

<b>Committee(s):</b> Policy and Resource Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Update on Staff survey results 2024	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	1,2,3,8,9,10
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Alison Littlewood, Chief People Officer & Executive Director of People and HR	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Kaye Saxton-Lea, Acting Assistant Director of Learning and Organisational Development, People and HR	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the recent staff survey conducted to assess employee satisfaction, engagement, and areas for improvement within our organisation. The survey, conducted by People Insight over a five-week period, garnered responses from 74% of our workforce (52% in 2022), and 63% engagement score (52% in 2022) providing a comprehensive overview of staff sentiments.

The analysis of the data from the survey reveals that the initial findings clearly align with the five themes within the People Strategy (2024-29).

Recommendations from People Insights outlines that to continue to build on the engagement score across the City Corporation work to progress the key drivers outlined below will support further engagement.

- My Contribution, My Reward - Recognition
- Trustworthy Leadership – Leadership
- My Talent and Development – Development

The 2024 survey findings reveal considerable progress since the last survey in 2022 and indicate positive progress.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note that: -

Following the publication of the recent survey results, action planning commenced in July 2024. The proposed department actions will align with the strategic action plan and the broader themes of the People Strategy. To ensure transparency and accountability, departments will be required to provide regular updates on their progress.

High level updates will be given to Corporate Services committee (CSC) members on a bi-annual basis, these will include progress on the strategic and local action plans and will align to the twice-yearly People Strategy progress reports.

Regular communications will be maintained in a transparent and timely manner to foster trust and engagement amongst staff, communications and updates will be shared in the regular Town Clerk briefings messages to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to foster a positive and engaging workplace culture.

## Main Report

### 1. Background

The 2024 staff engagement survey was conducted to gather valuable insights and feedback from our employees and casual workers (respondents). It aligned with the themes of the People Strategy and incorporated questions on the proposed upcoming changes to the workplace attendance policy. The survey was available from 15<sup>th</sup> April to the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.

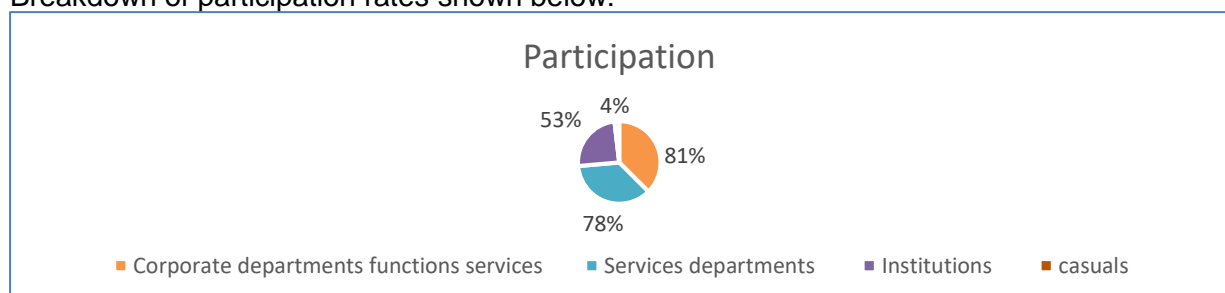
To support teams who were not desk-bound, colleagues from Town Clerk's SLT and People and HR visited various sites to assist employees and the casual workforce in completing the survey. This initiative-taking approach ensured that everyone, regardless of their work environment, had the opportunity to participate and share their feedback. The on-site visits facilitated discussion, engagement and helped address any technical or accessibility issues and enabled more representative data.

For the first time, protected characteristic and socioeconomic questions were added to the end of the staff survey.

To further drive engagement, a series of "you said, we did" stories were shared based on feedback from the previous 2022 survey. These stories highlighted the tangible actions taken and outlined the organisation's ongoing commitment to improving the workplace.

Additionally, a video featuring the Town Clerk emphasised the survey's importance, reinforcing the value placed on employees and casual's feedback. As a result of the engagement initiatives, the like-for-like participation score increased significantly from 52% to 74%. Moreover, the overall engagement score rose from 52% to 63%, indicating a substantial improvement in respondent involvement and satisfaction. Conversely, only 27% of respondents believe that actions will be taken because of this survey. In contrast, 36% responded negatively, while another 36% had a neutral or ambivalent stance. These findings indicate that the need to build trust needs to continue.

Breakdown of participation rates shown below:



## 2. Current Position

### Benchmarking Insights:

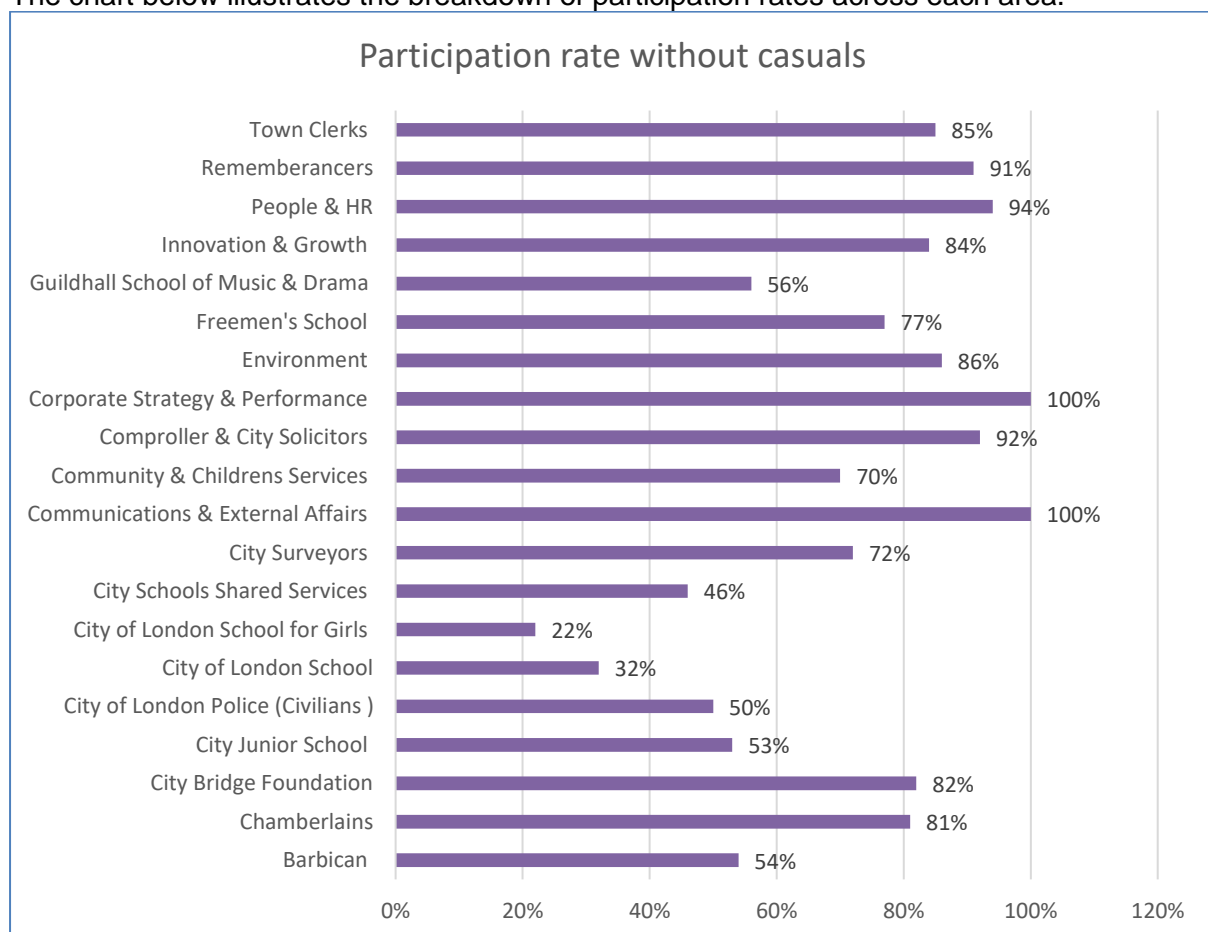
Current benchmarking is against the public sector, which provides some useful comparisons. However, there is no single area that we can benchmark the City Corporation against comprehensively. This highlights the unique nature of our organisation and underscores the need for tailored strategies and actions that specifically address our distinct workforce and operational environment.

Despite the inherent challenges associated with benchmarking, the recent comparison to the 2022 survey reveals significant improvements in several critical areas. Notably, there has been a substantial increase in positive responses regarding manager support and the visibility and engagement of senior leadership. Additionally, there is a marked improvement in respondents understanding of team performance relative to our objectives.

## 3. Composite overview

The composite overview is made up of all departments and institutions except any casual workers.

The chart below illustrates the breakdown of participation rates across each area.



The recent survey findings reveal considerable progress since the 2022 survey, indicating positive organisational progress. Noteworthy highlights include:

- 76% of respondents agree with the statement, "If asked, I would say to friends and family this is a good place to work," marking a 15% increase from the 2022 survey.
- 74% of respondents express pride in working here, which is a 9% improvement over the previous survey.
- There is a notable 20% increase in positive responses regarding our culture of openness and transparency compared to 2022.

These results underscore the positive developments in our workplace environment and the strides we have made in enhancing employee satisfaction and engagement.

The statement "My line manager treats me fairly and with respect" received the highest positive score in the survey, with 84% of respondents expressing agreement. This reflects a keen sense of fairness and respect within managerial conduct across the organisation.

The most improved score compared to the 2022 survey was for the statement "*I know how well my team is doing against our objectives,*" which saw a significant increase of +38%. This improvement indicates enhanced communication and clarity regarding team performance and objectives.

The least improved score was for the statement "*My role allows me to attain the right balance between my work and personal life,*" which showed a decrease of 4% compared to the previous survey. The current survey results for this statement include 59% positive responses, 22% negative responses, and 19% neutral responses. This indicates that there is further work needed around the themes of wellbeing and belonging within the people strategy. Additionally, trustworthy leadership must be emphasised to better support teams in achieving a healthy work-life balance

In the survey, 9 questions allowed respondents to provide their views in open text. A staggering 14,585 comments were entered, reflecting a high level of engagement and willingness to share detailed feedback.

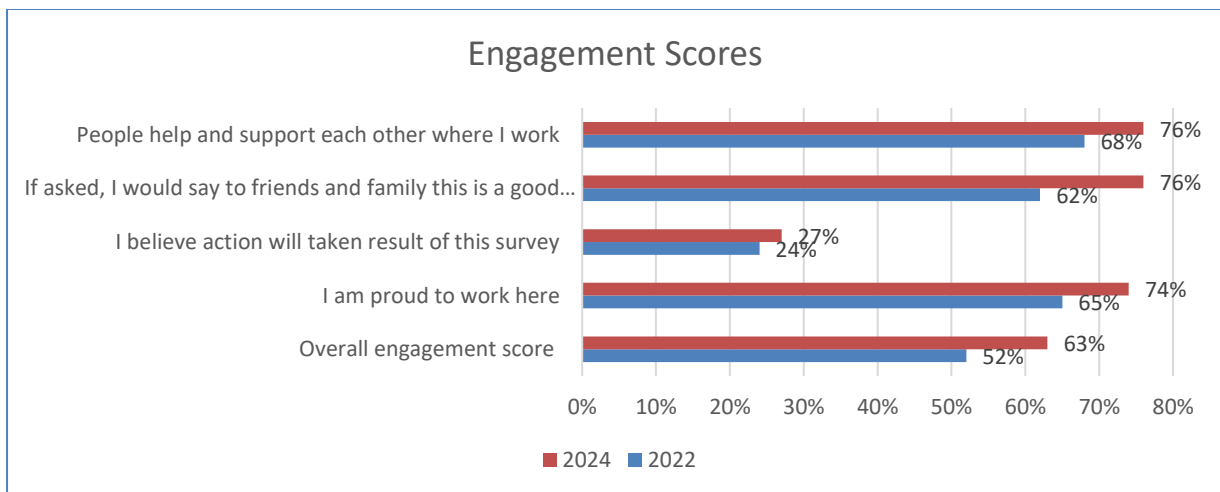
### **Positive comments**

- *"The uniqueness of the City of London; ability to participate in activities outside of my work tasks e.g. networks. Always something to learn if you want to. Location - interesting and fascinating places of history to visit during my lunch break (or after work)."*
- *"Diversity of the departments, the history and traditions of the organisation, the people, the variety of the work i am involved in."*
- "Managers are very helpful if I need anything. Colleagues are very friendly. The work environment is enjoyable."

- “The history and opportunity to be involved in historical events and ceremonies. The pomp and ceremony (within reason) Good pension benefits, Great team relationships Feeling I add value to my department, and this being recognise

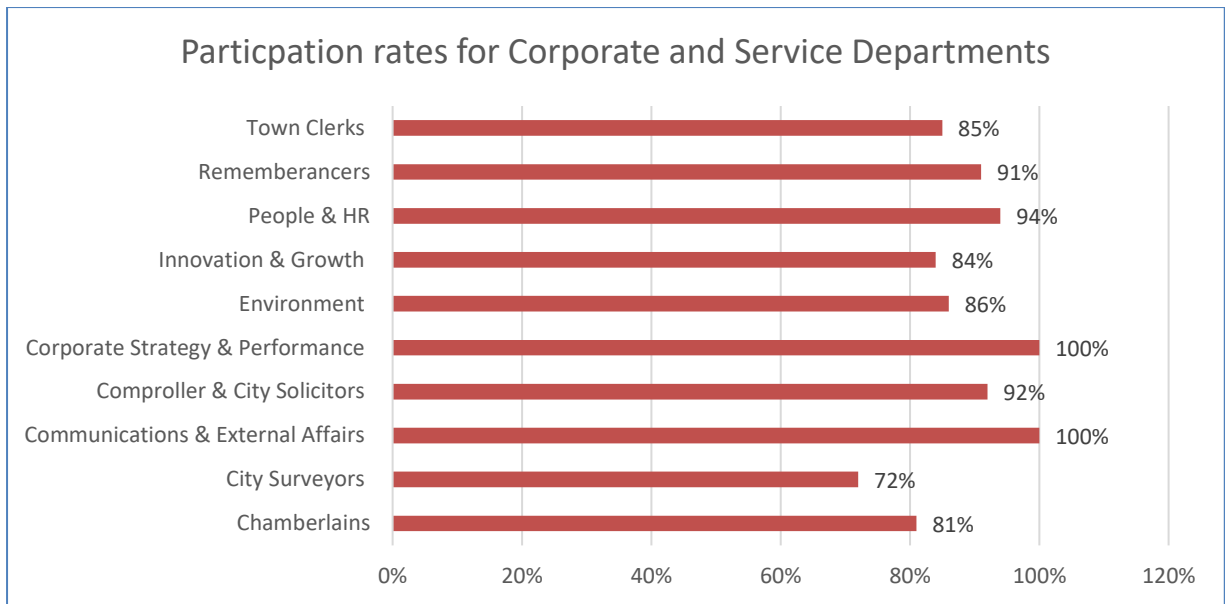
### Negative comments

- *"More frequent opportunities for the different departments to meet, collaborate, and share ideas. Feels a bit siloed."*
- *"The pace in which decisions are made."*
- *"There is constant change which is unsettling and damages morale. The messages for doing so are mixed - save money, streamline process, governance reviews - but it seems piecemeal and only leads to more change in the future. The organisation is still far too bureaucratic, and processes slow down decision making."*
- *"Sometimes poor performance isn't dealt with strongly enough which can create resentment and an imbalance within the team". • "Less reactive working, proper prioritisation and development of a healthy accountability culture rather than blame"*



### 4. Corporate and Service Departments

Participation for this group was 80% with an engagement score of 63%. Response trends show a sizeable number of respondents selected neutral responses, indicating neither positive or negative feelings towards their engagement and satisfaction levels.



The data reveals that while there has been substantial improvement in participation and engagement scores, the high frequency of neutral responses suggests that there is still work to be done to enhance employee satisfaction and encourage further engagement. The neutral stance of respondents highlights areas where employees may feel indifferent or uncertain, which could be pivotal in directing future efforts and initiatives. Targeted improvements to convert neutrality into positive engagement. Continued efforts and strategic interventions will be essential to build on the progress made and to foster a more actively engaged and satisfied workforce.

The highest overall positive score matches the composite score for the statement: "My line manager treats me with respect."

The least favourable score was regarding workplace attendance, with 78% of respondents indicating they would not be in favour of a potential move to a four-day work week in the office.

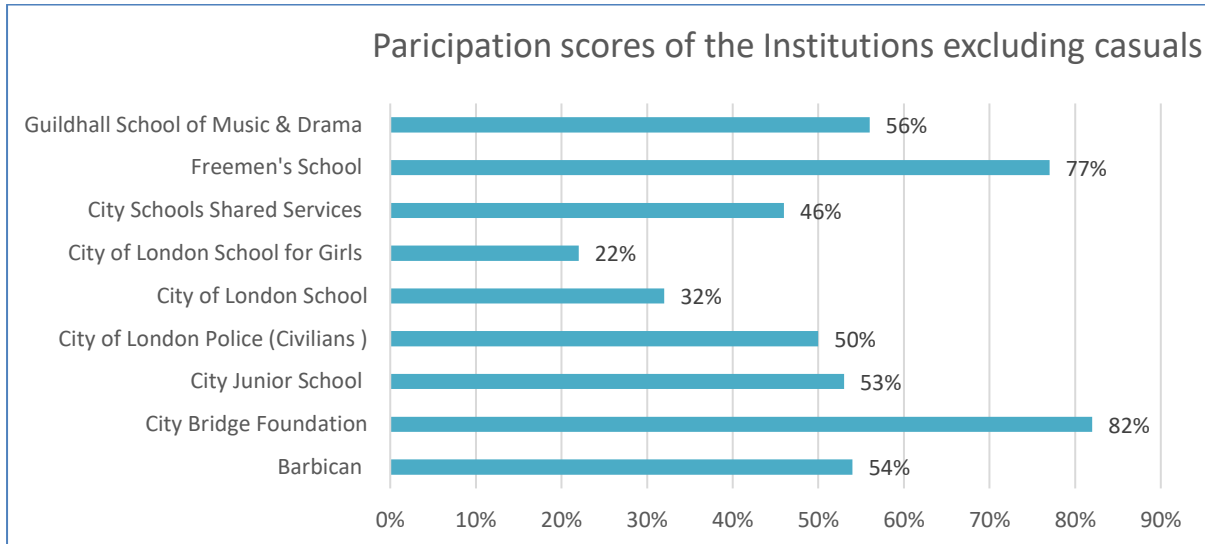
The strong positive feedback regarding respect from line managers is encouraging and should be leveraged to further enhance employee relationships and satisfaction. Conversely, the significant opposition to increase in-office attendance should be carefully considered in future workplace policies to ensure they align with employee preferences and promote overall engagement and productivity.

#### Open question responses

- *"Working in nature, making a positive difference to national and local biodiversity. Relaxed work atmosphere where I am trusted by managers."*
- *"Change some of the antiquated practices in the city, which if changed would bring the city into the 21st century, which would make us more efficient and save the city money!"*

## 5. Institutions

Overall, the Institutions (excluding Casuals) reported a lower engagement score of 53%, which is below the average across other departments within the City Corporation. Like other departments, the Institutions exhibited a high number of neutral responses, indicating ambivalence or uncertainty among respondents.



Despite the mixed results as seen above, it is evident with the right leadership and engagement achieving positive responses and participation is possible across the institutions.

Freeman's School, and City Bridge Foundation, demonstrated higher results in the survey. Freeman's School achieved a notable participation rate of 73% and an engagement score of 69%, which is 6% above the corporation's overall score. Additionally, four key drivers at Freeman's School received higher ratings than the organisational benchmarks, with the highest being a positive response rate of 84% for respecting individual differences, such as cultures, working styles, and backgrounds.

City Bridge Foundation also demonstrated strong performance, with an 82% participation rate and a 63% engagement score. Notably, the statement "The senior leaders in my department/team provide a clear vision of the overall direction" received a 64% positive response rate, which is 10% above the organisational benchmark. These results contributed to the overall positive outcomes.

The survey results further highlighted a significant gap in understanding the Corporate Plan and People Strategy, with these respondents being 14% less likely to comprehend how their work contributes to the organisation's goals compared to the rest of the organisation. This underscores a need for improved communication and alignment efforts to ensure that employees within the Institutions are better informed and more connected to the overarching objectives of the City Corporation.

Three of the five key drivers for the Institutions are linked to Trustworthy Leadership, focusing on:

- **Culture:** Creating a positive and inclusive workplace culture.
- **Communication:** Ensuring clear and effective communication across all levels.
- **Support During Change:** Providing adequate support and resources during periods of change.

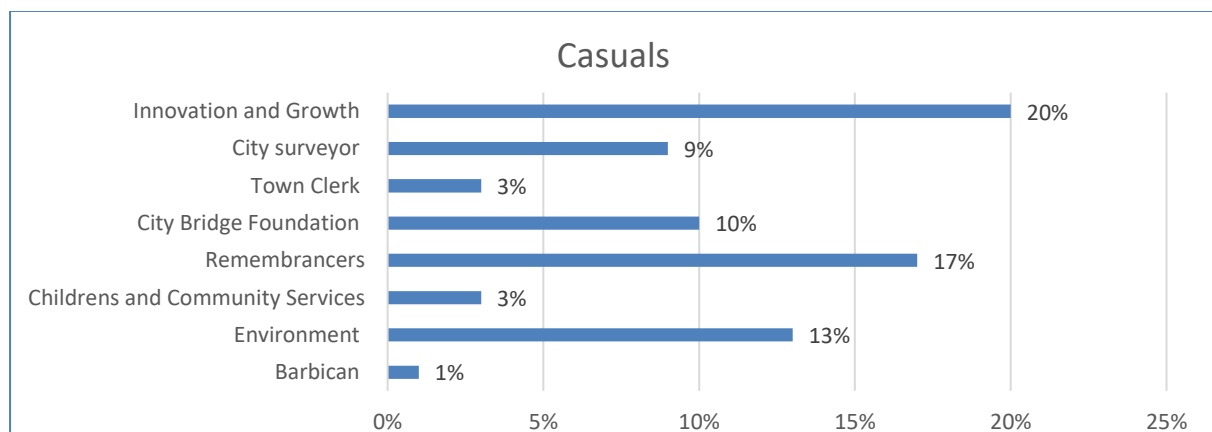
The response from the institutions demonstrates a gap in understanding of the corporate goals. Providing support to enable the institution leads to share and disseminate the detail on the corporate goals, taking into account their strategic landscape will begin to address these concerns.

### Open questions comments

- *“Working with many talented young people, and staff. Of many nationalities, backgrounds, etc, opportunities for cheaper tickets to concerts and dramas”*
- *“The City of London making decisions that equally apply to all institutions, without understanding its institutions' needs and logistics are different. Communication is a weak point and needs improving. People tend to show resistance to change. Lack of rewarding system that makes motivation drop over time.”*

## 6. Casuals

Participation among Casual staff across the organisation was notably low, with only 71 out of the 1914 invited individuals responding, resulting in a 4% response rate. This low participation rate suggest that future comprehensive surveys will exclude casual staff to focus resources more effectively. Instead, more relevant local, targeted pulse surveys should be designed to engage casual staff and address their specific needs and concerns.



Despite the low participation, 70% of those who completed the survey responded positively to feeling valued and recognised for the work they do. This indicates a keen sense of appreciation among the engaged casual workers.

The least favourable result showed that 11% of respondents believed the Town Clerks Executive Leadership Board (ELB) is visible and listens. This highlights the need for improvement in leadership visibility and communications with casual workers.



## Open questions comments

*“Access to nature, good working hours, exercise”*

- *“As casual worker I would like to feel more included in the corporation and have the opportunity to be asked or be aware of other work opportunities that arise and maybe even see them first.”*

## 7. Members

The recent staff engagement survey included two key questions regarding the behaviour and performance of elected members.

The questions were:

- I think Members provide strategic leadership and good governance.
- Members demonstrate our values and behaviours including Equity, Equality, Diversity, and inclusion.

The results highlight concerns among staff about the strategic leadership, governance, and adherence to organisational values by elected members.



- 22% of respondents felt that elected members provide strategic leadership and good governance.
- 27% rated Members performance negatively.
- 51% of respondents were neutral, indicating a portion of staff are undecided or indifferent about the members' effectiveness in these areas.

Question	Impact ↓	Theme	Response Favourability
I think Members provide strategic leadership and good governance		Trustworthy Leadership	

Regarding whether members demonstrate values and behaviours such as leading for equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion, the results were similarly divided.

- 27% positive
- 26% negative
- 46% neutral responses

These responses demonstrate a level of uncertainty and concern about members' commitment to these critical values.

Question	Impact ↓	Theme	Response Favourability
Members demonstrate our values and behaviours including leading for Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion		Trustworthy Leadership	

## Open Comments Analysis

Of the 14,585 open comments, those raising concerns around members conduct, behaviour and views were significant and demonstrate the level of feeling that has previously been informally raised by the workforce. These comments provide qualitative insights that support the quantitative data:

Comments highlighted were.

- *“I was horrified watching the committee meeting where it was ‘voted’ in. Members were rude and aggressive. They are out of touch with staff. They don’t care how this will impact people’s lives. They are prepared to watch good staff walk out the door”.*
- *“Culture amongst officers quite good. Elected Members much less so. Lack of respect shown towards staff and towards diversity.”*
- *“Hold members accountable for their attitudes towards staff, especially in recorded meetings and email communications.”*
- *Member behaviour needs to be sorted once and for all by Members themselves. How many surveys will it take?*
- *“Members to be a bit more human”*
- *More ability to address rude/discriminatory behaviour from Members, Better work environment (i.e. office space) Greater flexible working arrangements.*
- *“Have less bureaucracy, be more joined up, make decisions more quickly, be forward thinking, give people more autonomy for their work; it means they would take more responsibility and care, Give Members less autonomy.”*
- *“Committee Members should adhere to their code of conduct.”*
- *“Foster collegiate and collaborative leadership, provide a clear vision, zero-tolerance policy to toxic and rude Members and senior leaders.”*
- *“Elected Members views and opinions are outdated - there need to be fewer of them and more ceremonial role. The officers are the competent executives who run the organisation despite the Members!”*

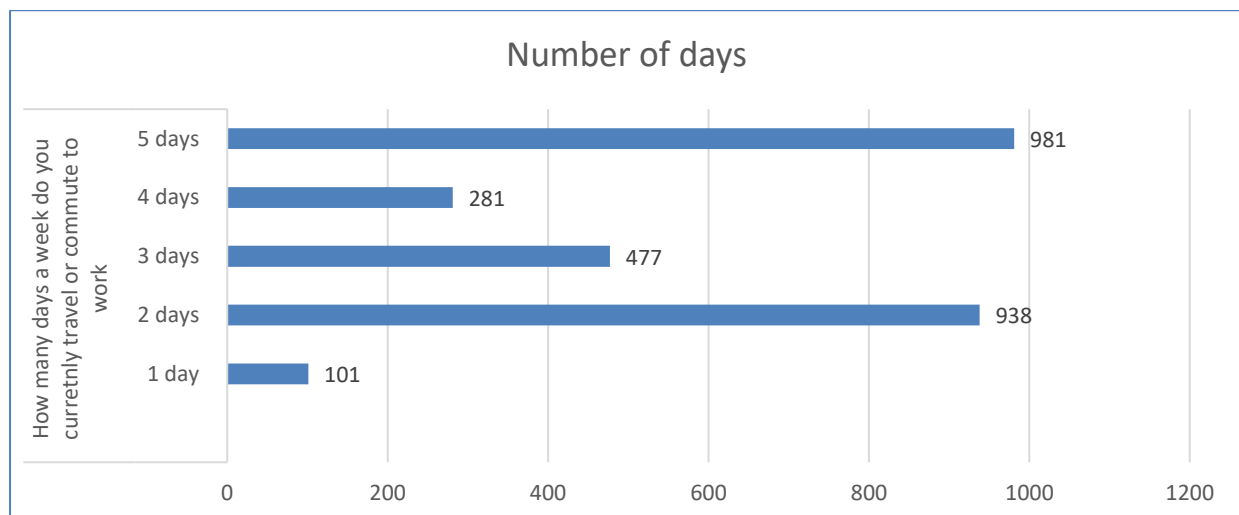
These comments highlight the extent of the feeling from staff towards members behaviour. To ensure this does not impact on staff morale and builds on the commitment made in the people strategy around developing trustworthy leadership this needs to be addressed as a priority.

## 8. Workplace Attendance (WPA)

The survey revealed that 65% of respondents eligible to complete the workplace attendance questions responded negatively to the prospect of returning to the office for more than three days a week.

Over 4,500 open responses highlighted concerns about workplace attendance and demonstrated anxiety at the perceived lack of trust in employees' productivity and commitment when working from home, particularly by Members.

The chart below provides an overview of the current number of days respondents travel to the workplace. This shows that over 61% of the respondents currently travel to the workplace 3 or more days a week.



The questions asked in the survey regarding WPA were:

*The move for workplace attendance from the current 2 days to 3 days a week in September, will encourage me to reconsider my role and future place of work?*

- 47% of respondents who responded to this question agreed or strongly agreed that this change would make them reconsider their role and future place of work.
- 29% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 23% disagreed.

*I would support a potential move to 4 days a week for workplace attendance in the future.*

- 8% of respondents were in favour.
- 77% responded negatively.
- 15% were neutral.

These findings indicate that changes to the workplace attendance policy is a significant concern for our workforce and careful consideration needs to be given to future planning. However, recent research by Ipsos, Karian and Box<sup>1</sup> reports that three days in the office per week is optimal for key aspects of employee engagement and workplace culture. The report shows that 67% of full-time office workers spend three or more days at their employer's location, suggesting that the changes to workplace attendance in September 2024 align with prevailing opinions.

The Chief Executive of Ipsos Karian and Box stated "In response to the recent survey, three days in the office came out as an optimal solution. It strikes the right balance that realises the benefits of office working for both employer and employee, while also giving individuals the ability to think, work and manage their home lives in a flexible way".

## **9. Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEDI)**

Results from a selection of the EEDI questions show the following results.

- 66% of respondents agreed with the statement, "My leadership team is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace".
- 63% of respondents gave a favourable response to the statement, "Leaders here understand that Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is central to our future success."
- The statement, "Members demonstrate our values and behaviours, including leading for Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion," received less favourable responses, with 27% agreeing, 26% disagreeing, and 46% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Respondents were also asked to provide additional information regarding their sensitive and socioeconomic data. This effort aims to build a more detailed workforce profile, allowing us to better understand and address the diverse needs and circumstances of our employees.

The survey results have been analysed from various perspectives, including departmental, gender, age, length of service, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. This data serves as an invaluable benchmark for future surveys, helping us track the impact of our initiatives and identify areas needing further attention.

## **Key Findings**

### **Gender**

- The survey results indicate a high level of gender equality within our organisation. Responses across various themes are deemed to be consistent between male and female respondents.

### **Age**

- Staff aged 30-39 are least positive about My Contribution My Reward relative to their cohort.

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<sup>1</sup> Making the case for the office, Ipsos, Karian and Box, September 2023

- Whilst still in the minority, those between ages of 50-69 are notably more likely to respond favourably to the Workplace Attendance questions, relative to their cohort.

### **Length of Service**

- Staff who have been with the City Corporation for less than 12 months generally reported the most positive responses across all themes.
- A gradual decline in positivity is noted over time, with those having more than 11 years of service responding less favourably.

### **Ethnicity**

- Those who selected "prefer not to say" consistently scored less favourably across all themes compared to other cohorts.
- Black, Black British, or Caribbean background and Chinese\* staff were notably less likely to respond favourably to My Wellbeing and Belonging and Building Brilliant Basics

### **Disability**

- The difference of employee experience between those with a disability and those without is evident, indicating a need for targeted support and inclusive practices to encourage ongoing engagement.

### **Sexual Orientation**

- Staff who selected "Prefer not to say" reported the least favourable responses across all themes.
- Employees who identify as bisexual, lesbian, pansexual, or queer tend to respond less favourably to themes related to "My Talent, My Development,"

In relation to the questions posed for EEDI the responses highlight areas where we need to focus on improving support and development opportunities.

The insights gained from this survey are critical for understanding the current views of our workforce and guiding future improvements. The consistency in gender responses is encouraging, suggesting effective gender equality measures. The positive responses from the youngest and oldest staff members highlight potential areas of engagement strategies for different age groups. The decline in positivity with longer service underscores the need for ongoing engagement and support for long-service staff.

Additionally, the less favourable responses from those who prefer not to disclose their ethnicity or sexual orientation, as well as from employees with disabilities and those identifying as bisexual, lesbian, pansexual, or queer, highlighting the importance of fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment. These findings will inform our ongoing efforts to enhance the employee experience and support the goals of our people strategy.

The mixed responses regarding commitment to and understanding of EEDI highlight areas where further communication and action are needed.

## 10. Next Steps

To address the findings of the survey and align with the strategic priorities, the following actions are recommended.

### Strategic Action Plan:

- **Workforce Development:** An initiative-taking strategic action plan which aligns to the key drivers and themes of the People Strategy will be developed as a priority and progressed.

This will include the following actions.

- The new look **senior leadership forum** launched in July, to further develop the work around the Trustworthy Leadership and My Talent and Development themes of the People Strategy.
- To establish an **Employee Voice** task and finish working group hold the organisation to account for delivery of the actions as agreed from the 2024 staff survey.
- A plan to be agreed by the Court of the Common Council to help Members address their feedback and improve their reputation.
- Agreement by ELB on the on the organisation wide strategic response and action plan.

By following these steps, this strategic approach will ensure that policies and actions are in line with the needs and expectations of our workforce, fostering a more positive and productive work environment whilst meeting our corporate aims and objectives.

### Chief Officers' Action Plans:

- **Dedicated Administrator:** Areas have a nominated person who will have access to their departmental dashboard to support their action planning.
- **Targeted Actions:** These plans will be tailored to address specific concerns and improvement areas identified within their teams.

### Collation and Communication:

- **Action Plan Compilation:** The People and HR teams will compile feedback from Chief Officers in response to their action planning to enable regular reporting on progress.
- **"You Said, We Did":** this initiative will be implemented to communicate the actions taken in response to respondent feedback. This will support further engagement and demonstrate that their input is being taken seriously and to show action is being taken.

### Corporate & Strategic Implications

**Strategic implications** – This proposal will support our priorities of the themes of the people strategy more effectively, improve retention and employee engagement.

**Financial implications** - Currently there is no allocated budget to cover the cost of commissioning the Annual Survey. The costs will therefore need to be met from the People & HR Corporate Training Budget for 2024/25.

**Resource implications** – staff resources will be required to manage, prioritising and implementation of changes based on the survey results and action plans which may include training programmes and process improvements and clear communication on actions undertaken.

**Legal implications** – None

**Risk implications.** The recommendations are minimal risk.

**Equalities implications** – It is essential that both the Staff Survey and Pulse Survey allow employees to disclose their protected characteristics anonymously. This will be included in all future surveys. This then enables analysis of the findings by protected characteristics to identify trends and any underlying issues of disproportionate impact.

**Climate implications** - None

**Security implications** – None

## **Conclusion**

The outlined recommendations provide a clear framework for translating the 2024 staff survey results into actionable plans. With structured timelines, regular updates, and a focus on alignment with strategic objectives, the organisation will be well-positioned to enhance staff engagement and overall organisational performance.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – People Insight City of London staff engagement survey results presentation

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