

# **POLICY & CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Monday, 17 December 2018**

**PRESENT** – Councillors, Connor, Floyd, Harling, Kay, Liddle, Mahmood, Rigby, Slater and Whittle.

**OFFICERS** – Councillor Andy Kay, David Fairclough (Director of HR, Legal and Corporate Services)

## **RESOLUTIONS**

### **6 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Councillors Jim Shorrock, Jamie Groves and Mahfooz Hussain.

### **7 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2018**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Andy Kay advised that the Budget Settlement from the Government had been as expected, with 75% Business Rates Pooling approved, which was a one year deal which would realise an extra £800k and also some extra money for SEN. Despite this funding, cuts would still have to be made as anticipated.

### **8 Declarations Of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were received.

### **9 Sickness and Absenteeism**

David Fairclough and Corinne McMillan circulated a briefing note and reported on some key information in relation to management of Attendance at the Council.

Comparative figures for average sickness across Lancashire were presented, and it was noted that for Blackburn with Darwen, the overall position was positive with the average days per employee lost to sickness being 9.24 for 2017/18 compared to 9.37 for the previous year. Members were advised that district councils tended to perform better in comparison, but that they didn't have certain job groups, ie care workers. Of the three unitary authorities in Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen was the highest performing.

A number of Health and Wellbeing Activities were outlined, the aim of which was to support employees and keep them healthy and at work. Mental Health was a key focus and there were now 64 qualified Mental Health First Aiders at the Council.

A number of Wellbeing events and activities had been arranged across the past year, along with a dedicated Health and Wellbeing week. In addition to these events there was a continuing focus on Stress Management.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions and made comments on the approach identified and the key points arising were:

- Budget – there was no dedicated budget for these activities, but existing resources across the Council were utilised and this helped reduce the number of Occupational Health referrals.
- Adult Health and Social Care and Children’s Services – lack of take up of activities on offer noted and also use of Agency staff, the costs of which were around £8-£10k a week.
- Long term absences were reducing but short term absences were increasing, although this varied by Department.

At this point of the meeting Cllr Andy Kay, David Fairclough and Corinne McMillan left the meeting. This topic would be further discussed under the Work Programme agenda item.

**RESOLVED** – That the Officers be thanked for the information presented.

#### **10 Work of the Task Groups**

The Digital Strategy Task and Finish Group were due to meet on 20<sup>th</sup> December and would report back to the next meeting.

#### **11 Work Programme**

The Committee discussed the three areas currently being scrutinised:

**Digital Strategy** – as referred to earlier, the Task and Finish Group were scheduled to meet on 20<sup>th</sup> December and would report back to the next meeting.

**Asset Management** – Information was required on various assets – Council buildings, accommodation, leisure centres, community centres etc, bearing in mind the reduction in staff resources. Phil Llewellyn advised that a report on the Accommodation Strategy would be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Board and that when the agenda had been published he would send the link to the Committee.

**Sickness and Absenteeism** – Members asked for the following information to be made available to Members of the Committee in good time, well ahead of the next meeting, and also that the item be placed on the next agenda:

- Cost of agency staff required – take up of Health and Wellbeing Offer is only 10% - is it cost effective, cost of agency staff needs to be weighed against getting more full time staff.
- How does the 10% take up compare to other local authorities/areas?

- More % information required – length of absences, %per department sickness and breakdown of take up of assistance per Department.
- Workloads – Social workers - are supervisions taking place?

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted and that progress on the three areas be discussed at the next meeting.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
at which the minutes were confirmed