



## Submission Details

Organisation or individual to which this submission relates (if different from above):	Same as above
Approximate size of organisation (number of employees) if applicable:	1700
Number of employees covered by the initiative if applicable:	1700



### The Southend Way Organisational Development Programme

Local Government association peer reviewers left our organisation reflecting on *'the most impressive employee engagement'* they had seen *'in over 25 years in local government'*.

*'In awe of the breath taking culture'* they found here at Southend Borough Council this is the story of just how that transformative working culture was created, using two Organisational Development (OD) programmes.

Each beginning from *radically* different starting points:

- 🚩 **'At risk of failing' in 2006** – *the only way was up!*
- 🚩 **Council of the year 2012** - the pinnacle of success – *now what?*

Delighted to be told we had achieved **LGC Council of the Year in 2012** (an extremely rewarding outcome from our first 2006 *'Inspiring'* culture change programme) beginning again, this time from success still meant we started by *listening*.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> programme encouraged 2,700 suggestions from our people, focused within 5 areas to help us improve further:



- 🚩 Behaviours
- 🚩 Capability
- 🚩 Leadership
- 🚩 Shared Purpose
- 🚩 Values

Engagement with our 2<sup>nd</sup> programme practically **overwhelmed** us. Collating this volume of suggestions into a coherent plan, of affordable and appropriate interventions, was assisted by the very people who had supported our 1<sup>st</sup> programme our *Change Instigators*.

These volunteer '*change champions*' were used with great effect in our first programme, acting as 'narrators' and 'story tellers'.

Credibly explaining the '*heritage*' of the programmes and maintaining the continuity of our story, they were integral to culture change succeeding, as ambassadors, critical friends and in testing ideas.

Operational people, from 'front-line' and 'back office' roles, often not in management roles, they demonstrated *leadership*.

Their integrity, authenticity and passion for improvement defeated accusations of '***this is just an HR initiative***' or '***this programme won't actually change anything***'.

They sieved through the thousands of suggestions, identified work streams, goals and interventions to move performance forward, *again*.

This draft programme needed support from both Councillors and our senior leadership team, aligning to our developing strategic priorities. Challenging leaders and politicians, whilst also engaging them, during the greatest reductions in budgets ever to occur in local government, made this even more complex.

When you are already perceived as successful the risk of inertia or complacency taking hold is constant.

Three key culture change themes emerged, embodying aims critical to our ongoing success:

- 🚩 **Resilience and Growth**
- 🚩 **Engaging Leadership**
- 🚩 **Focused Performance**

### **Our Culture Change Model**

These themes and supporting workstreams became ***the Southend Way***.

An Organisational Development model supported understanding and engagement.

Visually linking the synergies of the themes – a strong, resilient and skilful team, focusing on new performance challenges, with high quality engaging leadership linking the two.

**The Southend Way:  
A cultural change programme**



**1) Resilience & Growth**

Ensuring our people were engaged, strong, flexible and ‘developed/grew’ at a rate greater than that of the change, was going to be critical:

**Take Time To Think** – stopping ‘the hamster wheel’ to reflect and review. Access our award winning coaching programme or new action learning groups. Workshops on Systems thinking, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Servant and external speakers the MD of the Metro Bank talking to us about ‘*creating fans not customers*’ were used as provocateurs.

**Your talent, our performance** – the workforce development cycle and how performance management supported individual’s development were reviewed. A new learning management system is being with new systems to monitor and support L&D.

**Be more business-like** – Supporting services to reduce costs (£56m 2011-15 in the context of a £124m revenue budget), also improving income becoming more entrepreneurial.

**Productive, healthy working lives** – Introducing a new resilience programme using a holistic resilience profiling tool showed our commitment. Public health colleagues contributed with Mindful Employer status adopted – staying healthy both physically and mentally was critical.

## 2) Engaging Leadership

Engaging Leadership had been critical to our previous success. A new leadership development programme with the Real World Group using their 360 feedback tool challenged leaders again.

'Downsizing' risked devastating our employee engagement, four critical workstreams sought to ensure that didn't happen:

**Courageous conversations** – leaders would need to challenge previous practice, addressing the 'elephants in the room' addressing difficult issues.

**Change & transition** – courageous conversations would focus on change, and critically supporting transition – ensuring our people successfully adapted and managing the impact it would have on them were priorities for leaders.

**Coaching, feedback & recognition** – leaders needed to develop and grow our people, coaching higher performance in a developmental way.

**Solutions, innovation and creativity** – enabling our people would to create innovative solutions to not only maintain our services, but improve them.

## 3) Focused Performance

Our final theme needed to wed our changing business strategy, to our people. Informing what needed to be different and how. Arguably the most challenging theme it needed to encourage:

**Clarity & consensus on our priorities** – SBC was re-aligning reduced resources whilst ensuring those in greatest need were supported. A new conversation with our community titled '**Our town our future**' started identifying key outcomes for the.

**More targeted & effective in our outcomes** – Every service or relationship has been reviewed, ensuring our focus is impact/outcome not procedure. Coaching to outcomes was key - not the process and bureaucracy on the way!

**Collaborating, negotiating & improving partnerships** – Partners were involved extensively in both programmes.

**Stopping non-priority activity** – SBC like all other UK councils is pressured to stop some services. Innovative practice, increasing income, wider use of volunteers and closer partnership working have all been used to minimise service closures.

## Our values embedded in our performance

Identified in our first culture change programme, our values were reviewed in 2011 and firmly re-confirmed as relevant.

Programmes promoting **'Doing the right thing'** and team Values workshops were introduced.

Acting as 'a safety valve' to the emerging risks that occur in a much busier yet downsizing organisation, they ensured how we worked was sustainable and our behaviours were the *'right'* ones .

***Our people repeatedly expressed that if in changing the council, we left behind our values and everything they represented, then we would have not succeeded.***



### Our Values

#### EXCELLENCE

We aspire for excellence in our work

#### AS ONE

We work as one organisation

#### RESPONSIBLE

We are all responsible for the performance of our organisation

#### OPEN & HONEST

We are open, honest and transparent, listening to other's views

#### CUSTOMER CARE

Good customer care is at the heart of everything we do

#### SUPPORTIVE

We support, trust & develop each other

#### VALUING ALL

We value the contribution of all our people

### Outcomes – so what?

We measure our culture change outcomes from what we achieve for Southend, 'Creating a better Southend' is of course our point. Our 2015 LGA *independent and external* Peer group review noted the following:

- 🚩 "The Council has a track record for achieving – **it has a 'can do' attitude**"
- 🚩 "Enduring and purposeful senior management leadership – winning [MJ Senior Leadership Team](#) of the year 2016"

- 🚧 “Successfully managed £66m of reductions (from 2011/12 to date) **with minimal negative impact on services**”
- 🚧 “Managed a complex political administration offering stability through change”
- 🚧 “Delivered critical service improvements e.g. new waste contract saving £22m over 15 years **and** achieving improved outcomes”
- 🚧 “Some truly amazing achievements through effective partnerships – University & college The Forum, Stobarts and the Airport, local businesses and the Hive etc.”
- 🚧 “Creating a clean and prosperous Southend: Hive, Cliffs Pavilion, Chalkwell Park, Cycle network, Garrison development, railway stations, improved road network, forming our own energy company.”
- 🚧 “Investors in People Gold achieved in 2015.”
- 🚧 We launched our own L&D venue in 2011, **as other authorities were cutting L&D we invested in ours.**
- 🚧 SBC formed a new partnership with the Pre-School Learning Alliance successfully attracting **£40m (from the Big Lottery Fund) over the next 10 years.**
- 🚧 Works commenced on our £210m Airport Business Park creating over 7,000 new jobs and transform the surrounding highways and infrastructure over the next few years.