

ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 4 AUGUST 2020

Present:

Councillor Angelique Foster (Chair) (in the Chair)

Councillor Joseph Birkin
Councillor Patricia Bone
Councillor John Funnell
Councillor Maggie Jones

Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Heather Liggett
Councillor Philip Wright

Also Present:

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

OSC/ Apologies for Absence

12/2

0-21 An apology for absence was received from Councillor M Potts.

OSC/ Declarations of Interest

13/2

0-21 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pecuniary interest and/or other interest, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdrawn from the meeting at the appropriate time.

No declarations were received.

OSC/ Minutes of Last Meeting

14/2

0-21 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee held on 23 June 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OSC/ Annual Review of HR and Organisational Development

15/2

0-21 The Committee welcomed the HR and Organisational Development Manager to the meeting to receive an Annual Review of HR and Organisational Development.

Members were presented with a report that outlined a range of employee related issues that pertained to the 2019/20 financial year, which included recruitment and selection, employee health and wellbeing, health and wellbeing initiatives, organisational development and apprenticeships.

Members heard that 209 new employment contracts and 195 variation to employment contracts were processed during the 2019/20 year, and that there had been 85 leavers. The Committee noted that the sickness absence out-turn figure for the reporting period was 9.14 days per employee, which was a reduction on the previous year but higher than the target of 8.5 days.

The Committee enquired about the number of employees currently at the Council, and asked for comparisons to be made to other district councils. Members also noted the number of resignations, and the disparities in staff turnover between different services.

The officer informed the Committee that 94 job adverts had been placed, and that the Council had experienced difficulty in recruiting in the past, however this depended on the service and type of role.

The Committee discussed sickness absence and the target set by the Council. There was a consensus that the Authority provided good support to employees, which included an occupational health provider and physiotherapy. Members also requested that the Gender Pay Gap Report be sent out to the Committee.

The HR and Organisational Development Manager informed Members that the lockdown had significantly reduced Sickness Absence figures. It was stated that the average number of days lost for Q1 (April-June) was 1.17 days, compared to 2.28 days for the same quarter last year. The Committee heard that there could be a number of reasons behind this, such as homeworking and a failure to report sickness.

The Committee requested that the HR & Organisational Development Manager attend a meeting later in the municipal year, so that Members could hear what lessons had been learned from staff members working from home. Members noted that SAMT had established a group to look into homeworking arrangements.

The Committee had a wide ranging discussion on homeworking, and agreed that it was important any future homeworking arrangements balanced the needs of the Organisation with the employee.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**OSC/
16/2
0-21** **Scrutiny Review - Health and Wellbeing - Working from Home during the Pandemic**

The HR & Organisational Development Manager was present at the meeting to assist the Committee scope the Scrutiny Review for 2020/2021 Health and Wellbeing – Working from home during the Pandemic.

The Committee agreed that it was important the Health & Wellbeing of employees was maintained when working from home, alongside performance and productivity.

Members discussed health and safety, and that it was vital employees continued to be able to access equipment that improved their physical health whilst working at home, such as specialised chairs or desks. The Committee requested that the review included occupational health staff, as well as the Health and Safety Team for interviews. The HR & Organisational Development Manager confirmed that the Authority remained liable for providing a safe work environment, regardless of whether it is from home or from the office.

There was a consensus that mental health should be considered a part of overall health and wellbeing, and that it was important to gather the views of staff whose mental health may have suffered as a result of an extended period of working from home during the Pandemic.

Members were informed of the temporary work place arrangements that had been put in place during the Pandemic, such as extending flexi-time arrangements. These were available to view on the S Drive.

Members requested that the Joint Director of Environment and Enforcement, and the Joint Head of Service – Partnerships and Transformation, attend a future meeting to explain any plans they may have for the future working arrangements of staff.

Members reiterated that they wished for the Review to examine the lessons learned from the Pandemic and Lockdown, and what was done to support the health and wellbeing of staff. The Review could also gather useful information that could be passed on to Cabinet when formulating any future policies on homeworking.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager confirmed that interviews would be organised and that some would take place at the next meeting on 29 September.

The Committee thanked the officer for attending the meeting.

The officer then left the meeting.

OSC/ Previous Scrutiny Review

17/2

0-21

The Committee considered the draft interim Scrutiny Review Report on Health and Wellbeing.

Members were reminded that due to the Pandemic, the Committee had been unable to triangulate the evidence collated during the last municipal year. It was therefore proposed that the report would be sent to Cabinet to make them aware of the work undertaken, but contained no formal recommendations. The final report would be circulated to Members for final approval, before being submitted to a meeting of Cabinet.

The Committee asked that some clarifications were made to the report, such as that a number of Members gathered evidence verbally by attending the Mill Lane offices and Eckington Depot to talk to staff. There was also a request to include additional comments in regards to the staff room, as well as comments from managers on sickness absence and return to work interviews.

RESOLVED – That subject to final approval from the Committee, the 2019/2020 Scrutiny Review Report on Health and Wellbeing be submitted to Cabinet.

OSC/ Forward Plan of Executive Decisions - 15 June to 15 July 2020

18/2

0-21 AGREED – That the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions – 15 June to 15 July 2020 be noted

OSC/ Work Programme

19/2

0-21 AGREED – that the Draft Work Programme 2020-21 be noted.

OSC/ Additional Urgent Items

20/2

0-21 There were no urgent items to be discussed at the meeting.

OSC/ Date of Next Meeting

21/2

0-21 The next meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 29 September 2020 at 10.00am.