

## Changing Mindsets - Developing a Continuous Improvement Culture

### Part 1 of 2

By Stephen Walsh



The recent success of TEAM BRITAIN and particularly that of our very own Scottish Champion, cyclist Chris Hoy, in the China Olympics should inspire us all to want to excel in what we do.

It is Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the BEST area and the BEST council in the eyes of visitors, inhabitants, businesses and employees. To that end, the street cleansing staff of Souterford Depot has risen to the challenge of becoming medal winners in the field of *continuous improvement*.

Working with the KAIZEN Team continuous improvement officers, the street cleansers of the mid Shire depots have been the first group of Council operatives to undertake the so-called Bronze-Silver-Gold approach to KAIZEN for DAILY IMPROVEMENT.

The Kaizen for Daily Improvement programme builds on the highly effective Blitz events, with the aim of embedding continuous improvement in the behaviours of the staff, making 'improving the way we do things' the normal and natural mindset. This is predicated on self-assessment against a predefined set of performance-related behaviours, which have been graded as 'Bronze-Silver-Gold'.

In simplistic terms, 'Bronze' level is about *'doing what we are supposed to do well'* and creates a 'quality service' mindset; 'Silver' is about *'improving our processes and quality to better satisfy customers'* and will see the introduction of problem-solving behaviours, tools and techniques to staff; 'Gold' level represents world-class practice as a recognisable description of daily activity in the service.



Mike addresses one of the directors...



Some of the team: after Ivan, Lloyd, Dave, Darren and Claire

The team at Souterford have made an impressive start and set a fast pace for the Bronze line – in just three months they have organized the depots and their vehicles around the principles of 5S, setting a literally shining example of clean and tidy work areas, which makes for safer and more efficient working; they have interpreted the complex jargon of the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse into diagrammatic form that informs them of performance standards and have reviewed and revised zones and routes to help them plan capacity and reduce unnecessary travel. They applied their knowledge of their work into identifying ineffective, non-value adding activities – or *waste*. Waste occurs in everything and the trick is to recognise it and then change the operation to eliminate or reduce it. Waste shows itself as cost to the business, which means financial losses. It also steals time, which means less capacity, which in turn means detriment to the service. The Souterford team identified ways of increasing capacity by 26% *just by working differently!*

The work of improvement has just started. They are gunning for Bronze and then Silver. Their efforts have attracted an audience – other council members want to know what the excitement is about and how they, too, can get in on the act. Like any Olympic athlete about to break the tape, they are rightly pleased with their achievement and deserve a huge round of applause from everyone else.