Q&A on Values-Based Leadership

Organisation: City of Ryde

Respondent: Marnie Mitchell, Manager People & Culture

1. **Values:** What are the core values of your organisation?

   Response:

   Our values were developed in consultation with our staff about what they value most in the workplace. The values foster a culture of safety in the workplace and the community, a supportive approach to teamwork, ethical decisions, whilst behaving with professionalism:

   Safety: We are committed to preventing injury to ourselves, our team and our community
   Teamwork: We work together with respect and support
   Ethics: We are honest, responsible and accountable for our actions
   Professionalism: We deliver effective services to the community with consistent decision-making

2. **Communication:** How are your core values communicated and reinforced with leaders and staff? Do you communicate your core values to other stakeholders (eg, customers, suppliers, shareholders, anyone else)?

   Response:

   Our values of Safety, Teamwork, Ethics and Professionalism (STEP) are fundamental to everything we do at the City of Ryde. Our values guide and reflect the way we work, communicate, and interact with each other in delivering the many great services we provide to our community.

   At City of Ryde we communicate our values to leaders and staff using a number of mediums. On commencement staff are provided with a Code of Conduct document which contains our Vision, Mission and Values. Staff are also made aware of our values during the new starter Induction Sessions which occur within the first month of employment.

   Our values are then reinforced through the General Manager Weekly Update, displayed on the computer desktop backgrounds for all staff (see Figure 1 below), and through our "TA Award" (Token of Appreciation Award) recognition program where staff are acknowledged for demonstrating behaviour that goes above and beyond the expected level of service and is

aligned to a Value. The TA Award is a $25 voucher awarded to successful employees who have demonstrated City of Ryde's Values.

Figure 1. Computer desktop with our Values.
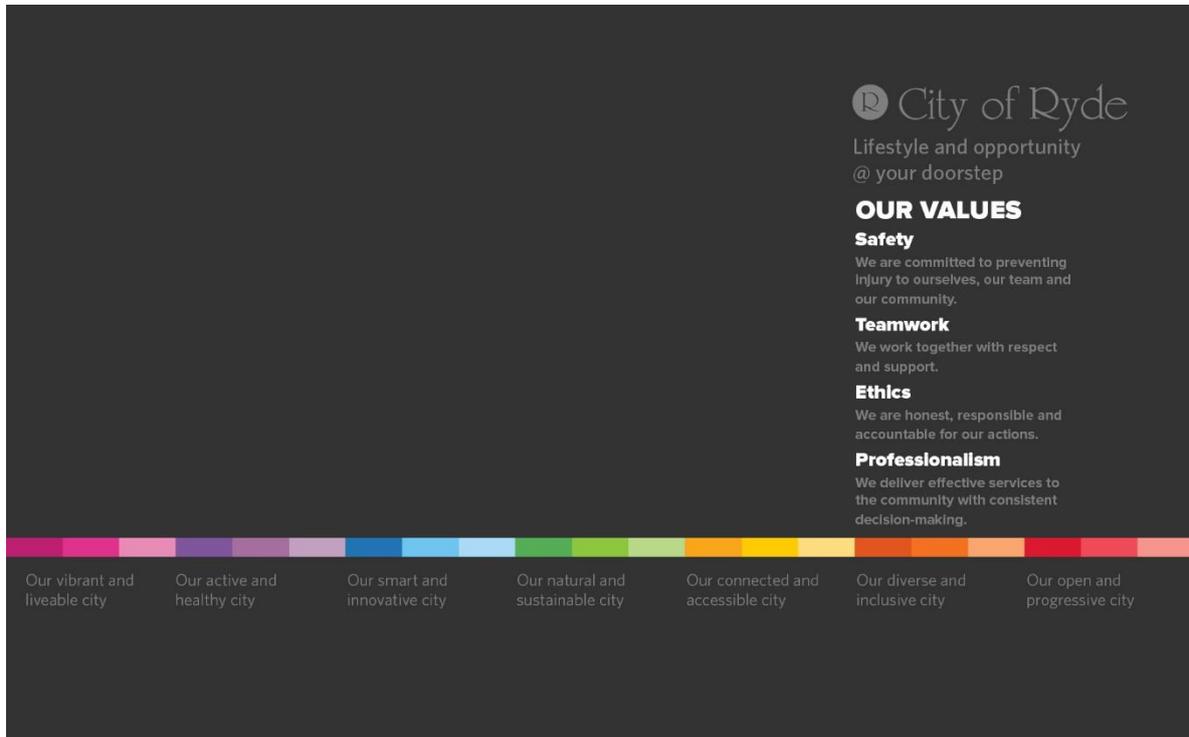
Other initiatives that keep our values visible and reflective of the way we work at the City of Ryde include annual awards that highlight outstanding examples of staff living our values. The annual awards program is called "STEP UP" in recognition of our values and is a program where staff can nominate and vote on the winners. We want to acknowledge and celebrate staff that have "Stepped Up" and gone above and beyond in a way that is reflective of the City of Ryde values.

The Operations STEP Award is presented to an Operations staff member who has excelled in any of the City of Ryde values. Nominees are nominated by their colleagues for going above and beyond. Nominations are made by colleagues putting a person's name forward at toolbox talks or Section meetings which can then be escalated to the monthly Operations meetings. The recipient is selected from the pool of nominees that have been forwarded by a Section Manager.

3. **Impact:** Can you please provide one or two specific examples of how core values impact everyday decision-making of leaders in your organisation? Have there been any "critical incidents" in which core values have shaped how your leaders responded to unusual and difficult circumstances?

Response:

Earlier this year Council resolved that single use plastic would no longer be used in Council run events reinforcing our commitment to environmental sustainability and our core value of ETHICS, ie: being responsible and accountable for our actions.

Council also complies with statutory reporting obligations to the Community demonstrating how the organisation has met the requirements of its operational plans, again reflecting our value of ETHICS.

A critical incident occurred at a Council facility and staff at all levels responded and demonstrated Council's core values of Safety, Teamwork and Professionalism. This was demonstrated through staff immediately responding as a TEAM enacting relevant evacuation procedures to ensure the SAFETY of customers whilst the incident was being responded to. Post incident, leaders ensured that relevant support was provided to staff including the provision of counselling services as the health and wellbeing (SAFETY) of our staff is always at the forefront of our thinking. Leaders also took the lead to ensure that appropriate and PROFESSIONAL communications were undertaken for both staff and to the Community. Leaders spoke personally with staff to acknowledge their good work in handling the matter as well as providing relevant support.

In terms of impact we have constant demonstrations of staff modelling our Values. Staff will step in to help their co-workers when workloads are high, they take action to eliminate or reduce safety risks and they strive to ensure customer needs are met in professional and ethical manner.

4. **Challenges:** What are the biggest challenges in using core values to shape leadership behaviour in your organisation?

Response:

One of the challenges is embedding the Values to an extent that they are inherent in everything we do. We need to ensure that the behavioural expectations we set for our organisation are measurable. We can have great people working for our organisation, but are they demonstrating our values? Does their behaviour align? Are we brave enough to call people out on their behaviour when they are not aligned to the values or do we make excuses for them? There is ongoing work to do in this space.

5. **Recommendations:** What are your recommendations for other organisations if they want to use core values as a foundation for leadership behaviour?

   Response:

   If other organisations want to use core values as a foundation for leadership behaviour, ensure the values are developed in consultation with staff to gain their ownership and understanding of the expectations. Then ensure there is constant and consistent reinforcement through both words and actions.