MINUTES OF COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 MARCH 2020

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee: Councillors Mahoney (Chair), Mrs A'Barrow, Mrs Brown, Douglas, Eccleson, Mrs Garcia (substituting for Councillor Leigh Hunt), Keeling and Mrs Parker (substituting for Councillor Cade)

Officers: Mannie Ketley (Head of Corporate Resources and Chief Financial Officer), Jon Illingworth (Financial Services Manager and Deputy Chief Financial Officer), Michelle Dickson (Communities and Projects Manager), Suzanne Turner (Human Resources Manager) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

20.   MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2019 were approved and signed by the Chair.

21.   APOLOGIES

Apologies from the meeting were received from Councillors Cade and Leigh Hunt.

22.   FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2019/20 QUARTER 3

The Committee had previously been requested to bring copies of the relevant Cabinet report from 3 February 2020 to the meeting.

RESOLVED THAT – the Financial Services Manager be thanked for his attendance.

23.   COMMUNITIES AND HOMES – WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

The Committee received a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 5) concerning a light touch review of the Council's relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Communities and Projects Manager attended the meeting to present the report and answer questions.

A brief introduction was provided and the following additional points were made:

Rugby Lotto was currently generating approximately £34,500 in revenue for the voluntary and community sector in Rugby. However, the figure fluctuated in accordance with the ticket sales achieved. No annual target was set.

For organisations to benefit from the scheme, self-promotion and engagement with their supporters was key. It was in the organisation's interest to generate ticket sales.

To join the lottery, not-for-profit organisations were required to meet the eligibility criteria listed in Appendix 3 of the report. Warwickshire CAVA provided support where required to ensure that organisations were governance ready.

The **Community Grants** were annual grants for the voluntary and community sector apply to for the delivery of projects (not core running costs). The eligibility criteria were confirmed in the comprehensive grants guidance notes for 2020/21 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

A robust process was in place to ensure that all grants were allocated in accordance with the eligibility criteria and follow ups were carried out with all grant beneficiaries by officers of the Communities and Projects Team to ensure that the resulting grants have been spent in the appropriate manner and to evaluate outcomes. The 2018/19 Grant Follow Up Evaluations are attached at Appendix 2 to the report. If a beneficiary wants to deviate from the original project that they set out to deliver then they would be required to seek prior approval. The Grants Working Party would then be consulted. In the event they are unable to deliver the project then the grant will have to be repaid. a beneficiary was unable to deliver the project for which the funds were allocated, the Grants Working Party would be informed.

RESOLVED THAT – the Communities and Projects Manager be thanked for her attendance and report.

24.   **EMPLOYEE WELLBEING UPDATE**

The Committee received a progress report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 6) concerning the council's Employee Wellbeing and Sickness Absence Management practices.

The Head of Corporate Resources and Human Resources Manager attended the meeting to present the report and answer questions. Due to the sheer volume of information provided as part of the report, officers prepared a presentation to highlight key points. A copy of the presentation is annexed to the minutes.

During the discussion, the following additional points were made:

- The Committee was pleased to see that the number of sickness days was reducing. At the end of January 2020, the average number of sickness days per employee was 12.87 days.

- Management guidance was issued on when it was appropriate for managers to use their discretion to not give a formal warning. A process was in place through stages 2 and 3 to progress unacceptable frequent short-term sickness absence cases through to dismissal. A very different process was applied to management of long-term absence with the focus on communication with the employee, home visits, medical interventions, adjustments or phase return to work, etc.

- An internal audit in 2019 reviewed the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's absence management processes and gave a substantial level of assurance.

- Home working was becoming a common practise in the public sector. Council employees working from home were available by email and skype and managers were also contactable by phone. Reasons behind working from home varied but generally, staff were working on projects rather than their day to day work. Not all staff were able to work from home as the nature of their work might not allow it. The Committee was informed that a Space Review of the Town Hall was underway. Preliminary findings showed that only a small proportion of staff were occupying office space and the Town Hall was underutilised.

- With regards to the outbreak of Coronavirus, guidelines for staff and members were published on SharePoint and regularly updated. If self-isolation was required, a fit note from their General Practitioner was not needed. The absence would be recorded but would not count towards the employee's sickness entitlement. In the event of self-isolation, the employee might still be able to work from home. This would depend on the nature of the employee's work.

The Senior Management Team agreed an action plan (page 12 of the Employee Wellbeing report) to implement some of the recommendations in the West Midlands Employers (WME) report and other recommendations proposed by Human Resources. There were some recommendations in the WME report that would be considered at a later date.

Members agreed that to allow enough time for initiatives and recommendations to be imbedded into council's policies, a progress report would be presented to the Committee in 12 months' time.

RESOLVED THAT –

(1) the Head of Corporate Resources and Human Resources Manager be thanked for their attendance and report;
(2) council staff to be informed of the scrutiny review of Employee Wellbeing and the ongoing monitoring of the situation and sickness absence levels by the Committee; and
(3) a progress report be presented to the Committee in 12 months' time.

25.   **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 7) concerning the progress of task group reviews within its remit and the forward work programme.

During the consideration of the item, the following topics where raised for inclusion in the 2020/21 work programme:

Fly-tipping – the Committee was informed that the topic formed part of the Environment and Growth OSC work programme. The draft one-page strategy was scheduled to be consider by the Committee at the next meeting 2 April. Following the approval of the one-page strategy, membership would be sought.

<u>Misuse of lay-bys</u> – a member of the committee raised concerns over overnight parking, prolonged parking, fly-tipping and drivers using the roadside as a personal bathroom.

<u>Changes to Members' work environment</u> – the Committee felt that to fully understand Members' individual needs, a consultation should had taken place prior to the procurement of the audio-visual equipment recently installed in the Council Chamber and the IT equipment issued to Members to support the Council's paperless agenda. Scrutiny would review the current procurement process in place; and establish a way forward that would ensure that Members were consulted when directly impacted by any improvements made to their work environment.

RESOLVED THAT – the suggested review topics minuted above be put forward for inclusion in the 2020/21 overview and scrutiny work programme.

CHAIR

Employee Wellbeing

Our Aims

- provide employee wellbeing initiatives to improve the health of the workforce
- manage absence in line with best practice
- monitor and report on absence levels.

Best Practice

- Qualified HR professionals
- Access to Best Practice
- Networking, Benchmarking and Sharing Best Practice
- Thrive At Work Bronze Award

HR Strategy

Principle 4: Nurture Employee Engagement, Wellbeing and Diversity

- Facilitating health and wellbeing events
- Medical Intervention to get employees back to work sooner
- Reviewing reasons for sickness absence and identifying how we can improve employee wellbeing eg offering flu vaccinations

RUGBY

Our Absence Management Policy

Short Term Sickness Absence

- Reporting sickness
- Return to Work Interviews
- Sickness Consultation Interviews
- Stage 2 and Stage 3 Meetings

Long Term Sickness Absence

- Home Visits
- Occupational Health Advice
- Medical Interventions
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Phased Return to Work
- Length of Absence
- Redeployment or Retraining

Occupational Health Advice

- Pre-employment checks
- Advice on employees who have a medical condition
- Obtaining reports from Doctors
- Health surveillance & Vaccinations
- Health at Work events
- Ill-health retirement

Our Sickness Absence Rates

Average Number of Sickness Days per Employee = 14.1 days (Oct 2019)

- Short Term = 4.7 days
- Long Term = 9.5 days

Benchmark = 8.6 days

- Manual Workforce = 25.7 days
- Non-manual = 7.4 days

Further Analysis of our Absence Data

Sickness Rates Higher for:

- Over 55's
- Males
- Full Time employees
- White British employees
- Lower graded employees

Wellbeing Events

- Health at Work Days
- Dietary advice website
- Health Checks
- Weight Loss groups
- Tasting Table and Hydration Station
- Menopause Awareness
- Mental Health Awareness Sessions
- Walking Football
- Sleep Workshop

Thrive at Work

Survey Feedback

- Stress
- Healthy Eating
- Musculoskeletal Conditions
- Managers need to be better at spotting stress and supporting them.

Actions

- Wellness Action Plans
- Health and Wellbeing Events
- Consider use of Wellbeing Apps
- Encourage Inter-service events
- Encourage managers to be more aware of their team's mental health

Tackling Mental Health at Work

- Training
- Wellness Action Plan
- Counselling
- Regular 1:1s
- Mental Health Awareness Days
- Mental Health First Aiders
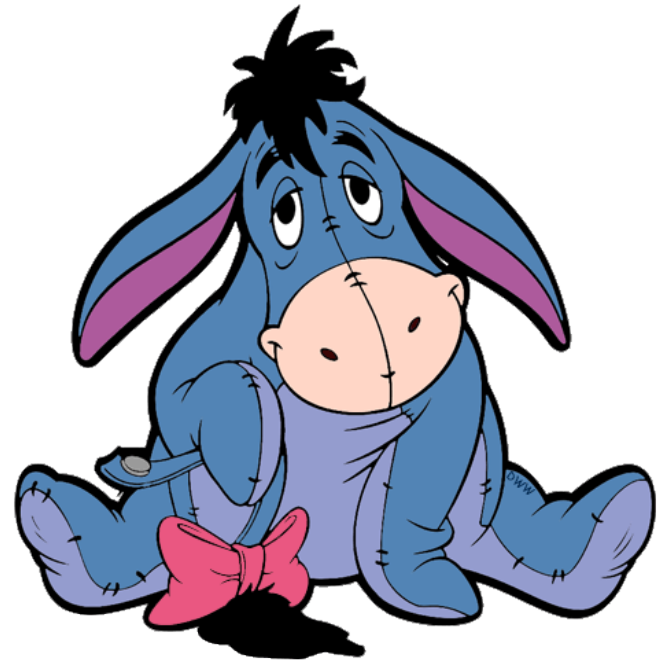
West Midlands Employers' Consultancy Review of our Sickness Absence

- Sickness Benchmarking
  - All absence = 8.7 days
  - Manual Workforce = 13.1 days
- RBC Sickness Absence Triggers and Interventions are consistent with other Councils.
  - Consider Bradford Factor

- Only 2 Councils had made changes to sick pay scheme
  - No pay for first 3 days
  - Removal from flexi scheme or overtime
- Top reasons for Absence:
  - Stress
  - MSK
  - Gastro

RUGBY

Action Plan Agreed with SMT

- Routine Wellness Action Plans
- If Sickness Triggers hit – consider removing flexi or overtime
- Share absence rates with our Trade Unions
- Review Sickness Triggers
- Timescales for actions and meetings in Long Term sickness cases

- Improved communications about wellbeing support
- Measure cost effectiveness of future wellbeing initiatives
- Review of Absence Management Policy and introduce a Wellbeing Strategy

Patterns of Sickness Absence

Day	No of occasions	%
Monday	53	24
Tuesday	35	16
Wednesday	34	15
Thursday	41	18
Friday	62	28
Total for the 43 employees	225	

Patterns of Sickness and Holidays

Sickness Adjacent to Annual Leave

No of cases	18	8% of all 1 day absences
No of employees	17	5% of employees
Total 1 day Absences	225	

Sickness Adjacent to Bank Holidays

No of cases	10	4% of all 1 day absences
No of employees	10	2% of employees
Total 1 day Absences	225	

Conclusion

- We will continue to:
  - monitor and report on our Absence rates
  - network and benchmark
- We will review our Absence Management Policy in light of best practice and drawing on data insights
- Councillors can track absence rates on RPMS