

**NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

INTERIM REPORT

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING
IN THE WORKPLACE**

JULY 2020

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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this interim report on behalf of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee. It details the findings of the Committee from its Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace review.

Members of the Committee felt that it was timely to look at how well the service was working to ensure it was meeting the needs of our staff and the Organisation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for their input and also the stakeholders who helped inform the review. I would also like to thank the Scrutiny Manager for her support of the Committees work and Democratic Services for the help they provided.

Review Panel

The review panel comprised the following members:

Councillor A Foster	-	(Conservative) – Review Panel Chair
Councillor P Bone	-	(Conservative)
Councillor J Birkin	-	(Labour)
Councillor M Emmens	-	(Conservative)
Councillor J Funnell	-	(Independent)
Councillor M Jones	-	(Labour)
Councillor H Liggett	-	(Conservative)
Councillor M Potts	-	(Conservative)
Councillor B Wright	-	(Labour)

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Organisation Scrutiny Committee have not made any recommendations at this stage as a result of the Pandemic and subsequent lockdown. However the Committee has decided it wished to keep Cabinet informed of their work and present the evidence gathered to date for this review. It is recognised that as a consequence of the Pandemic some of the items raised in the review may no longer be relevant at this time. They have agreed they wish first to respond to more immediate issues raised by the Pandemic and will review this piece of review work after completion of the more pressing issues.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 At its meeting on 18th June, 2019 the Organisation Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace.
- 2.2 The Committee felt it was timely to review this area to ensure the Councils strategy was fit for purpose and was helping improve performance and decrease sickness absence in the Authority.

3. Scope of Review

- 3.1 The review aimed to:
- Review the effectiveness of Health and Wellbeing provision to employees working for the Authority
 - Establish the current position of Health and Wellbeing in the Authority
 - Improve performance and reduce sickness
 - Identify any further improvements that can be made

4. Method of Review

- 4.1 The review panel met on five occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and key people they wished to interview.
- 4.2 Evidence was gathered in a variety of ways including documentation, articles on the intranet, interviews and two walk rounds at Mill Lane and Eckington Depot

5. Evidence and Research

A number of documents and evidence were provided to the review panel for consideration. Details are provided below:

- Scene Setting Presentation by the Human Resources Manager
- Health and Wellbeing Framework 2019
- Employee Health & Wellbeing Framework 2017-2020
- Health and Wellbeing Calendar 2019
- Employees Survey – Feedback and Actions 2017
- Data on Sickness Absence and actions taken to address this issue
- Sickness Management Procedure
- Cost of Providing Sickness Cover
- Details of Health and Wellbeing Initiatives the Council is currently delivering
- Corporate Training Programme
- Information on training provided to managers on this area and number of attendees
- Health and Wellbeing Survey
- Information on the new Organisational Group
- Details of proposals for potential improvement works – Eckington Depot

6. Key Findings

6.1 Strengths/ Comments

The majority of the comments listed below were taken verbally by members of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee during their walk rounds at Eckington Depot and Mill Lane. A few were received by email from staff who were not in the building during the visits.

MILL LANE OFFICES

WORKPLACE

- Several people commented they enjoy working at the Council Offices and are happy with their jobs. One Joint Manager enjoyed managing two teams
- Positive comments received for the quick fixes to the over-heating issues at Mill Lane, the door closers, window film and portable air condition units that many believed had helped with hot offices.
- Half price admission to Sports Centre helped me get a lot fitter and appreciated you offering this reduction
- Staff know where to access information
- Support you get is very good
- Managers are good
- Some staff do use the staff room to get away from their desk for lunch

OUTSIDE SPACE

- Provision of sun parasols
- Walks available near the offices and comments made some teams going out jointly. Recognised that not the case in all offices and where officers working on their own in an office this may not happen.

INITIATIVES

- Positive feedback on the Cake Baking event that took place. Thought it encouraged people to interact.
- Yoga well received and mentioned by a few people positively.
- Menopause awareness course considered excellent
- Provision of a number of food vans very useful
- Several positive comments were made about members walking round and talking with staff.

COUNCIL POLICIES

- Option to work from home was praised by several officers. Most were only working from home one day a week. Felt it helped with work life balance, reduced travelling time, cost, carbon footprint, their productivity.
- Provision of a Flexi time scheme was much appreciated

ECKINGTON DEPOT

WORKPLACE

- Good team spirit within teams, good atmosphere
- Retain staff, several worked here for a number of years
- Seasonal workers come back
- Good place to work
- Have a new cleaner who is doing a really good job

6.2 Suggestions for Improvement/Comments

MILL LANE OFFICES

- Views on the film recently fitted to windows were varied, the majority still to be convinced that it will do the job. Comments about it not stopping heat, although some said not had full summer to see if it worked. Several commented it made the office dull, depressing and thought it would be worse in winter. One officer felt it had made a difference another felt it may be helping with glare, others disagreed. Some commented that they had no choice on whether it was fitted in their office. Some staff felt it might help the Carbon Footprint. However, despite the difficulties, several commented that regardless of this they welcomed the desire from Members/ SAMT to try to solve this problem.
- Several comments on heating within the building. Too hot, no facility to individually control temperature in offices as either lack of valve or valve locking issue. Associated with this was the inability for most offices to open their windows more than six inches due to the restrictors fitted. This prevented heat being able to dissipate out of the window and also did not allow air to enter and cool offices. Was some air conditioning in certain rooms and portable units had been provided to some offices during the hot summer which had been welcomed. More provision was probably needed.
- Isolation of Building. Issue raised no easy access to shops (unlike at Saltergate).
- Issue for people who travel to work by bus. The walk to the bus stop is dark and was raised as a safety concern by some. The regular bus route along Derby Road is proposed to be reduced which means staff will have to wait longer for buses as they will be less frequent, one per hour
- Lack of meeting room space was raised
- Toilets- regular issues with toilets not flushing, various ones being out of order on several occasions, smells, cleanliness could be better (similar comment on cleanliness made about the kitchens).
- The new hand driers were welcomed by some but others asked the question whether this was carbon efficient. Another senior officer provided information that they were more carbon friendly and cheaper. Therefore, felt by members this was a communication issue, let staff know this to prevent misconceptions.
- Showers. Some were not aware the Council provided a shower facility. Some officers were using it but felt that one was perhaps insufficient given the number of people who cycle/run to work, work in jobs that may need this facility, including doing work in the evening.

- Communication – comments received no longer receive staff newsletter, intranet not available to all and there should be equal access for employees on things. Not everyone looks at intranet. Used to switch on first thing in morning so staff could see front page, now have to sign in.
- Some offices quite crowded due to number of staff in them and/or furniture required
- Provision of lockers for people who cycle/run to work to store their bags containing wet cycling clothes, due to lack of space within office/inconvenience to colleagues etc. Like to form an informal group with fellow cyclists/ runners to try and gauge what they need to see it happen and to make it easier and more open and accessible to all. Mentioned climate change.
- Lighting in some offices raised – no individual cord pulls, all lights on or off – stated causes migraines for some.
- Access around the building not straight forward, having to go long route on top floor as not connected and ground floor because of rented offices
- Windows to open wider to allow air to flow in
- Some officers said they feel pressure to take their lunch at desk – workloads

STAFF ROOM/CANTEEN

- Separate rooms or space for those staff wanting to be in quiet space to read, relax and destress as opposed to those wanting to interact, watch TV, play table football etc.
- Pictures would be helpful both in this room and about the building on walls. The attractive pictures on the walls by the member's rooms were mentioned as a positive thing.
- Several comments received - Sterile, white walls, hard chairs, badly designed. Members heard many comments on this staff area and recognised on visiting it themselves that the room did appear uninviting and would benefit from improvements to the decoration, mix of seating and layout to make it more comfortable for staff.
- The vending machines did not offer enough choice, particularly healthy options.

OUTSIDE SPACE

- Inner courtyard not private, puts some people off from using it, as feel overlooked by all the offices.
- Lack of sun protection. Sun parasols helped but need more/something more permanent. The removal of trees that provided shade was mentioned. This was to help with light in some offices it was stated. During the visit the doors to the courtyard were locked which members felt did not help with easy access if a member of staff needed to take time out (following a difficult conversation with a customer or if feeling stressed) or wanted to use the space for an outside meeting/discussion if weather ok, etc.
- Lack of benches rather than picnic tables both in the courtyard and on the grassed area at the side of the building. Issues mentioned included people with mobility issues and women in skirts who had difficulties getting into the tables. Additionally, people did not always want to sit and eat lunch. Benches were useful for relaxation and destressing, chatting with a colleague, reading.
- In relation to keeping fit, request for private place to get changed, store clothes as well as provision of equipment. One comment - appreciates current provision but NEDDC have the opportunity to be more forward thinking in terms of staff fitness and well-being.
- Some officers would like to see some gym equipment outside or inside. Been advised a safety issue but thought these issues could be resolved.
- Small area in courtyard covered and heated to encourage staff interaction
- Outdoor classes
- One request was made for a shelter over the smoking area.

INITIATIVES

- Some officers commented they felt more isolated in this building/ their department. References to some successful events that had improved this. Felt more of this needed to be done to encourage interaction between colleagues
- Encourage more staff interaction generally
- No healthy option choices on food vans or vending machines

- Some comments on need to ensure there was always feedback on suggestions put forward

COUNCIL POLICIES

- All hospital appointments should not require staff to take leave.
- Member/Staff Forum (new employee forum being set up may meet this).
- Sickness triggers mentioned as being very strict with no leniency

ECKINGTON DEPOT

WORKPLACE

- The Committee were sent a document by the Facilities Team proposing works to the Depot which were currently in the process of being prepared to improve facilities and also undertake work after the impact of the recent flooding of the site. It was anticipated if the works were agreed the majority of the issues raised regarding the workplace below will be addressed.
- General state of the site, needs refurbishing. Some bits shabby. This includes communal showers, ladies toilet. Also need a ladies shower
- Provide some seating in the Parks changing area. Also said a drinks machine would be good. Currently staff have brought their own kettle and seating.
- Hatch in foreman's office would be good to protect confidentiality and also keep dust off documentation.
- Issue with escape in a fire in the foreman's office being out of window, currently with iron bars on it (bolts been taken out) needs resolving.
- Issue with the fire alarm mentioned – not connected through the various buildings so relying on someone going and telling those in the other buildings to where it is sounding.
- Heating in parks office. Boiler in supervisor room so gets very hot.

COMMUNICATION

- Personal thank you to staff from Leader for efforts in flood did not get through to all staff
- Computer for use by staff in canteen not being used, uninviting, locked in a steel cabinet. Many of the workers not accessing any intranet messages on items such as policies and updates
- Briefings need to happen, not being held, since a manager left

MANAGERS COMMENTS

- The Committee heard from a number of key managers. They had a lengthy discussion with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager about a wide range of initiatives that had supported the action plan contained within the Health and Wellbeing Framework. This Framework aimed to create a healthy working environment, to develop a supportive workplace culture and to encourage employee engagement in healthy lifestyles. Initiatives included a cycle to work scheme, free flu vaccinations, employee celebration awards and walk events
- Evidence was also provided of the Council's Assistance Programme which provided support to employees and their relatives. Support was also available from an Occupational Health Provider. Mental Health Champions were part of the provision to staff and counselling was available where appropriate. This was supported by evidence from Managers who felt that the Authority provided good support for staff including those experiencing symptoms of mental ill health.
- Members also discussed and considered data on sickness and the Councils Sickness Policy. The general consensus was that the policy supported both management and staff but recognised that for managers with large teams it required more input. They heard that some Managers felt that they struggled to meet the trigger date reviews on occasion and the Committee was of the view that the Policy needed to be flexible enough to allow some delegation to other managers within their team.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The review panel had not been able to complete this review and triangulate all the evidence it had gathered due to the Pandemic and subsequent lockdown. However, what they had heard included many positive comments about working for the Council. These comments had been collected from a wide range of employees working in various sections and premises of the Authority.

- 7.2 The comments have been set out in this report to keep Cabinet informed of the work that had been undertaken during this review and highlight the evidence that members had heard from participants.

Stakeholders Engaged During the Review

HR and OD Manager	S Gordon
Estates Manager	G Harper
Strategic Partnership Co-Ordinator	S Lee
Leisure Operation Manager	C Mills
Joint Waste Street scene and Waste Services Manager	D Mitchell
Lead Facilities Officer	M Rocca

Walk rounds/visits

- Staff at Council Offices, Mill Lane
- Staff at Eckington Depot
- Staff via the Intranet