

Employee Engagement Strategy

Introduction

The council's strategic plan, Plan 2030, sets out Lancaster's approach to tackling the various challenges that the district faces in the upcoming years. The plan outlines our priorities for addressing the challenges we face, but also the opportunities that exist:

- A sustainable District
- An Inclusive and Prosperous Local Economy
- Healthy and Happy Communities
- A Co-operative, Kind and Responsible Council

Our colleagues are critical in helping us to achieve these priorities and fulfil our purpose: 'in partnership with our communities, creating a district where people can flourish'. However, without an engaged and valued workforce the challenge of achieving our priorities becomes greater.

This Employee Engagement Strategy details a range of initiatives that will support us in harnessing our collective skills, knowledge and voice, to enable us to establish a place where we come to work with enthusiasm, energy and feel involved in delivering on our plan.

What do we mean by employee engagement?

Employee Engagement can be defined as the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace. In other words, it is where an employee is actively engaged in their work rather than simply putting in the time. Although there is no 'one size fits all' approach in creating successful employee engagement, four common enablers emerged from the Macleod Review, 2009: employee voice, engaging managers, organisational integrity and strategic narrative.

Aims of the strategy

This strategy has been designed to support all Lancaster City Council colleagues by taking an approach that considers the four key enablers of employee engagement. To achieve our intended outcomes as an organisation we want to create an environment where all employees come to work energised, where we are motivated in our job, feel heard, and enjoy working for Lancaster City Council as an employer. This can only be achieved if:

- Employees work in an environment where they feel able to express their views, opinions, concerns and suggestions and are central to solutions (employee voice)
- Managers engage with and enable their teams to perform effectively (engaging managers)
- The organisation's values reflect the day to day behaviours seen in employees at all levels i.e. what we say is what we do (organisational integrity)
- We have visible and empowering leaders who keep the people in the organisation up to date on where we're coming from, where we're currently at, and what the future holds (strategic narrative)

Why Employee Engagement is important

How we communicate, listen to each other and act on what we hear is at the heart of employee engagement. In improving how we engage with each other, we are aiming to:

- Develop a shared understanding of the council's vision and priorities, therefore having a greater sense of purpose in our role
- Live shared values that result in greater trust and motivation to perform well
- Experience greater job satisfaction and involvement in the direction of our own job
- Have a desire to improve the way things are
- Feel empowered at work and enabled to contribute ideas that are acted on
- Improve employee retention
- Feel happy, healthy and included
- Feel more involved in the ongoing changes in our organisation

How will we know it's working?

To ensure that this strategy is delivering on its intended outcomes (i.e., employees are engaged and consequently we are successfully delivering on our corporate plan) we will look to evaluate the progress made and where we might need to focus more effort. To do this we will use a number of different evaluation methods, including:

- An annual employee engagement survey in which we are able to ascertain how engaged employees are
- Regular pulse surveys to gain a temperature check on employee engagement throughout the year
- Workforce Analysis statistics and corporate performance targets to check for correlation between improved employee engagement and performance

Engagement strategies and initiatives

A number of common themes have emerged from the feedback you provided us in employee surveys and other consultation activities over the past couple of years; all of which have helped focus the action plan set out in this strategy. These will guide us in improving where we need to over the next three years.

Visible and empowering leadership

The two most recent Investors in People surveys found that a significant proportion of staff didn't agree that management communicates the organisations ambition or that they trust the leaders of the organisation.

We will aim to provide a strategic narrative through strong, visible and empowering leaders who make it clear to employees the current state of the organisation, where it's coming from and where it's going to, i.e. what changes are coming and what is the rationale for it. The intention of this is to help create a line of sight between any individual's job and the Council's vision. This message should be communicated clearly and consistently. All employees should also be afforded the chance to be kept in the know on major projects and plans undertaken by the Council that may affect their role, and also be kept up to date on what's happening at a service level. This will

be done through a range of communication methods, embracing digital technology whilst also recognising the value face to face communication brings.

Engaging managers

Extensive research has shown that someone's manager is the primary factor in an employee being engaged. An engaging manager is one who provides focus for their employees and the trust and freedom to get the job done. They also form strong connections with the individuals in their team and are able to effectively coach, stretch and support them all whilst focusing on their strengths. They additionally don't rely on HR to have difficult conversations and address any dysfunction appropriately as it happens. Survey statistics suggest that this is something managers generally already do well but it's an area where we will look to provide support through appropriate training and networks for new to role and existing managers. A particular focus needs to be placed on addressing poor performance appropriately.

Employee Voice

If seeking to make changes, our employees should be seen as central to the solution, to be listened to and invited to contribute their experience, expertise and ideas. This will allow for commonly held views and beliefs to be reinforced or challenged. Our Lancaster District Fair Work Charter states that "a culture of engagement and consultation should be fostered with employee voice at all levels being heard" and that employers should "focus on facilitating engagement opportunities and maintaining workforce buy in to working practices by listening to employees regarding what works well and what doesn't."

To enable employee voice we need to ensure that we have the right mechanisms in place to listen to employees and co-create change. We endeavour to provide more channels in which employees can have their voice heard, so that awareness is raised of how staff are feeling on the ground and what some of the main issues facing them are. We want employees to be actively involved in decision making and their ideas and views to be acted on.

Central to employee voice is having effective collective voice, and a regular dialogue with recognised unions is crucial to achieving this.

Organisational Integrity

The 2023 IIP Review found that Lancaster City Council were below the IIP average indicator score for living its values. In December 2022, we launched our new organisational values, along with an accompanying behaviours framework. These values and behaviours were a refinement of our previous organisational values and came about through co-creation with managers and staff, to understand the actual values and behaviours that we have in common as a workforce and that drive us in our work.

Through good communication we aim to ensure everyone knows what the values and behaviours are and how they apply to each service area and job role in practice. It's also important to consider what we do to recognise successful delivery of our values or speak up and challenge when people act in conflict with them. Our managers will also role model the values and these will be embedded within policies and processes throughout the organisation.

The Plan

Enabler	Initiative	Actions	Who	Year of Plan
Visible and Empowering Leadership	Leadership/Chief Officer Briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That we commit to monthly “Leadership Team” briefings, each month led by a different Chief Officer (or more) on a particular topic, for no longer than 45mins, including time for questions. • Leadership Team briefings to be “high level” and be led by Chief Officers, who are joined by other colleagues as helpful or appropriate. All Chief Officers are not expected to attend each month. • Leadership Team briefings to be held online, with in person sessions arranged for White Lund Depot and Salt Ayre Leisure Centre (if felt appropriate by Chief Officers). • The online briefings will be recorded and shared, with option to show the videos on digital screens too once in place. 	OCE Leadership Team	Ongoing
	Chief Exec Coffee and Chat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That we begin “Chief Executive Chat” sessions (or similar) bimonthly, where the Chief Executive will visit each site, and host a small conversation with colleagues. If these are successful, we could arrange further sessions. Thoughts around approaching teams or asking teams to approach us, with some scheduled sessions in advance in certain spaces (like the breakout spaces). 	OCE Leadership Team	Ongoing
	Weekly message from the Chief Exec	Chief Exec to continue providing a weekly message in the staff newsletter	Comms OCE	Ongoing
	Digital Communications	Installation of digital screens across Council venues to provide an additional communication platform for internal communications	Comms Marketing ICT	Ongoing

		Roll out of digital tablets to be accessible from our main sites, including in frontline area to further enable access to corporate communications	Property	
	Wider Leadership Team Meeting	All Chief Officers and their direct reports to collectively meet on a quarterly basis	OCE Leadership Team Managers	Ongoing
Engaging Managers	Commitment to Annual Conversation	All managers to hold annual conversations with individuals in their team or as a collective team in exceptional circumstances	Managers	Ongoing
	Performance Improvement Conversations	Improve the effectiveness and frequency of performance improvement conversations through the professional development of managers. Managers to actively tackle dysfunctional behaviour by giving feedback in the context of overall performance in a way that encourages and empowers an individual to build on their strengths and helps to address behaviours that are getting in the way of great performance.	Managers HRBPs	Year 1
	Coaching	To introduce a coaching for success programme to all managers to allow for effective coaching and stretching of employees as a result of professional development.	HR/OD	Year 2
	Manager's network	To introduce a manager's network to create a shared space for support on common people manager themes/issues.	HR/OD	Year 1
	Change Management	Improving employee engagement in the initial stages of change programmes, seeking to understand the perspective of others. This will be achieved through the professional development of managers.	Managers HR/OD	Year 1
Employee Voice	Annual Survey	Create and launch an annual staff survey	HR/OD	Year 1

		<p>Increase the response rate year on year.</p> <p>Focus on accessibility in frontline areas</p> <p>Develop a structured response to findings and empower services to take action in areas under their control</p>		
	Focus Groups	To utilise focus groups for staff to input on changes to people related processes as well as to gather further evidence and inform action planning at a local level in relation to annual survey results	HR/OD	Year 1
	Frontline Forum – We’re Listening Group-	<p>To further establish the We’re Listening Group so that there can be a regular cascade of key messages from senior leaders to frontline staff, as well as the feeding up of issues on the ground.</p> <p>To look at viability of expanding frontline forums into other areas where employee voice has greater barriers</p>	HRBPs WLD Mgt	Ongoing
	Staff Networks	<p>Strengthen and develop existing staff networks and look into feasibility of new networks if there is an identified gap.</p> <p>Promote value of networks, so that they are seen as an integral part of employee engagement and consultation, with unique insights and views</p>	OCE HR/OD	Ongoing
	Staff Ambassadors	<p>The purpose of the Staff Ambassador Forum is to allow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - senior leaders to discuss and consult with the workforce over strategic change - information on key issues to be presented to workforce representatives 	HR/OD SAs	Ongoing

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - representatives to present the 'hot topics' from the workforce to management and bring forward ideas, queries and suggestions that need attention at a senior level. <p>The Staff Ambassador Scheme is to receive increased focus, with a forward agenda spanning the year, in which there is an expectation of greater senior leader involvement.</p>		
	Pulse Surveys	Introduce pulse surveys to temperature check engagement levels, ascertain progress against actions and gain views on topical subjects.	HR/OD	Year 1
	Exit/Stay Interviews	<p>A review of our existing exit interview process is needed to understand if we are gathering the most valuable information that we can, that departing employees are having a fair chance to have their say, and that themes are analysed and used to inform decision-making.</p> <p>We will launch stay interviews to understand employees' motivations for continuing to work at Lancaster City Council and what threats exist that may lead to them leaving in the future</p>	HR/OD	Year 1
	Alignment of employee and collective voice	<p>To create a stronger link between union representatives and staff ambassadors</p> <p>Invite union representatives to presentations on the results from the employee survey and work collaboratively to address any issues.</p> <p>Union representation to be consistent at our frontline employee forums.</p>	HR/OD	Year 1

	Staff Conference	To further refine that staff conference event which will allow for an annual celebration of what we've achieved over the past year and provide a chance to ask questions to leadership about the year ahead	HR/OD OCE Comms Leadership Team	Ongoing
	Trade Unions: information for employees	Sharepoint page provided for employees to find out information about trade unions and how to join.	HR/OD	Year 1
Organisational Integrity	Creation of a speak up culture	We will ensure that everyone understands the channels available to them to speak up if something is not right and to influence change within the organisation. We intend to develop a culture through the promotion of our values where everyone feels comfortable raising concerns and are empowered to make a difference.	HR/OD	Ongoing
	Setting, enforcing and reinforcing behavioural expectation	Exiting perpetrators of discrimination, bullying and harassment.	HRBPS Managers	Year 1
	Role Modelling	Leaders and managers are fully engaged and are role modelling the values and behaviours, using the values and behaviours framework as a guide	Managers	Ongoing
	Embed values and behaviours	Values and behaviours are embedded throughout the organisation's policies, processes and practices	HR/OD	Ongoing
	Values Based Recruitment	Values Based Recruitment guidance and training to be developed and adopted by managers to enhance the quality and quantity of values-based interviews, in order to recruit people with values that match the organisation	HR/OD Managers	Year 1
	Values Performance	Develop ways in which to further embed values in performance management processes	HR/OD	Year 2

	Recognition	<p>Celebrating Success Event to be replaced by annual recognition of employees and teams who have lived the values, through the Staff Conference</p> <p>To explore options to develop the current recognition wall and other means in which employees can be recognised for their achievements</p> <p>Recognition of team successes and also visibility of what teams do through sharing of stories</p>	<p>HR/OD</p> <p>Leadership Team</p> <p>Comms</p>	Year 1/2
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