

### Draft Employee Engagement Strategy

#### **Introduction**

Employee engagement can be defined as the way people think, act and behave at work. Engaged employees are committed and act as ambassadors for the Council supporting our vision to be “thriving, prosperous and a sustainable city and district with equality of opportunity for all”. Evidence indicates that higher levels of employee engagement in an organisation contributes to better performance, better quality of service and greater wellbeing for employees.

This Employee Engagement Strategy supports the delivery of the Council’s priorities outlined in the Strategic Growth Plan, 2017-2032. It also reflects the values detailed in the Council’s annual corporate plan and supports the Human Resources & Organisational Development Service Plan where specific objectives are annually set to develop and improve staff engagement across the organisation.

This strategy sets out how the Council will engage with its employees to ensure they are empowered to deliver the Council’s corporate objectives and strive to achieve continuous improvement in service delivery. Derry City and Strabane District Council has developed and promoted 5 main categories of engagement activity to engage staff and promote staff roles as ambassadors for the Council. These are as follows:

#### *1. Developing Effective Leaders and Managers*

Derry City and Strabane District Council recognises the importance of supporting and developing our managers to ensure they have the necessary skills and demonstrate the behaviours required to be effective leaders. Employees rely on their line managers to communicate key corporate messages and ensure they have access to information and tools to allow them to do their job. Managers should agree clear objectives with their

employees offering constructive feedback on their performance including recognition for a job well done.

Effective managers must also involve employees, listen to their views and encourage them to put forward suggestions and ideas.

The Council has defined the competencies and behaviours it requires from its Managers in the competency framework. Managers are assessed against this framework during the recruitment process and then throughout the course of their employment through the Personal Development Plan (PDP) process. During the PDP process opportunities for development are agreed. Many managers have already taken part in accredited Leadership Development Programmes including the Senior Executives Management Programme and Aspiring Leaders Programme through Queens University, Belfast. In addition, managers participate in various capacity building programmes which are delivered in-house as well as through the Local Government Training Group.

## *2. Employee Voice: Involving our Employees*

Employees are more likely to be engaged when they are given opportunities to express their views and feel 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 as to how these services can be improved. We encourage employees to provide feedback through their team meetings as well as encouraging them to participate in focus groups and working groups. We will continue to develop systems that allow employees the opportunity to be involved in shaping the development and improvements in their services, embedding a culture of continuous improvement across the organisation.

At a corporate level, employees are encouraged to participate at our annual employee engagement event where we focus on corporate themes such as change and transformation as well showcasing examples of service delivery. We also use this

opportunity to get views from employees on how we can continue to improve staff engagement across the organisation.

The Council recognises the importance of fostering positive relations with the Trade Unions through consultation and involvement. We will continue to build on the positive partnership that has been established with our Trade Unions and further develop our framework of involvement and consultation.

### 3. Employee Recognition

We have a dedicated and innovative workforce so it is important that we recognise achievements, commitment and service to Council. We will continue to promote and celebrate the success of our employees at both our annual staff engagement event as well as our annual Staff Recognition event where service awards are presented. We also promote good news stories across all sections of the organisation in our staff newsletter. Recognition of success and excellence in our workforce will be further developed at individual, team and corporate level.

While formal recognition of successes and achievements is important, an employee engagement survey undertaken recently suggested that positive informal feedback from line managers is also greatly appreciated by employees. Managers are therefore encouraged to incorporate this important element of recognition on a daily basis for a job well done.

### 4. Development and Training

We recognise that our employees must have the appropriate knowledge and skills required to carry out their job effectively. We recruit employees in line with the required competencies and behaviours required for the job. We develop them to perform effectively in their role and offer opportunities for development so they can consider other

opportunities as they arise within the organisation. The training commences at the start of employment where employees are provided with an extensive induction programme.

We are currently embedding a PDP process across the organisation where individual objectives aligned to our corporate priorities and values are agreed between employees and line managers. This process also allows managers to provide feedback to employees on their performance and allows employees the opportunity to discuss their development needs. The Council provides a range of development and training opportunities including in-house training sessions, Local Government Training Group courses, Post Entry Training Scheme as well as the online Learning Zone. We will continue to promote and develop these opportunities to ensure our employees are performing their roles effectively in line with our corporate values and priorities.

#### *5. A Healthy and Safe Work Environment*

We recognise the importance of a safe and healthy work environment for a productive workforce. The BeWell initiative has been established to promote health and wellbeing at work. This has offered employees a range of activities and programmes to encourage healthy lifestyles. The ongoing work which is promoted through this programme contributes significantly to improving attendance at work and reducing stress levels within the organisation. We will continue to develop processes and initiatives to ensure that employees remain safe at work and where possible mitigate risks to employee health and wellbeing.

#### **Measuring Employee Engagement**

We will continue to develop our employee engagement activity in these 5 key areas and will ensure that all employees including those who are non-office based have sufficient opportunities to give feedback and share their views. We will carry out employee surveys and ensure the findings are communicated to all. We will also continue to develop engagement indicators which will measure the impact of employee engagement.

## **Conclusion**

We recognise that an engaged workforce contributes to greater success in performance and improvement. This strategy sets out our approach to achieving this and is supported by the HR & OD Service Plan which sets out specific objectives and activities which will be implemented on an annual basis to achieve this.