

Argyll and Bute Council Employee Engagement Strategy 2015 – 2017

***Making Argyll and Bute a place people choose
to live, learn, work and do business.***

Making it Happen

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Argyll and Bute Council Employee Engagement Strategy

FOREWORD

We are pleased to introduce the Council's Employee Engagement Strategy for 2015-17. Our Council is committed to making Argyll and Bute a place people choose to live, learn, work and do business. The services we deliver are vital to doing this and our employees are at the heart of delivering those services. Our corporate plan identifies a culture, structure and systems that will make our council a high performing and improving organisation that we are confident that people choose to work for. This strategy outlines how we aim to achieve this through a commitment to engaging with our employees.

Our success so far has been rooted in the motivated employees who deliver our services. We want to develop a work environment where our employees continue to be involved in our success and can perform at their best. We recognise that having motivated and engaged employees is the best way to deliver best value services to our customers and partners. This strategy sets out the Council's approach to creating a work environment where employees feel engaged, involved and empowered to deliver high quality services to our customers and communities.

Dick Walsh, Council Leader

Sally Loudon, Chief Executive

Introduction

The Employee Engagement Strategy supports the delivery of the Council's priorities contained within the Corporate Plan 2015-2017 and puts in place some of the key objectives identified in the HR and Organisational Development Strategy.

Employee engagement can be seen as the way people think, act and behave at work. Engaged staff are committed and act as ambassadors for the Council supporting our ambition to remain an employer of choice. Evidence shows that higher levels of engagement in an organisation contribute to better performance, better quality of service and greater wellbeing for employees.

Engaged employees will not only choose to work for Argyll and Bute Council but will recommend us as an employer to others. As a council we ensure that each individual employee's objectives are clear and are aligned to our corporate priorities, as set out in our corporate plan. Many of our employees have an opportunity each year to feed back through our PRD process on their contribution and to discuss future development. Through our suggestion scheme and through team meetings, our employees can contribute their ideas for innovations to put in place improvements for their customers, service users, themselves and the wider organisation.

We recognise achievement amongst our employees on a regular basis, with employee award and recognition events and recognise the value of regular, positive feedback on a job well done. Our Celebrating Success pages of the Hub share employee achievements regularly and highlight the value placed on recognition.

The success of the Council is highly dependent on the skills and commitment of its employees. The employee engagement strategy seeks to send out a simple and clear message about the Council's aspirations and expectations as a good employer, setting out the principle of engaging with employees to become a better performing council.

During 2014 a range of engagement activity took place to find out what employees think of the Council as an employer. This included surveys, focus groups and roadshows. This Employee Engagement Strategy has been informed by the feedback received from employees through these activities.

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The Employee Engagement Strategy is an enabling corporate strategy and sets out how we will create an environment where employees' individual objectives are aligned to corporate outcomes and that they have the support they need to perform at their best.

The underlying purpose of this strategy is to have a meaningful, positive impact on front line services. There are five main categories of engagement activity identified in this Employee Engagement Strategy. Each activity is designed to ensure that employees are

engaged and empowered to deliver the Council’s corporate priorities and involved in identifying areas for improving service delivery.

The strategy links to the successful delivery of the following key corporate priorities:

- Our culture, structure and systems make our Council a high performing and improving organisation that people choose to work for
- We provide excellent communications, customer service, consultation and engagement
- We grow excellent leaders in our managers and elected members

Our Employee Engagement strategic outcomes are illustrated in the diagram below.



These Strategic outcomes are developed in more detail below.

1.0 Growing Excellent Leaders and Managers

- 1.1 Line managers have an extremely important role at Argyll and Bute Council. For employees, their line manager is their gateway to the organisation. They rely on their line manager to communicate key corporate messages, ensure they have access to information and tools that allow them to do their job, agree clear objectives offering constructive feedback on their performance including recognition for a job well done. Great managers must also involve employees, listen to their views and encourage them to put forward suggestions and ideas. Great managers need to be great communicators.
- 1.2 Senior Managers have an important role to play in creating a vision for the organisation, defining the organisation’s leadership, demonstrating those behaviours and sharing these with employees. The Council recognises the importance of supporting and developing our managers and leaders to ensure they have the skills, attitudes and behaviours to achieve this. The Argyll and Bute Manager and Leadership development

programmes, which have been recognised with a Bronze Cosla Excellence Award, will be continually developed to ensure they cover the relevant behaviours and competencies that allow managers to create a culture of open communication and engagement within their teams.

2.0 Employee Voice: Involving our Employees

- 2.1 Employees are more likely to be engaged when they are given opportunities to express their views and feel that their views are taken seriously. Our employees work with service users on a daily basis delivering a range of services and are therefore often best placed to provide input to how these services can be improved.
- 2.2 We will continue to build on the range of methods available for employees to become more involved at a corporate level this will include development of the suggestion scheme and a programme of consultation and engagement activities around large corporate themes such as change and transformation as well as day to day service delivery and improvement. We will ensure that systems are in place that allow employees to be involved in shaping the development and improvements in their services, embedding a culture of continuous improvement across the entire organisation.
- 2.3 The Council recognises the importance of fostering positive relations with the trade unions through consultation and involvement. The Council will continue to build on the positive partnership that exists with our recognised trades unions and further develop our framework of involvement and consultation.

3.0 Employee Recognition: Acknowledging a job well done

- 3.1 We have a dedicated and innovative workforce who deliver excellence across the board. We will continue to promote and celebrate the success of our employees and teams via the hub and various other communication methods. Recognition of success and excellence in our workforce will be further developed at individual, team and corporate level including further development of our internal excellence awards and formal recognition events. We will work toward developing a recognition scheme.
- 3.2 While formal recognition of successes and achievements are an important part celebrating our success, the engagement activity undertaken during 2014 suggested that positive informal feedback from line managers on a day to day basis for a job well done is something that employee's value. This element of employee recognition will be built into a future review of the Argyll and Bute Manager programme.

4.0 Development and Training

- 4.1 Our employees deliver vital services to our communities and to do this effectively they must have the appropriate skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. The Council has a good reputation for providing staff with appropriate training and development opportunities which supports our reputation as an employer of choice and attracts

quality applicants to positions within the Council. Through initiatives such as growing our own we will continue to develop and train our employees to ensure they can continue to deliver excellent services to our service users and communities across Argyll and Bute both now and in the future.

- 4.2 In line with our HR and OD strategy we will ensure that we recruit and develop employees who display the appropriate attitudes and behaviours in line with our corporate values and provide them with the training they need. Our Management and Leadership development programmes will continue to be developed in line with organisational requirements.

5.0 A Safe and Healthy Work Environment

- 5.1 We recognise that for employees to give their best at work they must have a safe and healthy work environment in which to do so. Through our Healthy Working lives group, we will continue to drive forward our proactive wellbeing agenda which aims to promote healthy lifestyle choices for our staff. Through this agenda the Council has already achieved Bronze level Healthy Working Lives accreditation and we aim to build on this success. The ongoing work of this group and the highlighting of positive wellbeing will underpin the Council's approach to improving attendance at work and reducing stress levels.
- 5.2 In addition, we will continue to develop and refine processes to ensure that employees remain safe at work and where possible will mitigate risks to employee health and wellbeing.

6.0 Measuring Engagement

- 6.1 This strategy sets out the councils approach to employee engagement and in order to monitor the success of initiatives developed from this strategy it is important that the Council continues to monitor the engagement levels of our employees. The recent employee surveys have shown that our overall response rate and therefore engagement level is average for the size and type of organisation that we are. However it also shows us that there are low engagement levels amongst some of our employee groups. We recognise that high levels of employee engagement are an essential element of a resilient and high performing organisation, so we are ambitious to improve engagement and survey response levels. Evidence shows that different approaches to engagement are important, taking account of the employee group profile. It also shows that shorter, more frequent engagement achieves higher response rates and increases engagement.
- 6.2 We will develop a programme of regular engagement activity and will actively seek to increase accessibility of this to ensure that as many employees as possible can have their say. We are working to improve our engagement with employees, particularly those who are non-office based and who have shown the lowest levels of engagement, to ensure that they have sufficient opportunities to give feedback and make their views known. We will review the current employee questionnaires that are in use and simplify them to maximise their impact. We will ensure that the results and findings are

communicated in ways that are accessible to all.

- 6.3 We recognise that an important aspect of engagement is regular contact with managers and supervisors in a structured manner. As set out in the HR and OD Strategy, the organisation will prepare and develop a PRD system for manual workers, which will underpin an appraisal and engagement process for this group.
- 6.4 We also recognise that the skills required for managers to engage effectively with employees centre around communication and conversation. Research shows that improved conversations in the workplace between managers and employees are a prerequisite to improved engagement levels and ultimately overall performance. We will enhance the communication element of the Argyll and Bute Manager Programme to include appropriate training to address this.
- 6.5 Measurement indicators for conversation and communication are directly assessed in the employee survey questions. Over the longer term can be assessed against the people management indicators in service and departmental scorecards. Management units with greater communication and engagement skills and practice will exhibit lower levels of absence, grievances and disciplinaries. This has a direct impact on the resource available to the service, service quality and employee wellbeing.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Argyll and Bute Council is a people organisation, which is committed to being a high performing and improving organisation. Our employees are at the heart of what we do and are at the frontline of all the services that we deliver. We recognise that an organisation with an engaged workforce has a higher degree of success in performance and improvement. This strategy sets out our approach to achieving this.
- 7.2 The strategy is accompanied by an action plan that sets out the specific activities that we will implement in order to achieve these strategic objectives.

8.0 Measuring Performance

- 8.1 The performance indicators contained in the following table will be measured to determine the impact of the Employee Engagement Strategy through future employee engagement activities such as staff surveys. Some of these indicators are new measures and targets will therefore be confirmed following identification of a benchmark figure.

Measuring Performance			
Outcome	Performance Indicator	2014/15	2017 Target
We grow excellent leaders and managers	% of employees reporting they are treated with respect by their line manager	82%	85%
	% of employees who feel that their work contribution is recognised by their line manager	70%	75%
	% of employees who report they regularly receive constructive feedback on their work	49%	55%
Our Culture, structure and systems make our council a high performing organisation that people choose to work for	% of employees reporting conflict at work (friction or anger between colleagues)	20%	15%
	% of employees reporting they have agreed their training and development needs in the last 12 months	64%	70%
	Average days lost per employee due to sickness absence	10.6	9.78
	% of employees reporting that they would recommend the Council as a good place to work	60%	65%
	% of employees who feel the Council takes health and safety at work seriously	70%	75%
	% of employee reporting the Council takes equalities seriously as an employer	69%	75%
We provide excellent communication, consultation and engagement	% of employees who report their ideas are welcomed as a way of improving services	57%	65%
	% of employees reporting they are kept well informed of council decisions	46%	60%
	% of employees reporting that management seeks employees views and opinions	43%	48%
	% of employees reporting they are satisfied with communication in the Council	42%	52%

Employee Engagement Strategy Action Plan						
Reference	Topic	Outcome	Actions	Timeline	Responsible Person	Status
EE1.0	Growing Excellent Leaders and Managers	Our leaders and managers demonstrate behaviours which support the organisation's culture and create an environment where our employees can excel.	Leadership programme for third tier managers is refined based on feedback and rolled out	Dec 2015	HR and OD Manager	
EE1.1			Continued roll out and development of Argyll and Bute Manager Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for Management tier • Refinements to ensure programme reflects planned work on culture and behaviours • Options considered for accreditation of the programme 	Ongoing March 2016 March 2017 March 2017	HR and OD Manager	
EE1.2			Self-Assessment Framework (developed as part of Corporate Improvement Strategy) is used to provide a benchmark for leadership results. This will in turn provide a baseline on which continuous improvement in our leadership approach can be developed	March 2017 (or in accordance with timescale developed in the CIS)	HR and OD Manager	
EE2.0	Employee Voice: Involving our employees	Employees are involved in corporate activities and have the ability to put forward ideas on how	Options for increasing ways for employees to feedback ideas to management developed as part of consultation and engagement toolkit (this will include development of existing methods such as the employee suggestion	March 2016	HR and OD Manager/ Communications Manager	

		services or processes could be improved.	scheme)			
EE2.1			Employee forums (including Equalities forum and Healthy Working Lives group) have the opportunity to be involved in the development and review of relevant corporate plans, policies and procedures	Ongoing	HR and OD Manager	
EE2.2			Regular Trades Union Liaison Meetings at corporate and departmental level take place	Ongoing	Head of Improvement and HR-Directors	
EE3.0	Employee Recognition: Recognising a job well done	Employees receive credit where it is due and feel their contribution is valued through recognition of a job well done.	Formal recognition: Employee Excellence Awards developed with recognition categories	October 2015	HR and OD Manager	Categories approved and closing date for applications 21 st August 2015
EE3.1			Informal recognition: Revision of Argyll and Bute Manager programme will include conversation skills and dialogue which will support provision of constructive feedback including recognition for positive contribution	March 2017	HR and OD Manager	
EE3.2			Celebrating success- Managers will be reminded to update the "Celebrating Success" pages on the hub with employee and team achievements	December 2015	HR and OD Manager	
EE3.3			Internal communications strategy will include focus on people and achievements	March 2016	Communications Manager	
EE4.0	Development and Training	Employees receive the	Corporate approach to Talent Management/ Growing our own	March 2017	HR and OD Manager	

		training they need to do their job and those who display the appropriate knowledge, values and behaviours have the opportunity to develop within the Council	developed and approved. This will link to workforce planning and include Modern Apprenticeships, Argyll and Bute Manager and Specific Professional development opportunities.			
EE4.1			Corporate training programme developed, approved and rolled out following learning needs analysis	March 2016	HR and OD Manager	
EE5.0	Safe and Healthy work environment	Employees are equipped to do their jobs safely and have access to information and resources on making healthy lifestyle choices	Healthy working lives group develop and roll out programme of campaigns to raise awareness of healthy options	Jan 2016	HR and OD Manager	
EE5.1			Investigation into possible joint HWL campaigns with key partners (e.g. CPP)	March 2016	HR and OD Manager	
EE6.0	Measuring Engagement	Council develops approach to measuring employee engagement	Work with Napier university in developing Employee Value Proposition	March 2016	Head of Improvement and HR	