

ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 31 AUGUST 2021

Present:

Councillor Stephen Clough (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Heather Liggett (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Joseph Birkin
Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Philip Wright

Councillor John Funnell
Councillor Diana Ruff

Also Present:

Councillor Jeremy Kenyon	Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Transformation and Climate Change
S Gordon	HR & OD Manager
M Broughton	Joint Head of Transformation and Organisation
S Veerman	Overview and Scrutiny Manager
D Stanton	Governance Officer

OSC/ Apologies for Absence **19/2**

1-22 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Jones and R Welton.

OSC/ Declarations of Interest **20/2**

1-22 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 interests declared at this meeting.

OSC/ Minutes of Last Meeting **21/2**

1-22 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the previous meetings of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, as shown below:-

Organisation Scrutiny Committee – 29 September 2020
Informal Organisation Scrutiny Committees – 2 February 2021, 2 March 2021, 11 May 2021 and 6 July 2021.

OSC/ Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development 2020-21 **22/2**

1-22

The Committee welcomed the HR & OD Manager to the meeting to present the Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development. The report updated the Committee on a range of employee related issues that pertained to the 2020/21 financial year.

Members heard that during the reporting period, the Council had placed 71 adverts for job vacancies, with 110 new employment contracts and 186 variations to employment contracts. There were also 68 leavers, with the top three reasons for leaving being end of contract (10), resignation (21) and retirement (7). It was stated that last year there were 85 leavers.

The Committee noted that the sickness absence out-turn figure for the reporting period was 7.36 days per employee, which was a reduction on the previous year but higher than the target. The Authority had seen a reduction in both short term and long term sickness absence from the previous year.

The HR & OD Manager discussed a number of health and wellbeing initiatives undertaken during the year which included health checks offered to employees, occupational health, a cycle to work scheme, access to Council leisure facilities, and covid-19 advice and support.

Members heard about Organisational Development which covered a range of workstreams including workplace culture, employee engagement and experience, and recruitment and retention. The officer also provided an update on apprenticeships and trainees.

The HR and OD Manager concluded the update by informing the Committee of HR & OD achievements for 2020/21 which included supporting the covid response, implementation of a new E-recruit system, and rolling out a corporate learning and development programme.

The Committee enquired about the number of resignations. The officer clarified that due to the nature of some Council services, such as in leisure or streetscene, some staff were hired on a casual or seasonal basis and therefore had high levels of turnover. It was stated, however, that the Council did not have abnormally high levels of resignations when compared to other local authorities. Members requested further detail on the reasons why staff had resigned.

Members discussed sickness absence and how it had been impacted by the Pandemic. The officer clarified that there were 45 long term sickness absences', which was classified as being absent from work for over 20 days.

The Committee noted that there were a number of virtual career fairs planned at schools in Tupton and Dronfield. The Council also had a number of interns who were paid and typically enrolled on a course at a university or college.

The HR and OD Manager commented that maintaining a positive workplace culture was important given the increase of remote working following the Pandemic. Members heard that culture differed amongst services and that there was a staff survey conducted every two years to gauge the opinions of employees.

Members requested that future reports outline the percentage reduction/increase in reasons for absence from each quarter.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

OSC/ Scrutiny Review - ICT and Transformation

23/2

1-22

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Transformation and Climate Change, and the Joint Head of Transformation and Organisation were present at the meeting to discuss the Council's ICT Digital Transformation.

Members received a presentation and heard that the Council had set out its transformation vision through a number of strategic documents including the Council Plan, Carbon Reduction Plan, Leadership Programme, and Digital Transformation Strategy.

The presentation outlined the significant progress made on the delivery of the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy, which included a broad area of work spanning a number of different departments and directly impacted customers, residents and businesses. The Committee noted that digital transformation presented an opportunity to improve Council Services whilst reducing costs.

Members were informed about a number of significant Digital Transformation projects and achievements which included a multi-channel solution to the contact centre with webchat implemented (and email next); increased the number of forms and services available on self-service from 14 transactions in 2018 to over 80 which were available and accessible on all digital devices; improved online services for businesses; free digital training for residents aged 50 and above; and a PSN (Public Services Network) accreditation obtained for 2021.

The Joint Head of Transformation and Organisation commented that the Council had been able to operate more effectively throughout the Pandemic due to the existing digital infrastructure that had been put in place. The Pandemic had accelerated the Council's digital transformation.

The Committee enquired about the potential for system outages. The officer stated that whilst it was possible, a full system outage was unlikely. Members heard that in the past 12 months, there had been one major outage that lasted 4 hours and only affected emails. All Council data was 'backed up' and there was a shift planned for data to be stored in the cloud so that it was not held locally.

The Committee agreed that it was important for residents who were not computer literate to still receive support. The Joint Head of Transformation and Organisation commented that residents could still call the contact centres and that the Council was not removing services, but instead 'channel shifting' and encouraging users to use digital services. It was stated, for example, that Universal Credit was entirely digital, and the Council provided digital assistance to users.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Transformation and Climate Change discussed how the Council currently communicated with residents who were unable to access the internet. Those mediums of communication included

newsletters and magazines which were posted to every house in the District on a quarterly basis, and press releases to newspapers and radio. Surveys were also used, however, the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that their success was limited.

The Committee discussed productivity and home working. In this context, Members were reminded that employees were still expected to be managed at home similarly to the office, albeit remotely by their line managers. The officer explained that although measuring any change to productivity through home working was difficult, there were some obvious benefits such as reduced travel to the office.

Members heard that the Authority still believed that social interaction was important to workplace culture, and as such although some employees were at home, they should not be isolated. Potential changes to the Mill Lane offices were discussed that could better accommodate hybrid working, and it was hoped there would be some technological solution to socially re-connect teams that were working remotely.

The Committee discussed the savings and costs to the Authority of the Digital Transformation. The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Transformation and Climate Change commented that some savings were difficult to calculate, as a cost that could arise out of one budget could make savings for another department. It was agreed that Members were to be provided with a report which outlined direct costs to the overall budget.

Members had a wide ranging discussion on scoping the Scrutiny Review which included reviewing the user experience (for customers, staff and Members), reviewing the digital infrastructure and digital connectivity in the District, and Members IT.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

OSC/ Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

24/2

1-22 RESOLVED – That the forward plan of Executive Decisions be noted.

OSC/ Work Programme

25/2

1-22 RESOLVED – That the Organisation Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.

OSC/ Additional Urgent Items

26/2

1-22 There were no urgent items discussed at the meeting.

OSC/ Date of Next Meeting

27/2

1-22 The next meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee will be held on 5 October 2021 at 10.00 am.