**Hafod’s Organisational Culture Profile**

In March 2019, Hafod Board and Committee Members and a selection of staff were invited to take part in a cultural profile survey based on the work of Groysberg *et al* (2018)[[1]](#endnote-1) of Harvard Business School. This exercise was first undertaken in March 2018 and this was the second follow-up survey, designed to record any changes to the perceived culture of Hafod throughout a period of organisational change.

**Methodology**

Participants were invited to rank, on a five-point scale, how well they thought each of 16 statements described Hafod. The statements were paired and organised into eight themes, or attributes, with the scores added to give an overall score for the attribute, *e.g.* the ratings out of five for the statements “the organisation is focused on collaboration and mutual trust” and “the organisation feels like a big family” add together to form a score out of ten for the attribute of “Caring”.

*Table 1: Statements and attributes*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The organisation is focused on** | **+** | **The organisation feels like** | **=** | **Total** |
| Collaboration & mutual trust | + | A big family | = | Caring |
| Compassion & tolerance | + | An idealistic community or cause | = | Purpose |
| Exploration & creativity | + | A dynamic project | = | Learning |
| Fun & excitement | + | A celebration | = | Enjoyment |
| Achievement & winning | + | A meritocracy | = | Results |
| Strength & boldness | + | A competitive arena | = | Authority |
| Planning & calculation | + | A meticulously planned operation | = | Safety |
| Structure & stability | + | A smoothly running machine | = | Order |

All 18 Hafod Board and Committee Members were invited to take part, together with 122 members of staff. At the start of 2018, there were separate Boards for Hafod Care, Hafod Housing and Hafod Resources, but these have now been replaced by a single Hafod Board, supported by two committees. The selection of staff invited to take part in the survey was expanded after the first iteration. The original survey was distributed to 86 members of staff, drawn from the Operational Leadership Group, the Housing & Care Change Lab Workshops, attendees at a series of change management workshops, and managers from across the organisation. These groups of staff were chosen as they are most likely to be able to comment on the current culture of the organisation, and have a part in cascading current developments to others. The invitation lists for the September 2018 and March 2019 reiterations of the organisational culture survey were expanded to include all frontline officers, including neighbourhood coaches, maintenance surveyors and care home managers and support managers. The expanded invitation list thereby encompasses staff who regularly interact with a variety of other teams, as well as customers, and are either based in, or regularly attend meetings at, Hafod’s main office at St Hilary Court. This level of interaction means that the invitees are best placed to comment on any changes in Hafod’s culture, and are knowledgeable about major potential influences on the organisational culture, such as the Welsh Government’s Regulatory Judgement, and the corporate priorities promoted by the Executive team. In March 2019, a total of 10 Board/Committee members and 112 staff took part, representing an 87% return overall.

**Results**

The results showed that Hafod has a cultural profile that leans towards the attributes of Learning, Purpose and Authority. These three attributes were the top three choices, in the same order, in the original survey in March 2018, and again in the second survey in September 2018. The difference between the top three choices is small, however. Board and Committee Members ranked each attribute in a different order to staff, rating Purpose highest, Learning second, and Results in third place, above Authority.

*Table 2: Top three cultural attributes*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First** | **Second** | **Third** |
| **Overall** | Learning | Purpose  | Authority |
| **Board/Committees** | Purpose  | Learning  | Results |
| **Staff** | Learning | Purpose  | Authority |

As with the previous two surveys, Board and Committee Members gave a higher score than staff to all eight cultural attributes. The difference was only statistically significant (p < .05) for Order, however, which Board and Committee Members continue to rate much higher than staff.

Six of the eight cultural attributes were given lower overall average scores in March 2019, than they were given in the September survey with only Order and Enjoyment showing small increases. None of the changes were large enough to be considered statistically significant.

Six of the eight attributes had shown a rise in the previous survey, and it is possible that this rise and fall may be evidence of a seasonal effect. Only Safety has shown consecutive falls, leaving this attribute with a lower rating in the March 2019 survey than 12 months before. Enjoyment is the only attribute to show consecutive rises, so is now rated higher than in March 2018, although still the lowest-rated of the eight attributes. In both cases, the changes are too small to be considered statistically significant.

**Discussion**

Board/Committee members and staff continue to agree that Hafod is focused on Learning and Purpose. Groysberg *et al* consider these values to be held by organisations that emphasise flexibility, adaptability and receptiveness to change, which would seem appropriate for an organisation undergoing a change journey such as Hafod’s. They also note that convergence between staff and Board ratings indicate more stable organisational cultures.

Since the first survey was carried out in March, the rationalization of the Hendre group structure and reformation of a single Hafod board, with new Board and Committee members, has potentially contributed to high Purpose scores. The high ratings for Learning may have been influenced by the relaunched PDR process and e-learning facility, the launch of Academi Hafod and the recent drive to fill a range of work experience placements across the organisation.

Groysberg *et al* ascribe both advantages and disadvantages to each of the eight attributes, when featured strongly in an organisation’s culture. These are outlined in Table 3 overleaf, which lists each attribute in order of the scores given to it by Hafod Board/Committee Members and staff. The continued high figures for Learning and Purpose suggest a culture with an appreciation for innovation and social responsibility, but Groysberg *et al* warn that practical concerns and existing advantages may be missed by an overemphasis on exploration and long-term goals. It is possible that this may be balanced by the comparatively high scores for Authority, which has broadly complementary advantages and disadvantages.

The low scores for Safety and Order, however, may be interpreted as warning signs of potential instability, conflict, and reduced risk management and operational efficiency, as the structure of the organisation continues to evolve. These are not to be unexpected in an organisation that is in the process of significant change, but should be borne in mind when seeking to provide assurance that Hafod’s vision of integrated services is being delivered.

The attribute given the lowest figures by both Board/Committee members and staff was Enjoyment, as was the case in both previous surveys. This suggests that the organisation may be missing out on the advantages associated with this trait – high employee morale, engagement and creativity.

*Table 3: Advantages & disadvantages*

| **Ave score** | **CULTURE STYLE** | **ADVANTAGES** | **DISADVANTAGES** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **7.0** | **Learning**Open, innovative, exploring | Improved innovation, agility, and organisational learning | Overemphasis on exploration may lead to a lack of focus and an inability to exploit existing advantages |
| **6.8** | **Purpose**Purpose driven, idealistic, tolerant | Improved appreciation for diversity, sustainability, and social responsibility | Overemphasis on a long-term purpose and ideals may get in the way of practical and immediate concerns |
| **6.7** | **Authority**Bold, decisive, dominant | Improved speed of decision making and responsiveness to threats or crises | Overemphasis on strong authority and bold decision making may lead to politics, conflict, and a psychologically unsafe work environment |
| **6.5** | **Caring**Warm, sincere, relational | Improved teamwork, engagement, communication, trust, and sense of belonging | Overemphasis on consensus building may reduce exploration of options, stifle competitiveness, and slow decision making |
| **6.5** | **Results**Achievement driven, goal focussed | Improved execution, external focus, capability building, and goal achievement | Overemphasis on achieving results may lead to communication and collaboration breakdowns and higher levels of stress and anxiety |
| **6.0** | **Safety**Realistic, careful, prepared | Improved risk management, stability, and business continuity | Overemphasis on standardisation and formalisation may lead to bureaucracy, inflexibility, and dehumanisation of the work environment |
| **5.9** | **Order**Rule abiding, respectful, cooperative | Improved operational efficiency, reduced conflict, and greater civic-mindedness | Overemphasis on rules and traditions may reduce individualism, stifle creativity, and limit organisational agility |
| **5.5** | **Enjoyment**Playful, instinctive, fun loving | Improved employee morale, engagement and creativity | Overemphasis on autonomy and engagement may lead to a lack of discipline and create possible compliance or governance issues |

**Conclusions**

This third iteration of the organisational cultural profile survey suggests that Hafod continues to be focused on Purpose and Learning, with Authority and Results being lesser, but important elements. Low scores for Safety and Order should be monitored, however.

Groysberg *et al* suggest that cultures focused on Learning and Purpose are characteristic of organisations with a high degree of flexibility in response to change, as illustrated in the diagram below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | FLEXIBILITY |  |
| INDEPENDENCE |  | INTERDEPENDENCE |
|  | STABILITY |  |

Board/Committee and staff perspectives are still similar to one another, and the lack of any statistically significant change between the three iterations of this survey suggests that the organisational culture is very stable. Stable organisational cultures can be difficult to change, should change be desired.

These results are snapshots of opinions at regular points in Hafod’s change journey, and they highlight some potential advantages and disadvantages of focusing on different attributes. Future reiterations of the survey will help to capture any shift in organisational culture, as our change journey continues.

1. Groysberg, Boris, J Lee, J Price, J Yo-Jud Cheng, Harvard Business Review, Jan-Feb 2018, 44-57 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)