

## **ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2020**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Angelique Foster (Chair)  
Councillor Maureen Potts (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Joe Birkin  
Councillor Patricia Bone  
Councillor John Funnell

Councillor Michelle Emmens  
Councillor Heather Liggett  
Councillor Brian Wright

#### **Also Present:**

Mark Rocca – Lead Facility Officer (for Min No 464)  
Chris Mills – Leisure Operations Manager (for Min No 464)  
Gareth Harper – Estate Manager (for Min No 464)  
Darren Mitchell – Streetscene and Waste Services Manager (for Min No 464)  
Steve Lee – Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator (for Min No 464)  
Sarah Sternberg – Head of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer  
Damon Stanton – Governance Officer

#### **461 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor M Jones.

#### **462 Declarations of Interest**

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no declarations made at this meeting.

#### **463 Minutes of Last Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee held on 22 October 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **464 Scrutiny Review - Interviews**

Leisure Operations Manager/Lead Facilities Officer

The Committee welcomed the Lead Facility Officer and the Leisure Operations Manager to the meeting to discuss the Council's Sickness Absence Management Policy.

The Officers informed Members that there were over 125 staff in leisure services, and they found that the policy supported both management and staff when attempting to run a busy service. The Officers stated that they thought the triggers were appropriate and fair, and that it did help reduce overall sickness absence. They did, however, comment that the process could sometimes be time consuming.

Members noted that the Authority provided support for staff who were experiencing symptoms of mental ill health. This support included counselling and access to an occupational health provider. There was also wide ranging support available to management staff. This included advice from the HR Team, as well as external and internal training courses.

The Officers recommended a number of ways in which employee health and wellbeing could be improved, such as outside or walking meetings.

Members thanked the Officers for attending the meeting.

*The Officers then left meeting.*

#### Estates Manager

The Committee welcomed the Estates Manager to the meeting to discuss the Council's Sickness Absence Management Policy.

The Officer informed Members that he managed a relatively small team, and as such he felt that the processes and policy worked well. Members heard that HR Services provided wide ranging support to service managers, and that in his experience staff were well aware of the policy.

Members had a varied discussion on the trigger points in the policy, as well as the effectiveness of targets. The Officer commented that it was a policy similar to that in other organisations and that on the whole it worked well.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting.

*The Officer then left the meeting.*

#### Joint Streetscene and Waste Services Manager

The Joint Streetscene and Waste Services Manager was present at the meeting to discuss the Council's Sickness Absence Management Policy.

The Committee heard that there was over 100 staff in Streetscene and that due to the labour intense nature of the work there was a relatively high sickness absence rate when compared with other services at the Authority. The Officer stated that the process could be time consuming, and involved repeated review interviews after an employee had hit a trigger point.

Members discussed ways in which attendance could be improved, as well as a positive cultural attitude that promoted attendance at work. The Officer suggested that adjustments could be made to the policy to accommodate for

larger service areas, as a 'one size fits all' approach may not work for all.

The Committee heard that HR often assisted service managers in difficult meetings, and were pro-active in assisting employees who had on-going health issues.

Members noted that Streetscene allowed phased returns for employees, as well as placing them on lighter duties if they were returning from long term injury or illness. It was stated that agencies were sometimes used to cover for those on long term sick.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting.

*The Officer then left the meeting.*

*At this point, Councillor B Wright withdrew from the meeting.*

#### Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator

The Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator was present at the meeting to discuss the Council's Sickness Absence Management Policy.

The Officer stated that he was responsible for the transformation and partnership service area, and that he line managed three employees. The Committee heard that the policy did support both employees and managers, and in his experience was fair and easy to follow.

The Officer praised the support that HR provided, and commented that employees had access to counselling, a helpline and an occupational health provider. The Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator stated that whilst he found the policy to be supportive of service managers, he acknowledged that it could be time consuming if he was responsible for a larger service.

The Committee agreed that the policy had many good aspects, but recognised that it seemed to place additional pressures on service managers who were responsible for a large team. Members also discussed paid leave for medical appointments.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting.

*The Officer then left the meeting.*

#### **465 Previous Scrutiny Review**

The Committee agreed that they would like to consider the review after the meeting and feedback any comments to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager. Members acknowledged that there had been some organisational change since the previous Scrutiny Review on Communications and Marketing.

Members had a wide ranging discussion on Member and Officer communications, and felt that ward issues could be better communicated with Ward Members. The

Head of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer informed the Committee of a Member and Officer Communications Protocol that had recently been established and would be circulated to Members in the near future.

**466 List of Key Decisions**

RESOLVED – That the List of Key Decisions Issue No 91 be noted.

**467 Work Programme**

The Committee agreed that they would like to strengthen the review by inviting employee representatives such as union officials to the Committee to discuss employee health and wellbeing.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.

**468 Additional Urgent Items**

There were no additional urgent items for discussion at this meeting.

**469 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee is 24 March 2020 at 10.00 am.