

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

### Meeting held 16 November 2017

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Peace (Chair), Ian Auckland, John Booker, Denise Fox, Douglas Johnson, Pat Midgley, Josie Paszek, Mick Rooney, Ian Saunders, Steve Wilson and Andrew Sangar (Substitute Member)

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#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Penny Baker and Cliff Woodcraft (with Councillor Andrew Sangar attending as Councillor Woodcraft's substitute).

#### **2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2017, were approved as a correct record.

#### **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

#### **6. WORK-BASED DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING**

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Resources, containing details of the activity being undertaken to support and sustain a healthy and well developed workforce.

6.2 The report was supported by a presentation from Mark Bennett, Director of Human Resources and Customer Services, and also in attendance for this item was Lynsey Linton, Head of Human Resources.

6.3 Mark Bennett reported on the actions taken to support the workforce, specifically in relation to staff development and wellbeing, which had been identified as key elements of the Council's evolving Workforce Strategy. Reference was made to all elements of the Workforce

Strategy and Mr. Bennett reported on the reasons as to why such a Strategy was required. He concluded by referring to action undertaken, or planned, in respect of employee development and wellbeing, some of which had been in response to feedback from employees' Personal Development Reviews (PDR).

6.4 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- In terms of Personal Development Reviews (PDR), feedback from managers and staff had indicated that the system they were being asked to follow was not meeting their needs. The HR Service was currently piloting the "Time to Sit Down and Talk" approach in areas of the Council, focusing specifically on those "harder to reach" areas, such as Parks and Countryside and Repairs and Maintenance, to regularise the nature of a wellbeing and development conversation. As part of this process, staff were being asked about their general wellbeing at the very start of the conversation, which provided them with an opportunity to discuss any issues of concern with their managers prior to progressing onto work issues. This was considered very important as it allowed staff to raise any personal issues they had, with their managers.
- Mental health was considered a very important element of work-based development and wellbeing, and was very much front and centre of the Council's Being Healthy at Work strategy. It was not just about identifying, and managing, those members of staff with mental health issues, but also providing help and advice for other members of staff so they could recognise the issues.
- Whilst there was a considerable amount of data on the HR system, such data had not been linked in with the Workforce Strategy. The Strategy was not yet fully developed, and it had been identified that there was a need to make sure that the performance indicators we choose to measure meet the requirements of a future workforce. Certain elements of the Strategy had been prioritised in terms of undertaking additional work, including sickness absence, low response rates in terms of the PDR and Employee Survey, but the data links were not specifically clear at this stage.
- There was data on the HR system with regard to both short and long-term absence rates. The Managing Attendance Procedure had recently been reviewed and relaunched in November 2017 in order to assist managers in being better able to recognise individual's needs. It was accepted however, that there was still some way to go in this regard.

- Whilst it was considered that the Employee Survey was a very effective process to seek the views of staff in terms of their development and wellbeing, it had been accepted that, due to its length, and level of detail, some staff may be deterred from completing it. Other local authorities used smaller surveys, but had them more often. The response rates in respect of the survey had been identified as a key challenge. It was appreciated that if decisions were to be made with regard to the management of the workforce, there was a need to ensure that the Employee Survey was worthwhile.
- One key finding from the Employee Survey was related to the workforce's frustration with the ICT network. The Director of Human Resources and Customer Services was working very closely with the Director of Business Change and Information Solutions, who had been tasked to develop a new IT Strategy, and was committed to making improvements to the network. There was evidence to show that managers used the results of the Employee Survey, and took any action they deemed necessary. It was important, however, that managers informed staff why such changes had been made.
- It was accepted that some members of staff had concerns regarding anonymity in terms of completing the Employee Survey, but the results were reported at a level where individuals could not be identified. In those circumstances where the cohort, in terms of respondees, was less than 10, the results would not be reported.
- Staff were allowed time, during working hours, to complete the Employee Survey.
- There had not been any performance target rates in terms of PDR completions, although there was an expectation that all staff should have such a Review.
- The Service worked very closely with the Trade Unions, both in connection with the Workforce Strategy as a whole, and on specific elements of the Strategy. There was also a dedicated monthly meeting in place with officers and Trade Union representatives with regard to staff wellbeing.
- Staff dismissal rates were reported on an annual basis, and sent to Managers.
- It was accepted that problems in relation to the Learning and Development Hub had contributed to the low completion rate in respect of PDRs. The pilot removes this blocker. It had been identified that, as well as reminder messages from Human Resources, there was a need for compliance of staff and, in

addition, managers had been asked to raise the importance of PDRs with their staff.

- Whilst a high level of staff training was provided in the form of e-learning courses, which could be effective in some cases, the Authority still offered “face to face” staff training, which included managing attendance training.
- The Service was very aware of the current situation regarding sexual harassment. There were no indicators pointing to any particular problems of this nature within the Authority at the present time. The Authority continued to promote existing mechanisms in terms of staff being supported with regard to reporting such incidents.
- It was accepted that, given the increasing demands being placed on staff, together with the uncertain future, there were likely to be issues in terms of employee morale and wellbeing. Given all the recent changes, including new technology and new ways of working, dealing with employees’ wellbeing was always going to be an evolving process.
- The completion rate in respect of the Employee Survey was 31%, down from 38% from the last survey. It had been identified that not all staff were using the time given for them to complete the Survey.
- Performance discussions across the Council were being recorded inconsistently. The new pilot was also exploring the recording of conversations.
- The Employee Assistance Programme, set up to support employees with access to counselling, debt and legal advice, and other wellbeing resources, was a confidential, independent, telephone-based system.
- Data regarding sickness absence was broken down in terms of short and long-term absence. It was expected that staff would be having conversations with their managers in terms of their sickness absence. Managers, at their quarterly briefings, received statistics in terms of both long and short-term absence rates.
- It was believed that the results of the Employee Survey were a good measure of staff morale.
- There was a discussion to be had in relation to whistleblowing and whether Council procedures in this area could be further improved, which would be considered by the Director of Human Resources and Customer Services.

- Whilst it was accepted that there was still a need for further work, the Director of Human Resources and Customer Services believed that, in his first three months in post, he had developed a reasonable sense of what issues with regard to work-based development and wellbeing still needed addressing. It was believed that there would be considerable changes in terms of how the Council operated in the next few years, which would have an effect on staff development and wellbeing.
- In general, the one to one appraisals had been reasonably successful, with the only issue being a low completion rate when managers had been asked to log the conversations.

6.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the information reported as part of the presentation and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) identifies gaps in the Workforce Strategy, that it would like to be considered further, through the development of the Strategy, as follows:-
  - (i) adequate mental health training for all staff;
  - (ii) clarification of the role of Trade Unions in developing the Strategy;
  - (iii) how initiatives, such as “Time To Sit Down And Talk” could be made to work for staff, particularly those who are not office-based, or have office hours’ roles;
  - (iv) staff being able, and encouraged, to complete the Workforce Employee Survey; and
  - (v) the Council’s approach to bullying, harassment and whistle-blowing;
- (c) indicates that it would like to see the following issues prioritised in the Workforce Strategy:-
  - (i) engagement with Trade Unions throughout the process of developing the Strategy and implementing the actions;
  - (ii) there is a pressing need to ensure that there is a range of options for whistle-blowing and staff to report harassment, bullying and victimisation, so that individuals are able to choose the reporting method that is most comfortable for them, and that the options include a way to report, and escalate issues, that is independent of the Council; work should also be done to raise staff awareness of these options;
  - (iii) ensure that the organisation provides an environment that encourages the appropriate conversations around

- development and Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) – the Committee was concerned about the low completion, or reporting rates of PDRs, and considered that this should include equipping managers with the skills and capacity to have these conversations;
- (iv) ensure that the organisation is communicating effectively with staff about changes to training, development and wellbeing; and
  - (v) clarity around the difference between long and short-term sickness absence and the different solutions they require;
- (d) would like the Strategy to have clear and measureable outcomes, as well as a vision of what success would look like and, if the results of the Employee Survey were going to form the basis of any of these measures, consideration needs to be given to increasing completion rates; and
- (e) thanks Mark Bennett and Lynsey Linton for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised.

## **7. JANUARY 2018 FULL COUNCIL MEETING - DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT FOR SHEFFIELD 2017**

7.1 The Committee considered the Director of Public Health Report for Sheffield 2017, a presentation on which was to be made by Greg Fell, Director of Public Health, at the Council meeting to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2018, and made the following comments/observations:-

- (a) there was little detail of content in terms of the recommendations;
- (b) more frequent updates would be welcomed;
- (c) there was a need for more detail in terms of realistic measures regarding what was required in order to improve the health of the residents of Sheffield;
- (d) there was a need for the Council to be informed in terms of how the relevant agencies planned to respond to the findings in the report, and for such agencies to be accountable to this Committee in some way, such as being invited to future meetings; and
- (e) their requests that the Director of Public Health provides an update in terms of what measures had been put in place since the drafting of the report.

7.2 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the Director of Public Health Report for Sheffield 2017;
- (b) in terms of the presentation on the Public Health Report at the Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2018, indicates that it would find it useful if the

presentation could include the following:-

- (i) an overview of what progress has been made by the relevant agencies to date, in terms of responding to, accepting and implementing the recommendations in the Report; and
- (ii) an overview of the Annual Report, and the Director of Public Health's role in influencing and bringing people together to achieve the stated ambitions, given that success in these areas is dependent on more than one organisation; and
- (c) requests that a progress report on the recommendations in the Annual Report be submitted to a meeting of the Committee in six months' time.

## **8. ISSUES TO RAISE FROM OTHER SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

- 8.1 The Committee noted information reported by those Chairs of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees in attendance, in terms on updates of their respective Committee's work.

## **9. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

- 9.1 The Policy and Improvement Officer submitted a report, attaching the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2017/18.
- 9.2 The Chair reported that efforts were being made to arrange an additional meeting of the Committee, to consider the proposals regarding devolution, and that Members would be informed as soon as a date had been arranged.
- 9.3 In response to an issue raised by Councillor Douglas Johnson, the Chair stated that she would be happy to look into making arrangements for a report, most probably a briefing paper, on the nature and quality of reports submitted to Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees, to be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.
- 9.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee approves the draft Work Programme 2017/18, as set out in the report now submitted, and subject to the possible amendments following the issues now raised.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 10.1 It was noted that (a) the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 at 10.00 a.m. in the Town Hall and (b) arrangements would be made for a special meeting of the Committee, to consider the devolution proposals, with Members being informed of the date accordingly.