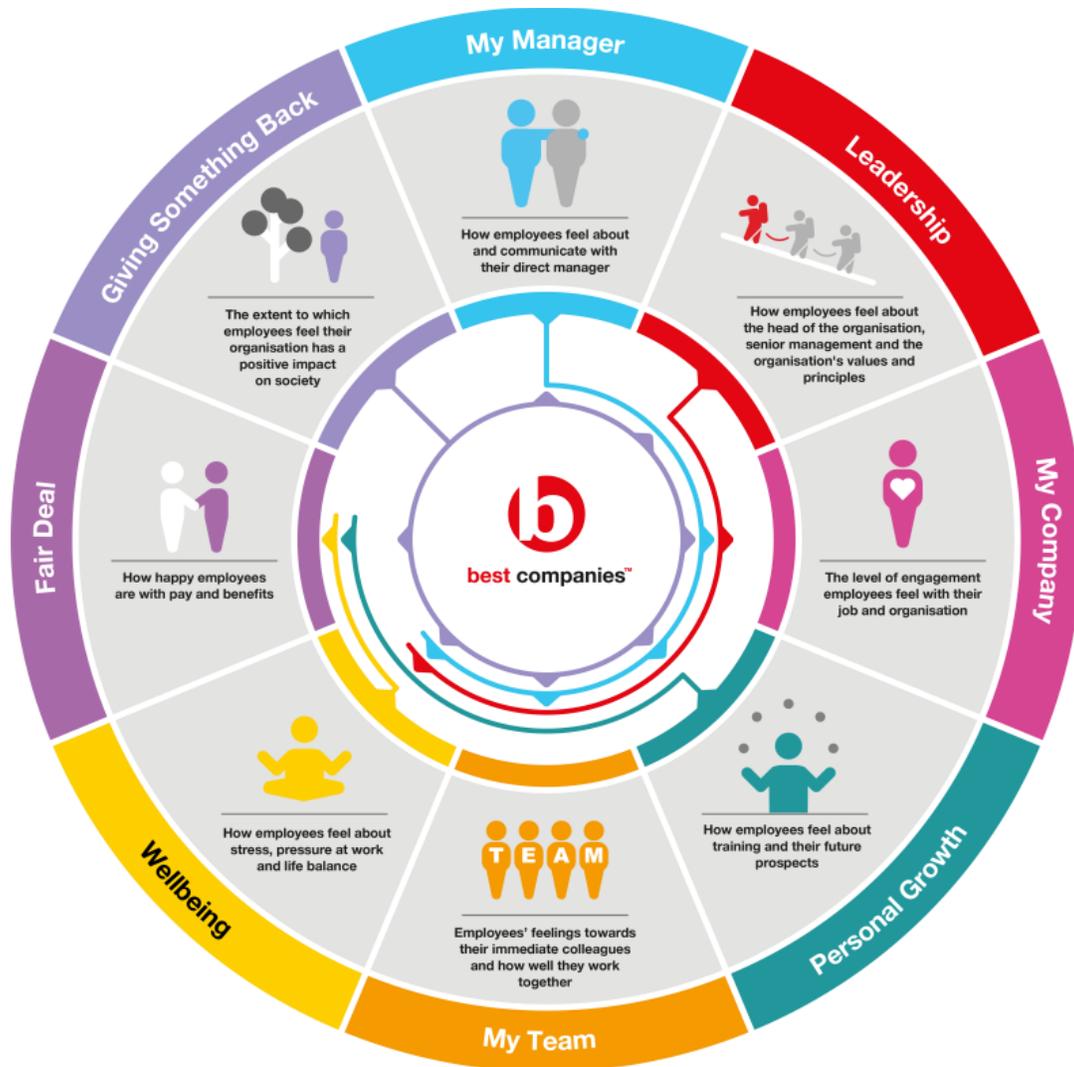
Best Companies Circumplex Model

Employees who are falling into the red categories are difficult to move their mindset over to the green satisfied /engaged categories (green ones) and may therefore may actively seeking alternative work and will not be high performing due to the level of disengagement. It is possible to move those employees falling into the orange or blue categories to become engaged/highly satisfied by understanding who these groups are and action planning with them. The Best Companies survey data analysis will be able to inform and offer clear and actionable insights into how we can engage these groups and we will be able to drill down into directorates and employee groups.



8 Factors of Engagement

Through Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Best Companies identify the deep and interdependent relationships between the 8 Factors of Workplace Engagement. It goes beyond simple assumptions of how people feel based on their response to a given statement, revealing instead the underlying reasons behind their responses and the complex associations between them. It's these patterns, connections and correlations that helps get to the heart of what people want and expect from their working lives.



Appendix B – People Strategy Emerging Themes

These are the emerging themes that are being developed to form the People Strategy. Each of the themes will have supporting activities aligned underneath which will be delivered over the next three years. The final piece of activity connected to the development of the People Strategy is the analysis of the employee survey data.

The How?

The creation of our new West Northamptonshire Council brings the opportunity to develop and set one organisational culture, that supports the delivery of the council's vision - to make West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and THRIVE. It important that we embed our values across our organisation and that these drive our behaviours, we value our employees and create an inclusive, learning environment, to contribute to becoming an employer of choice.

1) Attracting & Retaining Talent:

Talent Acquisition:

Retaining and attracting talent, recruiting the relevant skills and abilities for current and future needs is key to the long-term success of the Council. We have developed a Talent Acquisition and Management Team to lead and support the council in becoming an employer of choice.

Over the next year we will be developing an employer brand and employer value proposition, ensuring we are noticed in the markets to attract the best talent. We will be tapping into organisations that support inclusion including Stonewall and their programme of over 900 employers who are creating inclusive workplaces. To increase our pool of talent we need to ensure we are advertising in the right places. We established nine Staff Networks earlier in the year and working with this diverse range of our employees we will widen our advertising opportunities and our candidate pools.

To enable us to support our talent acquisition ambitions we are procuring a market leading recruitment and applicant tracking system that is scheduled to go live mid-2022. Supporting this the Acquisition Team will provide easily understandable tool kits for managers to navigate the new system.

Organisation Orientation:

The importance of onboarding our new talent cannot be underestimated. The best candidates are now won and lost in the period after their offer and acceptance of a role, prior to starting. How we manage this period is therefore more important than ever.

The delivery style and method of these first post-offer contacts will shape the candidates view of the true approach to engagement that the council takes. At this early stage it is key to create dialogues and start delivering on the employer brand experience, prepare the successful candidate on how to navigate the organisation in the early days and start contact with future colleagues. The intention over the next year is to design this programme of first contact to include a buddy system, alternative uses of technology to share and involve the new candidate in our culture, with information and contact that is informative and inclusive. Technology options will become clearer as the process of procuring the recruitment system develops.

The design of a new more formal induction process for new starters post start date will be launched in 2022. These will be run in three separate programmes, "Leaders", "Managers" and "All Employees", to include an inclusive introduction to the council and the West Ways of Working whilst setting expectations from the outset. The aim of these programmes is to ensure new starters are set up for success, which introduces them to the Council's vision, values, behaviours and cultural expectations as well as to the 'West way of working'.

Talent Management:

We are developing a defined, strategic approach to attracting, identifying, developing, engaging, retaining and deploying those people whose knowledge, skills and capabilities have been identified as key to the delivery of our objectives. The Talent and Succession strategy will include fully utilising apprenticeship opportunities.

Developing our internal and new talent by exploring available initiatives. To recognise ability and give opportunities to those who's skill sets can be developed and deployed across the organisation.

Over late 2021 and the first half of 2022 we are exploring initiatives including graduate schemes, apprenticeships, development of our care leavers.

The latter half of 2022 and early 2023 we will be designing our own Shining Stars Programme to develop internal employees, graduates or not, to become the West Northants leaders of the future.

Pay, Reward & Recognition:

Following the transfer of four councils into West Northants on a variety of terms, conditions and remuneration we are now in the process of designing a pay and reward strategy that provides financial wellbeing to all of our employees and is a key tool in attracting and retaining employees and motivating them to deliver consistently effective performance against the corporate objectives.

To achieve this the hard work underneath the pay and reward strategy will take us into 2023. This includes the creation of job family architecture and pay modelling, designing an affordable and attractive pay and reward model. Understanding how our employees flourish with recognition and how to maximise the opportunities to do this including life-style, benefits packages and flexibility.

This work will be the backbone of our career pathway design to understand the contracts and packages required to make these work.

2) Achieving Our Goals Through Our High Performing & Flexible Workforce:

Leadership & Management:

Leading whilst transferring four local authorities together into a new organisation during a global pandemic, whilst applying for the new tier 1-3 roles has been challenging for our teams. Six months in and the senior teams have become tight, positive and supportive, they are clear on the organisations future direction and have been carrying out an intensive programme of listening to employee views and thoughts.

Knowing that our transferred and new hire community will have a wide range of skills at different levels and the impact on the organisations employee retention, attraction, performance, engagement and motivation, throughout the first half of 2022 we are developing a programme of leadership development for our tier 1-3 leaders. This will include dedicated activities as well as the development of programmes that will be available to our leaders and managers across the organisation. These include the use of level 5, 6 and 7 apprenticeships in leadership and management, mentoring, partnering with organisations that have established programmes. Internal and external coaching programmes and continuing our peer group self-learning, action learning sets and developing this as a successful tool through the organisation.

Closely relating to the leadership programme activity is our Management Programme (MALP) workshops to ensure consistency of message and direction of travel. Feedback from our People Strategy Focus Groups unsurprisingly showed inconsistency in management approaches through our new organisation. Transferring managers have a variety of styles and skills and it is therefore a priority to set standards and expectations for

this group. Managing in a new organisation can be a difficult time, particularly post transfer, in a pandemic with huge swathes of the workforce still working from home. A twelve-week management development programme has been developed and has seen a number of cohorts start and complete the programme. The intention is for all managers to have completed this programme by the end of 2022. It will then be offered periodically for new managers.

Establishing High Performing Teams:

To establish consistent high performing teams we are looking internally and sharing our successes and how they've been achieved between directorates, services and teams, respecting and listening to our peers.

Key to high performance is to codesigned corporate, directorate and service plans. Listening to employees and providing safe spaces to share thoughts and ideas, developing agile environments to design and innovate.

Jointly setting clear objectives and reviewing and re-establishing direction where required will support the successes of high performing teams. To do this it is essential to develop a new, progressive and effective performance management programme for the Council. Supporting employees to achieve their potential, career goals and best selves to deliver for West Northamptonshire Council's residents. This work is taking place over late 2021 and early 2022.

Diversity & Inclusion:

Inclusion is the access to equal opportunity and treatment within the workplace. It is proven to improve the culture and success of organisations by bringing together a wealth of experience and ideas. How the Council approaches diversity and inclusion in the workplace should reflect our ambitions for residents and vice versa.

Staff Networks were set up at the point of transfer to West Northamptonshire in April 2021. There are nine networks covering a range of areas to enhance employee inclusion through peer-to-peer support and a collective voice. These networks are a safe space to share concerns whilst also initiating and supporting organisational feedback, policy change and increased opportunities.

As well as the deliverables around diversity and inclusion through our talent management workstream we will be developing a 5-year plan and target for inclusion in senior roles over the first half of 2022.

The starting position is a council wide review of the personal data held on our HR system ERP Gold, this is currently varied due to approaches at the transferring councils prior to April 2021. To develop a baseline, employees will be required to update their personal data using their self-service access. This will provide a complete set of personal data for all employees, to include the choice not to provide detail as a tick box. This update will be completed in the first quarter of 2022. This information will then be used to understand a full picture of the council and where greater efforts need to be directed to increase opportunity for all.

Diversity and inclusion is more than a set of tasks, the focus is weaved through all of our People Strategy workstreams and future thinking.

A Culture of Learning and development:

We encourage a learning culture across our workforce through the use of in-house training and development programmes, apprenticeships, clear career pathways and graduate development/shining stars programmes. This culture is a key attraction tool and also enables the organisation to deliver the corporate priorities through innovation and internally future proof and not solely rely on external options.

Starting from the beginning, we will be working with local schools and our closest universities to develop work experience, intern and volunteering programmes within a variety of services from Autumn 2022.

We will be researching and procuring appropriate apprenticeship programmes to meet the needs of our services, targeting hard to fill roles, supporting the delivery of career pathways and a range of personal development. Our strategy, as well as internal development, supports local residents into local government careers. Our Apprenticeship Strategy has been designed and planning is currently taking place. The programme will be developed from June 2022.

Fully developed learning cultures support and encourage self-directed learning. By the council ensuring the appropriate tools are in place and communicating where and how to use them effectively individuals can then identify their own learning goals and drive their own development.

3) **Creating A Culture of Engagement & Wellbeing:**

Culture & Engagement:

We aim to have one clearly defined, high performing organisational culture based on trust and a strong psychological contract. Employees are motivated and engaged, working in cohesive teams that collaborate across the organisation. Individuals and teams are clear on how they contribute to the success of the organisation, and their part in delivering the council priorities (the golden thread).

Council wide engagement opportunities across West Northants have been high. With regular "All Staff" briefings and Q&A with the Chief Executive, external employee survey, internal pulse surveys, People Strategy focus groups, the Staff Networks, Transformation coffee mornings, Directorate and Service engagement and networking events where possible to encourage face-to-face interaction. Whilst the opportunities are there for those who would like to get involved, the hard work is engaging those who are less willing or don't feel able for some reason to be part of these activities. Our Engagement Strategy will be developed for spring 2022 aiming to set a standard, process and plan to fully engage our workforce over the next three years at an individual, team and organisational level.

The employee survey that has just closed will give us clear feedback from employees on areas of success and where we need to jointly improve. Once the results have been analysed and shared by our survey partner, we have a post survey programme of activity including working with Clever Together on a Big Conversation, organisation wide engagement tool to deep dive into areas of the survey results where employees feel we have more work to do. This will be part of the co-design with employees of the action planning and next steps, including through focus groups, targeted pulse surveys and working with our trade union and staff network colleagues.

The integration of new behaviours coming out of our action planning to reflect how we work, living our values to deliver our vision. To enhance this work we will be providing values led feedback on the employee survey to start the thinking around this process. This work will take place over the end of 2021 and first quarter of 2022.

We are working towards one, new, embedded organisational culture focused on a high performing culture.

Work Environment:

We are working to create the right conditions for a modern, flexible and agile workforce to thrive, and in doing so drive productivity, improve service quality, customer experience and improve staff wellbeing.

To make best use of assets to achieve the Council's priorities. Supporting employees to succeed in a work: life balance that supports their role and our residents' requirements.

We will implement a hybrid working model based on worker profiles across WNC, ensuring staff have the *right* access to the *right* tools to work collaboratively and succeed in their role.

To support this model we will develop and deliver policies and training to enable managers to unlock potential of a hybrid workforce to drive productivity and improve quality standards and make best use of resources.

Wellbeing:

A holistic approach to wellbeing should be a key part of our employer value proposition and brand and will support us to retain and attract talent, support our employees and help them to reach their potential. This will increase resilience and improve performance.

Supporting employees through the initial changes to a blended work environment whilst supporting their performance, development and wellbeing. Ensuring the blended work environment enables the Council and its employees to be high performing and thrive

4) Embracing Change to Support West Northants Transformational Journey:

Organisational Design:

Business partnering the organisation for transformation. Supporting and advising on service design, spans and layers, following corporate wide direction and encouraging digital analysis as part of the design of services

Analytics & Digital:

Using people analytics to derive insights. Optimising and aligning decisions with the Corporate priorities. To understand the workforce element of the Councils Digital Strategy, supporting automation and innovation.

Organisational Maturity:

Not sitting on our laurels, continuing to measure culture and organisational maturity as WNC develops over the coming months and years ensuring a continuous cycle of improvement. Assessing effectiveness at gateway points and mapping improved capabilities and performance opportunities.

Appendix C – Early Impact Paper 6th September 2021

The feedback in the focus groups covered employee's priorities for the future People Strategy and understandably their feelings about their current situations.

There seem to be several activities that could have a positive early impact and take a relatively short period of time to set up. Please see table below:

Feedback:	Proposal:	Timeline:
Services, individuals, teams, District & Boroughs are working in silos	Provide networking events across services and between closely linked services for face-to-face engagement with colleagues (Online to be available for vulnerable employees) Working with OD to deliver	September/October
Feeling of gaps in the structure of working due to transfer and without an alternative way of working provided	All Directors and ADs to complete and share structure charts within service, with Comms and on the intranet. Working with Transformation and Comms to deliver	September
Feeling of not knowing where roles fit in structure, service and the Council	Director, AD, Manager cascade, self-designed toolbox talks on where the directorate and services fit within the organisation and how they will work together. Interim/new ways of working. Working with Transformation and Comms to deliver	September/October
Isolation due to transfer and to Covid	Networking events, buddying within services for home working, using Teams to full capacity and not just for video calls	September/October
Employees feeling of a take-over, particularly NCC but mainly of the Council their senior managers came from. Those ways of working have been adopted with all other good practice side lined.	Management run focus groups within service to form West Ways of Working, taking the best of all Council's previous working and adding in up-to-date best practise. Giving employees a voice and route to share their previous good practice.	October-December
Lack of Transformation communication is a cause of anxiety to many	Feedback shared with Transformation, coffee mornings, newsletter and enablers meetings have already been planned. Suggestions of timelines and transformation phases once working within a service have been superseded by Transformations recent coffee morning. Transformation and Comms main parties for delivery	September onwards
Management expectations	A review of transition activities and clear West Way of Working expectations set for	September

	<p>Directors, Ads, HoS and Managers. Ensuring basic transfer activities and communication took place and have continued, checklists and support. To include 1:1s, team meetings, direction setting. Working with HR, OD & Comms to deliver</p>	
<p>Vision, Corp priorities individuals not widely known. Values only known as THRIVE</p>	<p>Embedding programme in draft and a variety of deliver options being considered. Working with HR, OD, Comms to deliver</p>	<p>September - December</p>

Appendix D – High Level Employee Survey Results

1. Overall commentary

The Council shows 46% of people in degrees of “pleasant experience” vs 36% in degrees of “unpleasant” experience, but a larger than normal level of neutral people who are undecided, which is encouraging as they are most likely to become engaged if we work to motivate them and raise engagement and enthusiasm for the vision and our purpose. This split has become common in the post COVID world where so much has changed and a lot of anxiety and wellbeing focus has grown across businesses. Given this is a new council as well this creates further uncertainty and many staff will still feel a connection to their old council and leadership.

Given where we are and how new the Council is, our results are really good with strong leadership and clarity across the senior management (Director and AD/heads of service) of the leadership, vision and tasks to be done.

This is weaker as we move down the organisation and that there is work to do to engage managers and make sure they are bought into the plan and vision and they feel enthused to sell that onwards. This will require a focus on listening, inspiring, caring and personal growth. This will help everyone see how they contribute to the plan.

There is a strong sense that many staff feel they are reacting and not proactive enough and we need to look at how we make a shift. This finding is also increasingly common through COVID and as we recover.

We have a strong base to build on and clarity on where we need to focus.

2. Our responses by job group:

Your Defined Job Grade	Maps to	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Team Member	Team Member	1039/2134	49%
Team Leader/Supervisor	Team Leader/Supervisor	149/238	63%
Manager	Manager	251/323	78%
Head of Service/Service Manager	Senior Manager	27/36	75%
Assistant Director	Senior Manager	13/15	87%
Director	Director	5/7	71%

The level of our responses at 54% overall was good but there is a need to engage more front line staff and get their feedback.

3. Our West Northants Council’s overall engagement score:

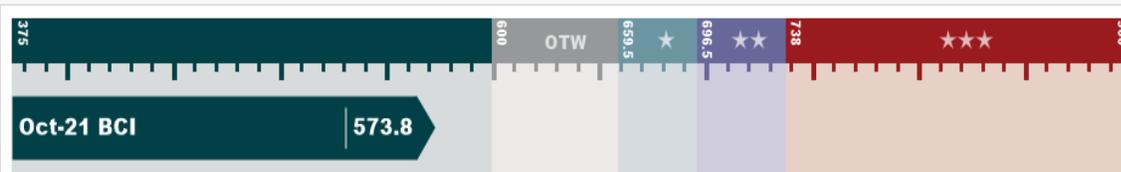
Your Engagement Scores

Description

This graphic shows the Best Companies Index (BCI) score for your organisation and how it relates to our Accreditation standard. The BCI is a score between 0 and 1000 and is directly comparable between surveys.

Survey types:
BCI - Best Companies Index Score

Ratings breakdown:
OTW is Good
★ is Very Good
★★ is Outstanding
★★★ is World Class



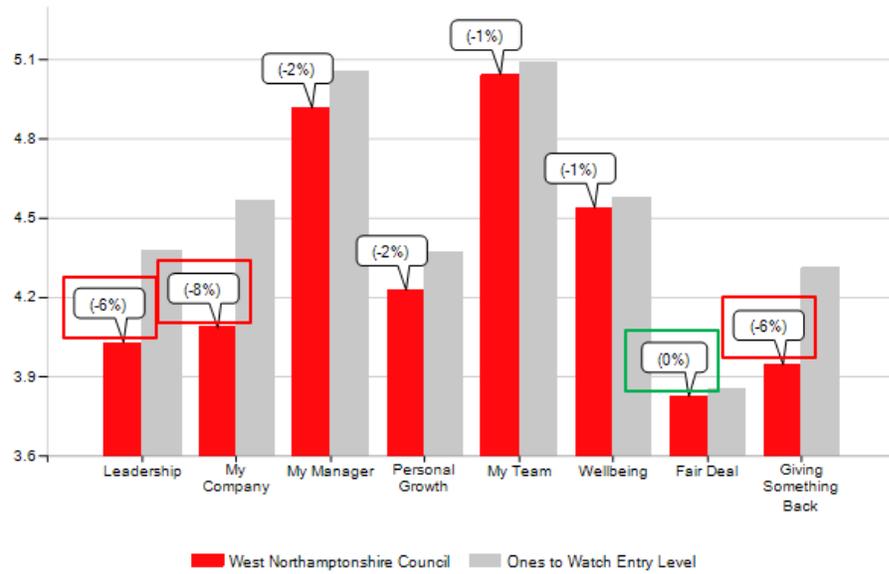
This is a good first response and normal for a new organisation starting its journey.

4. Best Companies '8 Factors of Engagement' – WNC benchmarked against the normal entry points for Best Companies 'Ones to Watch Entry Level'.

We are showing a strong match and starting point against “my team”, the sense of wellbeing, personal growth and “my manager”

We have work to do around “My Company” – how the organisation is seen but this is not unusual in a new organisation and when there is uncertainty (below managers in WNC). While overall Leadership needs some improvements, it is very strong at the top of the organisation and weakens as engagement lessens further down the organisations at or below managers. Some employees are yet to fully engage and connect with who WNC is as company, and will still identify in some cases with their sovereign councils.

West Northamptonshire Council vs. Ones to Watch Entry Level



5. Best Companies Findings – our three areas of strategic focus

Three Areas of Strategic Focus

Reinforce Organisational Clarity, by instilling confidence in the leadership skills of the senior management team

Encourage greater Managerial Engagement, by encouraging managers to care about the job satisfaction of their team

Encourage Managers to take more of an active interest in their colleagues' personal growth & wellbeing

6. What makes WNC a great place to work?

What makes this a great place to work?

Many colleagues feel passionate about working for the council as they believe their work is 'important' and they play a 'vital role in making people's lives better'. Although there are some disparities, employees are also excited about the 'new organisation' and are looking forward to tackling the 'challenges ahead'.

Many people do believe that this excitement is in part down to the CEO, as some employees commented on feeling "inspired" following a session with the CEO back in April. While people do believe this inspiration is not getting filtered down to the rest of the organisation, those that are receiving these messages are excited for the road ahead and more importantly, energised about building an 'inclusive' and 'aspirational' organisation where 'people are valued'.

There is a real sense of family amongst employees across the business, with many crediting "kind, considerate and thoughtful" colleagues as what makes this a great place to work. Everyone is said to be friendly and always willing to help, demonstrating a true sense of commitment, that 'invigorates' those around them.

Some employees describe their manager as 'approachable' and 'kind', with several members of staff stating they are given the praise they deserve for their hard work, but also appreciate the constructive criticism they receive as a way to better their performance. While many employees do believe their relationship with their manager could be improved, there are also many who believe their manager is a 'great sounding board for opinions and ideas', while others believe their manager is integral to being able to deliver 'life changing support to customers'.

While some believe that working from home has brought its challenges, those colleagues who still have the opportunity to work from home enjoy doing so. Employees feel as though the added level of 'flexibility' and 'time to concentrate' is contributing towards a better work life balance. Some employees also commented that the need for home working due to the pandemic has 'accelerated' the feeling of 'real trust in staff', which is appreciated.

7. What could make this a better place to work?

What could make this a better place to work?

Although some colleagues feel 'inspired', it is felt that these messages are not being efficiently communicated throughout the council. Many employees feel the ELT could be doing more to communicate the future vision and direction of the organisation, helping to mitigate any level of uncertainty that may be present as a result of the recent changes within West Northamptonshire Council. It is also felt that communications could be 'less corporate' and more consistent, while many employees feel the ELT would benefit from spending time 'on the ground' and 'actively engage' with the challenges colleagues face on a day to day basis.

Employees feel that more consistency is needed when managers communicate to their teams, as some people believe messages can often be different to those from senior management and that training could be more consistent to enable managers to better deal with particular situations. It is felt that managers should be promoting further team interaction, as the level of communication between colleagues has dwindled since the pandemic began, with some people stating that more cohesion between teams is needed as people are 'working in vastly different ways' to one another.

It is felt that more training could be provided, and in a more efficient manner, for those employees joining the organisation, while it is thought that more clearly defining responsibilities/roles would enable people, who have been in their role for a while, to focus on the most relevant training to keep up to date.

Some employees feel as though there should be greater room for progression, as many "feel stuck" and "stagnant" within their roles, leading to boredom. Many also believe the lack of progression to be a significant contributor to the amount of people that leave the organisation.

It is felt that employees can sometimes feel undervalued for their contribution and hard work, and while it may not be all about pay, there is a sense that pay could be more comparable to that of neighbouring local authorities. Some employees also call for a pay grading review, as it seems 'crazy' that unqualified staff can be earning more than qualified staff with many more years' experience.

There is a sense that facilities and equipment could be improved around all offices to help ensure that the most 'basic' tasks can be completed as efficiently as possible. It is felt that these 'basic' tasks like logging on to the systems and better equipping meeting rooms to connect with colleagues working remotely would go a considerable way to reducing time pressures within teams.

8. What can your organisation do to support you ?

What can your organisation do to support you at this time?

Whilst some employees are receiving communications regarding the future ambitions of the organisation, it is felt that the ELT could be doing more to ensure the messages are heard throughout the whole organisation. It is felt this would help reduce levels of anxiousness that people may be feeling following the most recent changes within the council.

It is felt that management should be checking in with staff regularly, asking their people how they are feeling and listening to their concerns, helping people to feel supported and valued. Many believe that if management teams across the organisation are fed consistent and clear messages, they will feel better prepared and equipped to continue communicating the messages down to the rest of the teams within the council.

When it comes to supporting the personal growth of individuals across the organisation, the council should consider the ways in which they can open more opportunities for career progression, as well as the training resources available to staff.

Whilst some believe they are fairly paid for their work, others feel that the organisation could do more to support their people financially, whether that be increasing or regularly reviewing employee pay to make it more comparable to the industry and to others within similar roles within the organisation.

After such a challenging year, it is felt that some sort of 'moral booster' would go a significant way towards people feeling valued for their contribution. While it is understood the individual teams are encouraged to organise their own 'away days', it is felt that organising something council wide would help bond and encourage a truly unified West Northamptonshire Council moving forward.

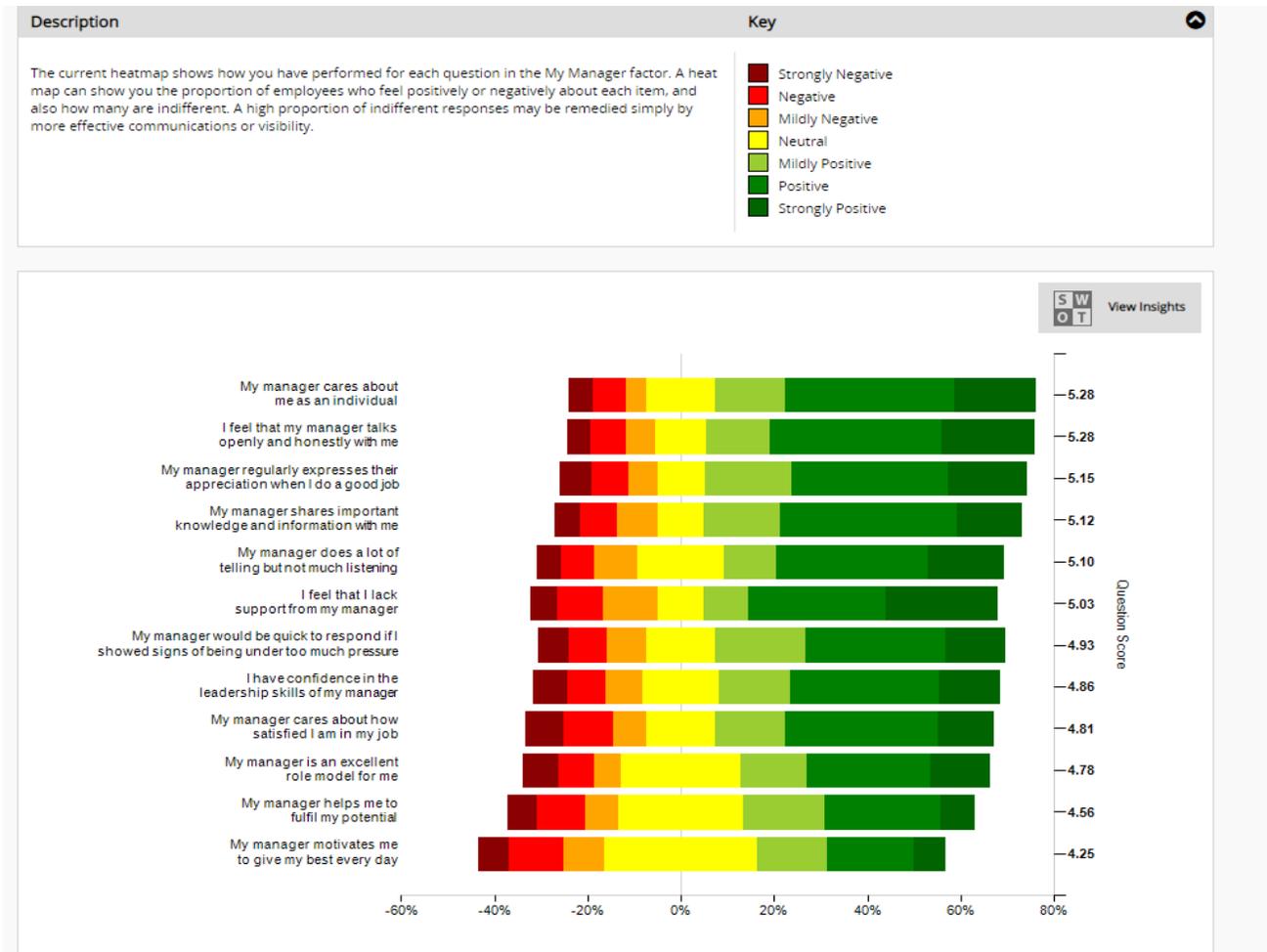
9. Leadership Heatmap

There are positive comments from staff about the Council's Leadership, clarity of vision and tasks. We know that we need to extend the visibility of the senior team to all of the organisation



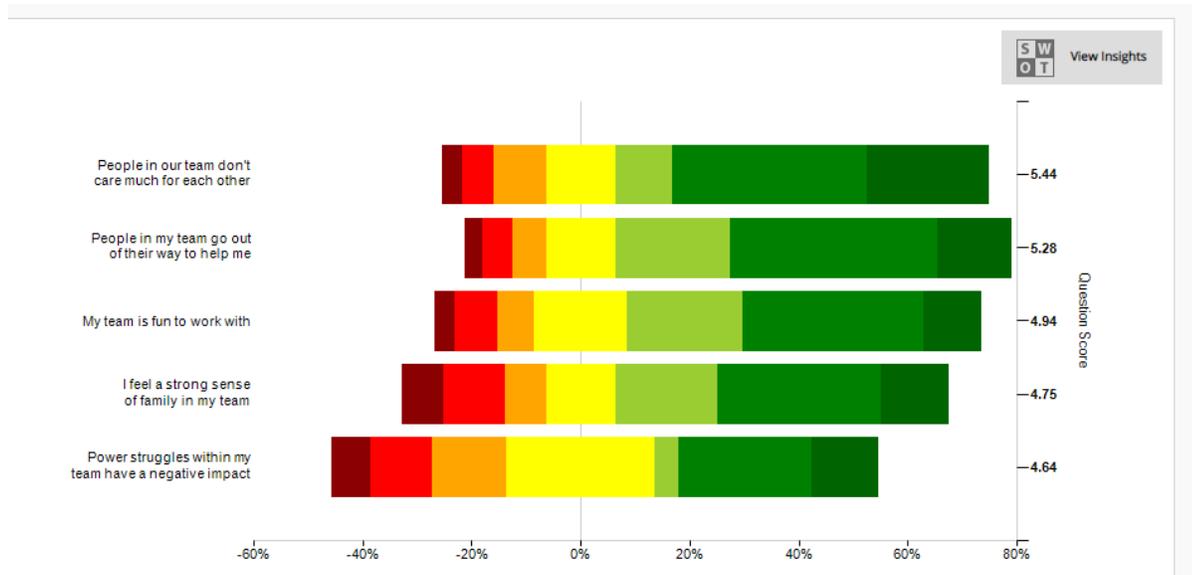
10. Management Heatmap

We have positive data about how managers in our organisation engage with their, team, we can also use this data to target Training and support to managers where it is needed most.



11. Teamwork

Given WNC is 8 months old, we have established that there are many positive aspects of teamwork, we can use this data to enhance this in the coming months.



12. My Company Heatmap

My Company Feedback Heatmap

