

ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2019

Present:

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

Councillor J Birkin
Councillor Patricia Bone
Councillor Maggie Jones

Councillor John Funnell
Councillor Heather Liggett
Councillor Brian Wright

Also Present:

S Gordon HR & OD Manager
S Veerman Overview and Scrutiny Manager
D Stanton Governance Officer

217 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors M Emmens.

218 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 of interest made at this meeting.

219 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

220 Scrutiny Review - Health and Wellbeing (Part 1)

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager (the HR and OD Manager) presented a scene setting report that outlined the approach to Health and Wellbeing within the Council.

The Committee heard a summary of the Action Plan Aims contained within the Health and Wellbeing framework, such as to create a healthy working environment, to develop a supportive workplace culture, and to encourage employee engagement in healthy lifestyles.

The Officer detailed some of the initiatives that had supported the Action Plan, such as a cycle to work scheme, free flu vaccinations, employee celebration awards and walk events.

Members noted that the Council's Assistance Programme provided support to employees and their relatives. This support included legal advice and counselling. The HR and OD Manager stated that information about services the Council offered to employees was found in payslips, on posters, and on the extranet. The Committee was informed that AXA provided the service, and the Officer would liaise with the Overview and Scrutiny Manager so that Members could be informed of the exact fee to the Council. It was stated that the initial take up from staff was low, however it had improved as employees had become more aware of the support available.

The Committee enquired about mental health champions, and how the Authority was helping staff who were experiencing mental ill health. The Officer informed Members that Managers and Service Line Managers had attended training courses that demonstrated a range of tools and techniques in order to support staff. The Council was also looking to organise and implement more specific mental health training in the next six months. The Committee felt that wider employee awareness would be beneficial, and enquired about possible training for Councillors.

The Officer informed Members about the support available to staff who were experiencing mental ill health, such as counselling sessions, and referral to the Council's occupational health provider. Members noted that if it was the appropriate treatment the Authority paid for up to six counselling sessions and this was organised either through the occupational health provider or Derbyshire County Council. The HR and OD Manager pledged to provide the Committee with the figures on how many employees had taken up this support. The Committee discussed the increasing pressures on GP practices, and the difficulties in obtaining an appointment, especially in mental health services.

Members discussed the benefits to the Organisation of healthy and happy staff, and the Officer commented that the feedback that had been given on support available had been good. The Committee heard that it was crucial the relationship between manager and employee was good, which was why regular appraisals and one to one meetings were encouraged.

The HR and OD Manager discussed sickness absence within the Authority. The Committee heard that overall there had been 47 long terms sickness absences in 2018/19, which had decreased from 50 in 2017/18. The Officer pledged to liaise with the Overview and Scrutiny Manager and provide the national average of sickness absence when those figures were published, so that they could be presented to the Committee. Members noted that 47 employees had taken up the offer of a free flu vaccination.

The Committee heard that there was a dedicated team in HR that specifically looked at organisational development.

Following the scene setting report Members gave consideration to the draft Project Plan and Timetable for the Scrutiny review of Health and Wellbeing in the workplace. The Chair, alongside Members of the Scrutiny Committee, agreed that there should be a structured approach to the visit to talk with staff at the Mill Lane offices and that this would be held during the scheduled meeting of the

Committee that day.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the scene setting report be noted.
- (2) That the Project Plan and Timetable be approved.

221 Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development

The HR and OD Manager presented the Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development 2018/19 that outlined a range of employee issues that pertained to the 2018/19 financial year. The Committee heard that there was 186 new employment contracts and 88 leavers during the reported period. Members noted that exit questionnaires had been sent out routinely but rarely returned, and therefore the reason behind staff leaving was difficult to analyse.

Members heard that the sickness absence outturn figure for the reported period was 9.7 days per employee, which was a reduction on the previous year, but higher than the 8.5 day target.

The Officer stated that the Council advertised vacancies through the Derbyshire County Council jobs website, and also through professional bodies if relevant. The Committee heard that in support of recruitment, career days had been held at schools and colleges, as well as an apprenticeship scheme and internship vacancies to attract university students.

In relation to 1.3 of the report, Members stated that they would like to see a full breakdown of why staff were leaving the Authority as opposed to just the top three reasons. The Committee also made clear a desire for more exit interviews to be completed by managers. Members requested a copy of the exit questionnaire and the Officer agreed to provide this to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager for Members' consideration. The Officer also informed Members that there was a pre-retirement course available to those who were close to retirement.

The Officer discussed the Council's apprenticeship scheme, where 17 apprentices had been employed in 2018/19, which was higher than the Authority's target of 11. Members enquired about the permanent contract opportunities for apprentices after their initial contract had expired. The Officer advised that there had been a number of apprentices who had gone on to permanent contracts, and that the Council was always looking to develop them further, for example some had been provided with leadership training.

The HR and OD Manager informed the Committee that some managers had attended level 3, 5 and 7 leadership development courses and that an internal training course would commence in September as part of the Transformation Programme.

Members discussed graduate recruitment, and the Officer confirmed that whilst there were no graduate initiatives, they did work with universities to attract internships in departments when appropriate.

The Committee enquired about the Council's Gender Pay Gap report, and the HR and OD Manager agreed to liaise with the Overview and Scrutiny Manager so a copy of the report could be provided to Members.

The Committee discussed services provided to parish councils, such as ad hoc payroll advice and other HR services.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting.

The Officer then left the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

222 Scrutiny Review - Health and Wellbeing (Part 2)

Members discussed the progress of the review and next steps. A number of questions that they would like to see included in upcoming interviews and site visits were suggested.

The Committee discussed the possibility of individual interviews and/or focus groups with employees, as well as a survey that could be distributed around the Organisation.

223 List of Key Decisions - Issue No 87

RESOLVED – That the List of Key Decisions Issue No 87 be noted.

224 Work Programme

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme for the Committee be noted.

225 Additional Urgent Items

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

226 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee is 22 October 2019 at 10.00 am.