Employee Engagement Strategy

Introduction

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) has a clear vision for the community it serves:

To make South Cambridgeshire a safe and healthy place where residents are proud to live and where there will be opportunities for employment, enterprise and world-leading innovation. We will be a listening council, providing a voice for rural life and first-class services accessible to all.

We have five Corporate Aims to support this:

1. A listening Council, providing first class services accessible to all
2. Ensuring South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place
3. Making South Cambridgeshire a place where residents are proud to live
4. Assisting provision for local jobs
5. Providing a voice for rural life

These Aims are complemented by a set of Approaches and Actions, which help us deliver services to residents. All of these are underpinned by Council values that clearly define the behaviours required of employees and members in delivering our vision. Our values are:

1. Customer Service
2. Mutual Respect
3. Trust
4. Commitment to Improving Services

To make the vision a reality requires employees with a flexible skill set who recognise that we need to adopt new ways of working in order to deliver the type of service required by our customers. At the same time there is a need to ensure that employees are fully supported through a range of effective management practices and processes.

Background

The results of the 2008 employee survey together with some of the findings from the Corporate Governance Inspection led to the establishment of an Employee Satisfaction Steering Group. From this Steering Group a number of inter-related work streams were identified (see p.4 for details of the work streams). One of which was charged with increasing levels of employee engagement and involvement.

It is important to have a clear and consistent view about how we will maintain, improve and harness employee goodwill, expertise and pride for the benefit of customers (internal and external) and partners. It is for this reason that the Council requires an employee engagement and involvement strategy based on recognised and accepted research evidence and examples of best practice. This will ensure that appropriate action is taken to maintain and improve employee engagement during a period of significant challenge.

The Engagement Challenge

Research undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that:

- Engagement levels decline as employees get older
- The most engaged groups tend to be those under the age of 30 and over the age of 60
- Engagement levels decline as length of service increases
For SCDC, our age profile is:
- 18 – 29 years = 56 employees
- 30 – 59 years = 408 employees
- 60 years + = 34 employees

Therefore in terms of the CIPD study there is the potential for 408 employees to be disengaged. This does not take into account the part that length of service may play in these figures.

The findings from the 2009 employee survey mirror those found by the CIPD. Although there is no difference in engagement scores for men and women, employees aged under 34 are more highly engaged than those aged between 45 and 54 years (54% and 49% respectively). By length of service, new employees are significantly more engaged than those who have been with the Council for over 10 years (77% and 41% respectively).

By place of work, the results show that 55% of employees at Waterbeach feel engaged, 52% at Cambourne do so, but only 38% of Sheltered Housing Scheme employees feel engaged.

Our Approach

In developing this strategy it is important to consider the following factors:
- To draw on the existing employee engagement research which provides guidance on best practice
- To ensure this strategy links with other strands of work and activity in SCDC
- To reflect the set of values recently agreed after extensive consultation with employees and members
- To build on the existing efforts already evidenced in the workplace

This strategy was developed by an exploration of the research and professional literature, discussions with the Employee Engagement and Involvement Work Group and a review of the “engagement” issues raised by employees in the 2008 employee survey. This highlighted a need to:
- Provide a clear definition of employee engagement for SCDC
- Explain the case for employee engagement and involvement and why it is important
- Identify the key elements required for an effective strategy
- Develop an action plan setting out how to take engagement forward, and how success will be measured.
- Ensure the strategy “belongs” to employees and managers.

It should also be noted that this strategy complements the Council’s overall Performance Improvement Strategy 2009 – 2012 particularly in the areas of:
- Performance Management
- Leadership
- Effective Communications
- Reward and Recognition
- Induction
- Learning and Development
Employee Engagement – what is it?

Overall, employee engagement is about the employee’s experience of work. It is about the combination of factors that make the individual feel involved and willing to go beyond the daily minimum workload and to contribute to the longer-term aims of the organisation.

While there are many definitions of engagement, what follows captures the elements that were identified in our Investors in People (IiP) assessment as being relevant and meaningful: customer service, effective processes and outcomes, being valued and the positive nature of working relationships.

Employee Engagement – definition for SCDC

Employee engagement is the extent to which employees enjoy and believe in what they do. It involves employees at all levels delivering the highest quality customer service and creating a great place to work. A place where employees find their work meaningful and are willing to work together for the benefit of customers, colleagues, partners and the future success of the Council.

Employee Engagement – why is it important?

Organisations that have implemented a successful employee engagement strategy clearly demonstrate the benefits for customers, employees and organisational performance. It is still important however, to consider the evidence before directing effort and resources to this strategy. Why should senior management pay attention to employee engagement?

High levels of employee engagement has many positive benefits:
- Higher productivity and organisational performance
- Improved customer focus
- Lower levels of absenteeism
- Higher levels of employee retention

Leading to Increased resident satisfaction with services (McLeod Report, 2009).

Research and studies that consider the impact of engagement and disengagement present a consistent view that organisations should take this subject seriously. Organisations embracing employee engagement are able to demonstrate improvement in both organisational performance and employee well being.

Employee Engagement – The Key Drivers

The existing research suggests that for any organisation there are 10 key drivers of employee engagement:
1. Belief in the future direction
2. Involvement in decision-making
3. People-centred culture
4. Formal internal communications
5. Control over how work is done
6. Understanding key business issues
7. Career advancement opportunities
8. Corporate values reflect personal values
9. Senior leadership
10. Line manager

The level of importance of each driver will depend on the nature of the organisation. The most effective method of identifying the importance is through an employee survey, which includes an employee engagement key driver analysis.
A key driver analysis of employee engagement was an integral part of the 2009 employee survey. This identified three drivers that matched those found in organisations generally (Line Manager linked with performance management, Senior Management (Leadership), and Training and Career Development (Career Advancement Opportunities)) and two that were specific to SCDC (Job Security and Stress and Workload). Details of the analysis and a discussion of the findings can be found in Appendix 3.

Also although not a key driver, the role that equality and diversity issues play in embedding employee engagement needs to be addressed.

The Situation at SCDC

The Employee Satisfaction Steering Group established 11 work streams to address those activities believed critical to fully engaging the workforce:

1. Employee engagement and involvement
2. Communication from the top
3. Leadership development
4. Management behaviour
5. Values
6. Flexible working policies
7. Succession planning
8. Corporate appraisal review
9. Benefits and rewards
10. Corporate social events
11. 2009 employee survey

How these work streams address the 10 key drivers is illustrated in Appendix 1.

Employee Engagement – making it happen

For employee engagement levels to increase in SCDC, we need the following elements in place:

The commitments and actions below are brought together in the tables to be found in Appendix 2 to this strategy.

1. **Belief in the Future Direction**
   It is the Council’s Aims, Approaches and Actions that are the reason for its existence. The activities of the Council are directed toward the attainment of its Aims. An Aim is a future expectation – some desired future state – and is something we are actively striving to accomplish.

   Aims provide a clear direction to the Council’s activities and to be effective should be emphasised, stated clearly and communicated to all employees. Only by gaining employee commitment to these aims will engagement become a reality.

   **Commitments**
   1. Clearly communicate the Aims, Approaches and Actions
   2. Ensure they are reflected in the Corporate Strategy and Service Plans
   3. Ensure that employees aims align with the Council’s Aims

   **Success Criteria**
   1. All employees understand the Council’s Aims and their role in delivering them
2. **Involvement in Decision-Making**
   Employee involvement is about creating a culture in which employees have an impact on decisions and actions that affect them and their jobs. This requires a leadership and management philosophy that enables employees to contribute to continuous improvement and the on-going success of the Council. This philosophy encourages ownership and commitment, helps retain the best employees, and fosters an environment in which employees choose to be motivated and involved.

   **Actions**
   1. Update the existing employee suggestion scheme
   2. Consider how to increase employee representation

   **Commitments**
   1. Work more closely with the Trade Unions
   2. Consider new ways to increase employee representation
   3. Senior management to provide a visible presence within the organisation

   **Success Criteria**
   1. Positive outcome on this indicator within the IiP reassessment
   2. Improved scores in employee survey

3. **People-Centred Culture**
   This is known within the Public Sector as “winning hearts and minds”. This means fully engaging employees in their work. Far too often in many organisations employees turn up for work each day but fail to engage with their tasks. This is a sign of low commitment, poor motivation, failure to take responsibility or show initiative and a lack of loyalty. Therefore, the culture of the organisation has a direct bearing on the raising of motivation generally, and the performance of individuals specifically. Senior management has a pivotal role to play in determining the culture to the extent that organisations that are people-centred enjoy higher levels of motivated and engaged employees.

   **Commitments**
   1. Senior management to lead by example through living the Council’s values
   2. Empower employees to do their job, and trust them to do it
   3. Ensure employees understand the bigger picture and how their work contributes to it
   4. Ensure that council policies, practices and procedures are clear and robust

   **Success Criteria**
   1. Positive outcome on this indicator within the IiP reassessment
   2. Improved scores in employee survey
   3. Examples of the effectiveness of values
   4. Increase in the number of employees who understand the bigger picture
   5. Increase in positive feedback about policies, practices and procedures

4. **Formal Internal Communications**
   Communicating effectively across the council is no easy task given the make-up of our workforce and how they are distributed. Many do not have access to a PC, or even the time to access a PC. These factors dictate that SCDC will continue to require a wide range of communication channels in order to reach and hear from employees at all levels. The mechanisms for ensuring effective two-way communication will be outlined within the Corporate Communication Strategy. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that when communicating with employees, the quality of the communication is key.
Therefore there is a direct link between the importance of the communication and the personal presence and impact of the person presenting it.

Messages often get lost if the messenger is weak. Therefore senior managers should receive coaching and development in presentation and communication skills. In fact this would benefit all managers so that they can inspire and motivate others. Making managers aware of their own style of communication and their own preferences is the first step. The greatest challenge for all communicators is to adapt their style to the audience.

Communication is a two-way process. The opportunity to feed views upward and be listened to by senior management reinforces a sense of belonging within the organisation. It also promotes a belief that individual actions can have an impact. Being able to feed information upward and be listened to are key factors in delivering high levels of employee engagement.

**Actions**

1. Introduce a Q&A slot on SMT and EMT agendas, which allow staff to answer questions and raise issues of concern
2. Carry out random checks to ensure team meetings are taking place regularly
3. Consider the Introduction of an Employee Forum to complement the work of the Trade Unions

**Commitments**

1. Ensure senior managers continue to deliver key messages. Preferably the CE or Executive Directors, and where possible face-to-face
2. Ensure line managers are holding regular team meetings
3. Ensure clear links between corporate Aims and employees’ personal objectives
4. Provide feedback, coaching and support to senior managers to help them convey a meaningful message

**Success Criteria**

1. Measurement through iIP and Employee Survey
2. Increase in the number of face-to-face meetings
3. Positive feedback from random checks
4. Positive experience from PDR meetings
5. Coaching and support takes place
6. Employee Forum established

5. **Control Over How Work is Done**

Having control over how you carry out your work is recognised as one of the factors in preventing and managing stress. It also implies a certain degree of trust in letting employees get on with the job they are paid to do. Unfortunately within many bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations such as local authorities, there is often a general reluctance especially among senior managers to relinquish tight control. This has the effect of stifling innovation and leads to poor performance as employees simply “go through the motions”.

Making employees responsible for their own actions and giving them authority to make decisions about their work means a faster response to customer needs, more effective cross-functional links, increased morale, job satisfaction and engagement.

**Commitments**

1. Agree limits of authority and responsibility for work at the PDR
2. Agree periodic meetings to review progress against objectives
3. Provide training for managers/supervisors in effective delegation
Success Criteria
1. Positive outcome from PDR process
2. Regular meetings confirmed
3. Training takes place
4. Improved scores in employee survey

6. Understand Key Business Issues

A clear, shared vision for the council is at the heart of employee engagement. Employees need to understand not only the purpose of the council, but also how their individual role contributes to that purpose. Although there is general recognition from organisations such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and Investors in People UK (IiPUK) that employers should “buy in” to the company vision, evidence suggests that little is being done to achieve this. The MacLeod Review (2009) on employee engagement indicates that only 40% of employees understand their organisation’s vision and supporting strategies.

For many employees the vision statement is just that – a statement, which is quite often disconnected from the people it is meant to inspire. To have meaning, the vision together with the aims, approaches and actions must be aligned with the required behaviours. When this is done effectively, it has an enormous impact on understanding and productivity within an organisation.

Commitments
1. Ensure employees aware of the Council’s strategic aims
2. Promote the aims on a regular basis both in writing and orally
3. Visible leadership keeping in touch with employees

Success Criteria
1. Improved scores in employee survey
2. Positive outcome on this indicator within the IiP reassessment
3. Information appearing regularly in SCene and on InSite

7. Career Advancement Opportunities

One of the areas that leads to higher levels of engagement is the provision of career advancement opportunities. This doesn’t necessarily imply upward progression. Many employees are happy with the level they have currently reached in the organisation, but may want to make a sideways move. Secondments are one effective way of doing this and can be arranged internally, externally and through the Regional Interchange programme.

For some employees, upward progression is a priority. In this case it is important to have some form of succession planning in place. For the public sector this is rapidly becoming a major challenge, as a high percentage of experienced employees will reach retirement age within the next 5-10 years. Therefore, the ability to attract, retain and develop talented employees is critical. Recruitment costs average £5,000 a head, and being able to contain or reduce these costs through better retention and internal development leads to considerable savings.

Commitments
1. Always consider secondment opportunities as and when vacancies arise
2. Embed the PDR and Service Planning Process
3. Ensure there is a range of development activities that support talent management
4. Clearly define what the future leadership needs of SCDC are

Success Criteria
1. Number of secondments offered and filled
2. 100% of PDRs completed on time
3. Service Planning Process embedded within the Council
4. Corporate training provides suitable development activities
5. Future leadership needs of SCDC successfully identified

8. Corporate Values Reflect Personal Values

Employee engagement can most usefully be viewed as a workplace approach which gains employee commitment to the Council’s values and aims, motivates them to contribute toward organisational success, and at the same time enhances their own sense of well being. Engaged organisations have strong values with clear evidence of trust and fairness based on mutual respect, where two-way promises and commitments – between senior management and employees – are understood and fulfilled.

One of the dangers of adopting a values approach is that the values are just words on paper and not reflected in the way things are done. SCDC has experienced some difficulty in agreeing a set of values that employees and elected members can commit to. It is now vital that we “live” these values and ensure that our actions, both corporate and individual, support them. This is important because where a gap exists between stated values and behaviours; the size of the gap is reflected in the degree of distrust within the organisation. If the gap is closed, high levels of trust usually result. If an employee sees the stated values being “lived” by the leadership and colleagues, a sense of trust is more likely to develop and this constitutes a powerful enabler of engagement.

Adopting a strong set of values means changing some of the ways the Council does things. For example, we should recruit for shared values, not just the skills required for the job. Engagement is about ensuring individuals feel “at home” within the culture of the Council.

Commitment

We will continue to embed the Council Values through the undertaking of positive publicity around values being demonstrated in our work, and through the PDR process.

Success Criteria
1. Improved scores in employee survey
2. Positive outcome on this indicator within the IiP reassessment
3. Values aligned with employee objectives through PDR process

9. Senior Leadership

One of the most effective ways of encouraging engagement is to ensure that the Senior Management Team (SMT) actively lead on engagement and involvement initiatives. It is the Chief Executive and Executive Directors that set the tone for engagement in any organisation. As a result, their actions are critical in inspiring employees to go “the extra mile”.

A major global survey (Melcrum, 2005) found that communicating a clear vision of the future is the most important task that senior leadership can take in driving employee engagement. Respondents further stated that when their senior leadership acted with integrity – building a sense of trust in the organisation and living the values – then employee engagement was significantly enhanced.

Commitment
1. Ensure senior leadership accountability for employee engagement and involvement is built in to their objectives
2. Ensure the senior leadership team is visible and accessible to employees
3. Communicate a clear vision of the future
4. Involve employees in decision-making that will affect them
5. Build trust in the organisation by being open and honest
6. Demonstrate commitment to the Council’s values through example
7. Be seen to respond positively to feedback
8. Demonstrate genuine commitment to employee well being

**Success Criteria**
1. Improved scores in employee survey
2. Positive outcome on this indicator within the IiP reassessment
3. Senior leadership engaging more with employees/teams
4. Visibly noticeable positive organisational climate

10. **Line Managers**
One of the main findings from the MacLeod Report (2009) is the key role that the line manager plays in enabling and building employee engagement. Unfortunately much of the research that looked at the line manager found evidence of “poor management skills” by ‘amateur managers’ who have an inability to let go and allow employees to take ownership of their work”. This results in very good employees becoming frustrated by not being allowed to do a good job and becoming disengaged. Why should this be the case? The reason is mainly one of fear:
- Fear of losing control if you allow people to come up with their own ideas
- Fear of losing your job if delegated tasks are done well
- Fear that team members can’t do the job as well as you
- Fear that team members can’t be trusted to do the job unsupervised
- Fear of being held accountable if things go wrong

It should be remembered that too often managers are promoted because of their competence in the job they did, not because they have the right skills for the new one. The challenge is to deliver these skills at a time of severe financial constraint.

**Commitments**
1. Develop line manager’s coaching skills
2. Develop line manager’s facilitation skills
3. Use the Management Competency Framework to develop/enhance line manager’s management skills

**Success Criteria**
1. Increased scores on employee survey
2. Positive outcome on this indicator within IiP reassessment
3. Positive outcome from PDR process

**Equality and Diversity**
Although not a key driver of engagement, the overarching impact that equalities and diversity has on employee engagement must be considered. Equality and diversity is about fairness in the workplace. This can be seen in many aspects of the employee experience starting with the initial contact following the advertisement of a job. Hiring the right people for the right jobs and with a similar value set to that of the Council is fundamental to ensuring a positive fit. This also manifests itself in the performance management process. Being clear about what is expected of people in their jobs and receiving regular and timely motivational and developmental feedback are key factors in engaging employees. Having a personal development plan, ready access to learning and development and being recognised for what you do will all contribute to a happy working environment.

- **Recruitment and Selection**
Organisations that have the best recruitment and selection practices are recognised for their open and transparent processes. In the past the Council was criticised for not advertising jobs internally, and even when they were, there was a lack of confidence and trust in the selection process. Whether or not this was the reality is not the issue. What is critical is that if this is still the perception of employees, then engaging them becomes problematic.

Successful organisations place the recruitment and selection of the right employees at the heart of their strategy. This means that engagement begins with the very first contact not just at the appointment stage. Thus it is vital to ensure that all the correct information is available to applicants, that all the paperwork (be it hard copy or on-line) is easy to complete, that acknowledgements are sent out and applicants are kept informed of how their application is progressing. This is an integral element of the Workforce Plan and helps create a positive image of the Council that even unsuccessful applicants will appreciate.

This needs to continue through the interview process – how people are received at reception, the structure and conduct of the interview, notification of the outcome and how they are treated on day 1 of their new job. The key message that needs to be understood is that the approach to recruitment and selection needs to be consistent and fair.

**Commitments**

1. Ensure that the recruitment and selection process is robust and linked to the Council’s values
2. Advertise all jobs prominently and ensure that the selection criteria are clear
3. Keep candidates informed of progress
4. Offer all candidates feedback – whether successful or not
5. Review the process on a regular basis taking on board comments from applicants and employees

**Success Criteria**

1. Positive comments from applicants and employees
2. Number of internal applications received
3. Review of internal appointments made
4. Positive comments in the IiP reassessment report
5. Increased satisfaction levels in the employee survey
6. Number of successful first time appointments

**Induction**

It is crucial that the success of the recruitment and selection process is maintained by ensuring a positive introduction to the Council through a thorough induction. This should encompass both an induction into the actual place of work and an induction to the Council corporately. An effective induction process is essential in order to provide new employees with a sense of belonging to their new organisation.

Experience from major companies such as Carphone Warehouse shows that an early sense of belonging helps to build engagement, involvement and retention.

**Action Point**

1. Carry out half-yearly audit of new starters to measure the effectiveness of the staff induction process

**Success Criteria**

1. Positive feedback from the Corporate Induction course
2. Random checks on workplace inductions
3. Positive comments in the IiP reassessment report
• **Performance Management**
  A key element of equality and diversity in the workplace is being aware of how well you are doing and how you can continue to develop. A recent CIPD survey claimed that one-third of UK workers never received feedback on their performance. Furthermore, two-fifths are not given any effective career advice. The Council has gone some way to addressing these issues through the revised Performance and Development Review (PDR) and the introduction of a management competency framework. However, feedback from our Investors in People assessment indicated that career development advice remained inadequate.

Conducting PDRs is a basic requirement of all managers, yet some see it as a distraction from their daily workload such that the timetable for their completion has never been met. This is a leadership issue and hopefully the “grandparenting” approach recently introduced in to the PDR process will address this situation. If PDRs are not conducted in a timely manner, performance can quickly drift and engagement levels fall through lack of direction.

Performance management is not solely limited to “people issues”. It includes the development and introduction of a sound strategic framework within which corporate objectives are delivered on time and within budget. It also addresses cultural change and roles within that culture. Therefore there will be clear links between employee engagement and the emerging Performance Improvement Strategy.

**Commitments**
1. Ensure the requirement to conduct regular PDRs is built in to manager’s objectives
2. Continue to audit the quality of completed PDRs
3. Provide support and coaching for managers who fail to complete the PDR process within the given timescale or to the required standard
4. Consider sanctions for those Managers who continue to fail to complete the PDR process on time following appropriate support and guidance

**Success Criteria**
1. Number of PDRs completed within the given timescale
2. Increase in scores on employee survey

• **Learning and Development**
  A major characteristic of employers of choice is that employees are consulted on the learning and development that benefits them the most. Too often employees are sent on training courses that may not meet their particular needs. Therefore there needs to be an understanding within the organisation that learning is not just limited to face-to-face training courses and consideration must to be given to ensuring the most appropriate means of delivery.

Development interventions should be tailored to the needs and learning styles of individuals otherwise they are likely to be ineffective. It is important that managers are aware of the preferred learning styles of their team members to ensure optimal learning takes place. Human Resources will be able to provide assistance with this if required.

Effective learning and development comes at a cost and it is important that it is managed effectively. Top performing organisations not only have a dedicated resource to manage learning and development delivery, they also ensure that there is ample time to research and identify new opportunities.

**Commitments**
1. Ensure that development needs and opportunities are discussed as part of the PDR
2. Show managers how to identify preferred learning styles and tailor their learning and development activities accordingly
3. Explore alternative opportunities for learning

Success Criteria
1. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) completed for all employees
2. Increase in scores on employee survey
3. Positive outcome on this indicator within IiP reassessment

- Reward and Recognition
Believing that you are fairly rewarded and recognised for the amount of work and effort that you put into a job is a key driver of engagement. However, within the public sector unless the performance-related pay route is taken, it is difficult to provide financial rewards. Yet, this is not necessarily a problem as research from the Gallup organisation shows that many employees are happy if they are recognised and appreciated.

Praise produces a “feel-good” factor, which in turn promotes positive emotions. The higher the level of positive emotions, the more engaged with the Council an employee is likely to be. Employees who don’t receive regular and genuine recognition are more likely to believe that nobody cares. Gallup found that receiving recognition or praise for doing good work increases productivity by between 10 and 20% and aids employee retention.

The introduction of a reward and recognition framework has also been identified as a key action within the Performance Improvement Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in 2009. This strategy approaches reward and recognition in terms of its contribution to a culture of continuous improvement in which excellent performance is recognised and success celebrated.

It is essential that whatever form recognition takes it should be sincere. The problem with schemes such as “employee of the month” and “best team” is that they can be perceived as not being truly deserved. In the worst case, they can be divisive. Where such schemes are credible, there is an independent nomination process and an employee adjudication panel.

Commitments
1. Give positive feedback to employees as appropriate
2. Feedback customer comments and compliments
3. Promote good news stories
4. Ensure teams are recognised as well as individuals

Action point
1. Introduce a “job well done” award for individuals and teams

Success Criteria
1. Increased levels of satisfaction and pride in the Council through the employee survey
2. Positive outcome on this indicator within IiP reassessment

Building Employee Engagement
Implementation of the Employee Engagement strategy will be a major step in improving the motivational climate within the Council. Critical actions which senior managers need to take in support of this are:

- Involving employees in decision-making that affects them
- Allowing employees control over their work and how it is done
How these can be achieved is outlined in the attached Action Plan (see Appendix 2).

The actions above are considered key to the development and on-going maintenance of Employee Engagement and support the findings from the 2009 Employee Survey. However, there are other actions in the strategy which senior management need to consider. It may be appropriate to implement all or some of these if time and finances permit.

Perhaps one overarching issue that senior managers should consider alongside the key actions is that of building trust. The results from the 2008 employee survey indicated that only 36% of respondents had confidence in senior management. This figured had reduced to 27% in 2009. Also in the 2009 survey only 24% of employers said they trust senior managers. It is a challenging task to build employee engagement if there is a lack of confidence and trust in the senior leadership of the organisation.

So, what can senior managers do to increase this trust? There are five actions that can be taken:

1. Have a clear vision of where they want the Council to be and by when
2. Clearly and persuasively communicate that vision to employees
3. Involve employees in how to achieve this vision (effective PDRs)
4. Align their own behaviours (values) to those needed to achieve the vision and be consistent in demonstrating them.
5. Maintain a high profile throughout the organisation by carrying out regular walkabouts

In essence this means: