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Westfields, Middlewich Road
Sandbach, Cheshire
CW11 1HZ

Tel: 01270 529729

email: glinys.mccready@congleton.gov.uk

DATE: 5 January 2009          OUR REF:          YOUR REF:

Dear Councillor

**CABINET - TUESDAY, 6TH JANUARY, 2009**

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Tuesday, 6th January, 2009 meeting of the Cabinet, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

**6    Key Decision CE28 Culture and Values  (Pages 1 - 8)**

Yours sincerely

Glinys McCready
Senior Administration Officer

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# CHESHIRE EAST

## Cabinet

**Date:**           6th January 2009
**Report of:**      Cheshire East HR Transition Project
**Title**           Culture and Values - final framework

### 1.0     Purpose of Report

1.1     To propose a final set of core organisational values for Cheshire East (CE) following staff consultation and to suggest ways in which the Values can be introduced and embedded as an important step towards building a high performance culture for the new Council.

### 2.0     Decision Required

2.1     The Cabinet are recommended to agree the:

(i)      adoption of the revised ASPIRE core values framework in Appendix 2
(ii)     development of a Values based performance management framework to be introduced from day one as outlined in section 12
(iii)    initial introduction of the Values through communications and the development of induction processes

### 3.0     Financial Implication 08/09

3.1     None identified for transition as it is assumed that funding to support to launch and implementation of the values will be picked up through approved transitional cost budgets for other associated workstreams e.g. communication, induction etc.

### 4.      Financial implication 09/10

4.1     No transitional funding has yet been agreed for 2009 -10. It is however anticipated that the new Authority may wish to invest in initiatives to integrate and embed the Values through for example the development of behavioural competency frameworks and employee opinion / culture surveys. These will need to be scoped and any additional resources bid for through the 2009 -10 budget setting process.

### 5.      Legal implications

5.1     None Identified

### 6.      Risks

| Risk | Impact | Mitigating Action |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The values will be seen as "just another initiative" which is quickly forgotten. | The culture will evolve through default or dominance and may inhibit high performance | Develop a strategy to embed the Values across the new organisation |

## 7.0    Background

7.1    The creation of a new Unitary Authority for Cheshire East will require a radically new approach to delivering services. The required transformation is not however just about developing the right structures or establishing new processes and systems. It is also about fundamentally looking at the way we will need to work. Focusing on <u>how</u> we will do things, as well as <u>what</u> we will do to deliver value for all stakeholders.

7.2    Creating a high performance culture for the new authority is critical to success and cannot be left to chance. Creating the new Council will in effect bring together the cultural norms, values and traditions of four quite different authorities. Defining and agreeing core values and key behaviours for the new organisation is a crucial first step in starting to unite employees and set out clear expectations.

7.3    The aim of the core Values is to:

- articulate for all stakeholders "how we work around here"
- provide a clear guide for decision making and behaviour
- encourage commitment and pride in the new organisation
- provide the glue which joins us all together

7.4    At the Cabinet meeting in July it was agreed that staff should be consulted on a draft core Values framework for Cheshire East known as "ASPIRE". The framework consulted on is provided in Appendix 1.

## 8.0    Summary of consultation findings

8.1    The staff consultation took two forms, an online survey through which a 211 staff took part and 2 discussion groups involving 38 front line staff who did not have online access. The consultation explored five main areas:

1. Ease in which staff could relate to the both the acronym ASPIRE and the related statements.

2. Clarity and understanding of each Value statement and related behavioural descriptions.

3. How easily staff would be able apply the Values to their work.

4. How well the Values encouraged staff to want to work for CE

5. Ideas on how to embed the Values into work practices and procedures

8.2     Key findings from the consultation are as follows:

- Overall staff liked the concept of ASPIRE Values but wanted the wording used to explain them to be clearer, shorter and snappier.

- They wanted the letters in the acronym ASPIRE to stand for one word (rather than one phrase) summaries of the five Values.  This was so that they would be easy to remember.

- A significant minority would not have known what the ASPIRE values summaries included without seeing the extra detail

- Although most staff thought the language used to explain the Values was easy there was a significant minority who didn't.

- It became clear during the discussion groups with front-line staff, that even when staff said the language was easy, when the values were discussed in more detail people had often interpreted their meaning in different ways.

- Overall the 'Push' value raised the most negative comments.

- A significant number of front-line staff considered many of the behaviours assumed a level of authority or autonomy they do not have.

- Most staff could relate the ASPIRE values to their job and said they would encourage them to work for CE to a certain extent.

- Some cynicism was expressed re the importance words translating into action. Staff expressed the need to see that everyone involved with the organisation working to these values.

- Most people considered the values should be used in recruitment and induction to help people to understand what's important and how they are expected to work.
- Although there was general consensus that the values should be incorporated into performance appraisal, there were concerns around objectivity and application.
- People felt that it would be useful to build the values into team away days, staff meetings and supervision to ensure understanding and as a constant reminder of the way everyone should be working.

## 9.0     Proposed changes to ASPIRE

9.1     Taking on board the important feedback and ideas that have come from the staff consultation a revised ASPIRE framework is proposed in Appendix 2. This is summarised as follows:

**Action** – take responsibility for making the right things happen

**Support** – work and learn together in order to succeed

**People** – put customer & community needs at the heart of what we do

**Integrity** – be open, honest and fair, expecting the same of others

**Recognition** – value all views, efforts and achievements

**Excellence** – strive to improve all that we do

**10.    Living the Values**

10.1    The staff consultation indicated that most staff could relate the ASPIRE values to their job and said they would encourage them to work for Cheshire East. There was however some cynicism was expressed re the importance words translating into action.  Critically behaviour breeds behaviour and staff need to see everyone involved with the organisation truly "living the values".

10.2    The values of the organisation need to be woven like DNA into all aspects of the new organisations to ensure that words and actions are consistent and a constructive culture created. For example an espoused value of trust and empowerment can be quickly undermined by overly prescriptive policies and practices or an aspiration to listen and be inclusive is damaged through an absence of early engagement.

10.3    One of the most important factors in building the desired culture is that the Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team and Members are <u>role models</u> of the values from day one, challenging and expecting the same of others. Leadership is one of the most critical factors in changing culture as what people hear, see and experience on a daily basis will be perceived as what is really important in the new organisations.

**11.    Phased approach**

11.1    Once the new Senior Leadership Team are in place it is recognised that this team will want to review the core Values and may wish to refine the Values and associated behaviours to fully align HOW we will need to do things in the new Council in order to achieve the vision of becoming a flagship Authority.

11.2    There are a number of levers that can be pulled to help to shape, reinforce and embed the desired culture and values within the new authorities. Embedding the Values as "how we do things" in Cheshire East will need to be planned, managed and monitored.

11.3    A phased approach is suggested:

**Phase 1 pre vesting day – raise awareness through:**

- Communication and induction
- Organisation and job design and recruitment

**Phase 2 year one –refine and integrate through:**

- Ongoing communication and induction
- Ongoing organisation and job design and recruitment
- Values based approach to performance
- Leadership and employee development
- Policy and process development

**Phase 3 term one – embed through:**

- Sustained phase 2 activity
- Talent management and succession planning

11.4    Measuring whether the desired culture and values has been established will be critical. This can be achieved by using a combination of culture / employee opinion surveys, supplier and partner feedback, staff and customer focus groups and customer surveys and these should commence during year one.

## 12   Values based approach to performance

12.1    During the first few months after vesting day it will be important to focus new services, teams and individuals on the priorities of the new Council and to tangibly reinforce the message that Cheshire East will be a place where contribution is measured as much on HOW people do things (values) as WHAT they achieve (performance objectives) in order to ensure long term success.

12.2    To support this it is suggested that a values based approach to performance management is adopted from day one. The objectives being to:

- Clarify an individual's role and responsibilities
- Support individuals to perform well
- Enable individuals to grow and develop
- Monitor and review performance
- Recognise contribution and achievement

12.3    It is recognised that the first few months of the new Authority will be hectic and turbulent but this is also a crucial time lay the foundations for "how we work around here" and high performance. It is therefore proposed that a flexible framework of principles, standards and a simple formset are developed to provide focus and enable experimentation with a view to formalising the approach within the first year.

## 13.    Conclusions

13.1.   When looking at high performing public and private sector service organisations a number of common characteristics are evident which tend to differentiate between the good and the great. These differentiating characteristics tend to focus on "constructive factors" such as how people interact with others and approach tasks in ways that will help them achieve high levels of satisfaction in their work rather than perhaps protecting or defending their own security or status.

13.2    Building a constructive culture within the new Council will be critical to both short and long term organisational success. Research tells us that exceptional organisations are held together by a high performance culture that "glues" the organisation together. This is shaped by role model leadership and having a single set of explicit guiding values and behaviours that Members and staff understand and demonstrate to their colleagues, customers, service users, communities, partners and suppliers every day.

*For further information:-*

*Officer:*           *Trish Barnett*
*Lead Member*   *Frank Keegan*
*Tel No:*          *01244 972273*
*Email:*           *tricia.barnett@cheshire.gov.uk*

*Background Documents:*

## *APPENDIX 1 - ORIGINAL* ASPIRE VALUES FRAMEWORK

| **Act** with integrity and challenge others to do the same | **Support** and help colleagues and customers to grow, learn and develop | **Push** to deliver our promises and make the right things happen for customers |
|---|---|---|
| **We will:**<br>• Treat everyone with dignity and respect<br>• Speak up when others are behaving inappropriately<br>• Respect the standards and practices that help us to operate<br>• Be accountable for taking informed risks and difficult decisions<br>• Separate personal feelings from professional requirements | **We will:**<br>• Take ownership of our own development<br>• Coach and encourage others to grow and go outside of comfort zones<br>• Take time to reflect and learn from own and others experiences<br>• Give and seek constructive feedback<br>• Find ways to narrow gaps and remove inequalities for others | **We will:**<br>• Take time to understand customer needs and requirements<br>• Manage expectations and keep customers informed<br>• Make efficient and best use of money and resources<br>• Own problems and take responsibility for solving them<br>• Get it right first time, balancing urgency with quality and efficiency |
| **Involve,** communicate and engage with others, valuing all contributions | **Respond** positively to change and find ways to improve the services we deliver | **Empower** colleagues, customers and communities to find the right solutions |
| **We will:**<br>• Actively listen and encourage ideas<br>• Influence others positively and constructively<br>• Work in partnership and be prepared to compromise<br>• Be open and honest in our communication with others<br>• Recognise and acknowledge contributions and achievements | **We will:**<br>• Encourage creativity from everyone<br>• Be flexible about ones job, responsibilities and ways of working<br>• Quickly implement agreed changes<br>• Keep abreast of new developments<br>• Try new ideas and approaches<br>• Take the initiative and make suggestions<br>• Push to be better | **We will:**<br>• Bring people together<br>• Actively share knowledge and information with others<br>• Provide appropriate resources to enable things to happen<br>• Remove barriers and support others in resolving issues<br>• Develop simple and easy to use processes |

## *APPENDIX 2 - REVISED* **ASPIRE FRAMEWORK**

| **Action** – take responsibility for making the right things happen | | **Support** – work and learn together in order to succeed | | **People** – put customer and community needs at the heart of what we do |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **We will:**<br>• Implement agreed changes as quickly as possible<br>• Balance urgency with quality and efficiency in delivery<br>• Take responsibility for solving problems where possible<br>• Be flexible about the way we work | | **We will:**<br>• Communicate clearly and openly<br>• Share information and best practice with others<br>• Work together being prepared to compromise<br>• Encourage and support others to achieve their potential | | **We will:**<br>• Do our best to understand people's needs and requirements<br>• Treat each person as an individual providing choice where possible<br>• Work hard to make our processes simple<br>• Agree realistic timescales and keep people informed |
| | | | | |
| **Integrity** – be open, honest and fair, expecting the same of others | | **Recognition** – value all views, efforts and achievements | | **Excellence** – strive to improve all that we do |
| **We will:**<br>• Treat everyone with dignity and respect<br>• Speak up when others are behaving inappropriately<br>• Face up to difficult or awkward questions and situations<br>• Separate personal feelings from professional requirements | | **We will:**<br>• Involve all members of our team, valuing their differences<br>• Acknowledge everyone's efforts and contributions<br>• Give and receive feedback positively and constructively<br>• Celebrate success | | **We will:**<br>• Take the initiative and make suggestions<br>• Keep up to date with new developments<br>• Try new ideas and approaches<br>• Reflect and learn from our own and others' experiences |

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