

# Organisational Culture and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) at Bridgend College (October 2017)

## Introduction

This document provides a very brief, positive and forward-looking summary of the key changes and impacts during our cultural and sustainability journey and our ambition to be an extraordinary organisation.

We know that sustainable development is all about dealing with different priorities and demands but also that this includes doing things within budgetary constraints; it is therefore vital that we remain agile so that we can respond to all challenges. A priority for Bridgend College is to be a catalyst for economic regeneration. It is right that everyone should have rewarding and secure jobs and a decent standard of living that allows them to care for their families in a safe and inclusive environment. But we know that there are other kinds of wealth we possess that give people a good quality of life; those in our relationships with our friends, family, and local and global communities but also in our shared natural environment which ultimately supports all life on earth. It is our intention to lead the sector rather than follow it, to scan the horizon and look outwards and not just inwards in achieving all of our ambitions, including of course our sustainability ambitions.

## Our Journey

### ***Leadership and cultural change***

Simon Pirotte, Principal and CEO of Bridgend College is a recognised inspirational leader who, after undertaking training with the Leadership Trust himself, wanted every leader and manager in the college to experience this exceptional training too. This was a highly significant investment to support people in building high value, genuine relationships rooted in trust, to become active and effective leaders, to develop an ethic of reason, an ethic of care and an ethic of objectivity.

As part of our open and inclusive approach, workshops were held with every member of staff across the college being invited to discuss the future of the organisation, their role and our collective mission and values. This led to the development of a table of values with four of those values (people centred, passionate, inspirational and innovative) supporting our college strategy 3E's (excellent, efficient and engaging) and our collective ambition to enable everyone to 'be all that they can be'. We now have the idea of a fourth 'E' - extraordinary.

## **Presenting the argument**

### ***High Challenge and High Support***

***Signing the SDG Accord was approved by the senior management team (SMT) October 2017.***

We are developing a culture of high challenge and high support, doing our very best to contribute to each individual's development; sharing the challenges and being open about the decision making process and recognising that making the right decision is not always easy. At a recent senior management team (SMT) meeting, the Principal suggested that we need to consider both moral and philosophical arguments and that discussing the difficult 'things' (the 'killer questions') matter; this view, supported by the SMT, is something truly extraordinary and quite special indeed.

### ***Sustainability strategy and the SD Accord***

Bridgend College has a very proud history and recognition in developing an holistic approach for sustainability holding platinum level of the Welsh Government Corporate Health Standard, platinum level of the Welsh Government Green Travel Plan Award and being recognised as the most sustainable college in the Sustain Wales Award and is now shortlisted for the 2017 Award.

And, as a signatory to the Sustainable Development Charter, we were recognised as an exemplary organisation.

The SMT were presented with the SDG Accord in advance of the latest meeting. This formed one of three items for discussion, review and approval; the other two were the new Health, Wellbeing, Safety and Natural World policy statement (*please see Appendix 1: Policy Statement approved by the senior management team (SMT) October 2017*) and our updated SD Strategy.

The SDG Accord was presented as a ‘natural step’ which aligns with the values of the organisation, takes account of the wider concerns of stakeholders and recognises our collaborative approach; all of which align with the 3E’s and which are integral and fundamental in our ambition to be an extraordinary college. It was explained that sustainability is always seeking a better future and recognises that through collaboration and the support of others across the globe, education plays a critical role as an enabler for change. A very important point is that, not only does sustainability encompass wellbeing, safeguarding, safety, equality and health for example, but all other elements of business from finance and estates to catering and curriculum and therefore sustainability lends itself quite naturally as a central organising principle. This recognises the duty we owe to our learners and wider stakeholders in contributing to a low carbon economy which protects the natural world and there is no conflict between this aspiration and our 3 E’s. Managers and leaders develop their individual area development plans which themselves align with the 3E’s and therefore there is simply no conflict between plans as we are all working towards these aspirations.

There is however a recognised need to begin aligning the most important priorities; the SMT discussed the scope of ambition and ‘wanted’ to be part of the solution but needed to know ‘what can I do now?’ This is critically important to ensure that staff across the college are not overwhelmed with multiple objectives but, with the support of the SMT, can pledge their support and begin to take ownership; failure to do this would jeopardise progress. This does not mean that other important actions are not taken but, that those identified as the top priorities take precedent.

**Our three top priorities are:**

**Curriculum - preparing a new Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) strategy**

**Carbon Reduction**

**Waste/Procurement**

**Sustainability leadership:**

***A roll out plan is to be introduced to ensure that every member of staff has the tools necessary for us to reach our collective sustainability ambitions. This will be supported by a training programme for every person in the organisation.***

***An introductory training session for college managers will take place in November 2017.***

People are looking for extraordinary leadership, now and in the future and we are absolutely determined to play a leading role, helping to build a sustainable future, advancing the critical role that education has in delivering the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the value it brings to our learners, staff, businesses and wider community. A significant responsibility rests upon our shoulders as stewards of Bridgend College - our legacy; and we are determined to leave behind an organisation which is significantly more sustainable than we started with. We have an ambition to be an extraordinary organisation, moving beyond business as usual, not because we have to (and indeed we must) but because we know in our hearts and minds that it is simply the right thing to do. During the SMT meeting the issue of language was discussed. An important aspect of change in decision-making is the development of a common language which people can feel comfortable using. Asking 'why?' more often can be a great way to look at things from a different perspective and opens up discussion about purpose much more than other forms of questioning and may lead to greater innovation. A SD approach needs to give a

voice to everyone and enable them to participate in the decision making process and therefore positively influence the outcomes. Levels of 'acceptance' support this process:-

At the SMT meeting three levels of engagement were adopted:

Level 1 - acceptance of the major areas of global concern (**I/we know that things are 'wrong'**)

Level 2 - acceptance of ownership and responsibility (**I know that I/we can do something about it**)

Level 3 - acceptance of action (**I/we will do something about it**)

### **A 'mature' organisation (let's talk)**

In order to support action and enable ownership and participation, Bridgend College has adopted a 'mature' organisational approach where all staff, at all levels, can work with others both outside and inside formal meeting structures to discuss new, positive ways of working - a dispersed leadership model. In essence this translates as a vehicle to help ensure equal opportunity for participation and to support innovative thinking. Talking over a coffee is a great way to discuss sustainability issues too.

### ***Money matters***

We know that as we continue on our sustainability journey, we must be aware of the competing pressures on budget, our need to ensure financial stability and meet the needs of stakeholders. When presenting the argument, two cases were briefly presented regarding (1) devolved budgets and the opportunity to consider central procurement of certain items which may ensure a 'circular' approach and (2) the benefits of our ongoing programme of LED lighting installation. There has been ongoing budget allocation to support sustainability initiatives over the years both within business support areas and curriculum and now there is a need to consider ways to broaden the discussion of sustainability within decision-making related to, for example, return-on-investment, capital expenditure and value for money. Bringing social/cultural, economic and environmental issues into decisions is already happening to a degree but as an

organisation which has an ambition to be extraordinary, we are determined to develop a common language across the organisation and with our partners.

### ***A Business risk***

The broad scope of sustainability within a business context is clear and further exploration of sustainability as a business risk is needed and this is included within our SD strategy.

### **SD visibility**

Our SD reporting has been recognised as exemplary and we have contributed to Welsh Government case studies. However, we know that we can improve how we capture and recognise the great work that we are doing right across the college and therefore improve our reporting. This can benefit the FE sector as a whole as it is easier to demonstrate to all stakeholders the real added value that FE brings not only to the local community but to Wales and beyond.

This document has been approved by the Principal and CEO, Simon Pirotte, on behalf of the Senior Management Team.

For further information, please contact:

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## Appendix 1: Policy Statement

### **HEALTH, WELLBEING, SAFETY AND NATURAL WORLD POLICY STATEMENT**

Bridgend College has around 6,000 learners and employs over 600 members of staff. We offer a wide range of courses from Level 1 to Degree level from six locations based at Bridgend, Pencoed, Queens Road, Maesteg, Cardiff Arts Academy and Barry. Bridgend College also works in partnership with local Comprehensive Schools for the 14-19 Learning Pathways.

With an ambition to be an extraordinary organisation, Bridgend College recognises and accepts that concern for the natural world, health, wellbeing and safety of all members of its staff, students, contractors, visitors and members of the local and global community is an integral and fundamental part of the Colleges' strategy for success. We will inspire people, celebrate and share success and advance the critical role that education has in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the value it brings to our learners, staff, businesses and wider society. As a major employer and educational provider, we recognise that we are an enabler of positive change and that our decisions have impacts far beyond the College boundary, in the present and into the future.

Bridgend College is wholly committed to the protection of people's health and wellbeing, its estate, the natural world and the prevention of pollution in all its forms and we will continually improve the HSE management system to support this commitment. This has the full support of the Governing Body and the Principal who is ultimately responsible for its execution and ensuring that it is a prime concern of all members of staff and students. We will identify threats from our activities and either eliminate or effectively control them and, as a minimum, we will comply with all relevant legislation and other requirements and fully co-operate with all relevant authorities.

Bridgend College is committed to making sustainable development (health, wellbeing, safety and the natural world) the central organising principle against which decisions and policies are made. Our significant impacts include curriculum delivery, consumption of electricity and gas, use of transport, waste to landfill, water use, abstraction and discharge, goods and services procured, infrastructure, land use and biodiversity. Going forwards we will:

- Demonstrate extraordinary leadership and develop extraordinary leaders throughout the organisation to help us achieve our health, wellbeing, safety and natural world goals
- Maintain the Platinum level of the Corporate Health Standard for wellbeing and safety
- Become a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Accord
- Ensure that responsibilities for HSE matters are effectively assigned, accepted and fulfilled at all levels
- Set specific targets for improving health, wellbeing, safety and the natural world within our publicly available Sustainable Development Strategy
- Continue to embed and develop ESDGC within the organisation and ensure that every member of staff, at every level, is able to undertake training to help us achieve our goals
- Continue to produce an annual performance report which will be publicly available

This policy statement will be brought to the attention of all members of staff and students, and copies will be freely available to the general public, suppliers, contractors and regulatory authorities. This document will be reviewed, at least, on an annual basis.



Simon Pirotte  
Date: 19/10/2017  
(Principal and CEO)  
On behalf the Senior Management Team

