

# ITEM 04

Time began: 10.30am

Time ended: 11.28am

## Personnel Committee

11 April 2019

Present Councillors A Holmes (Chair), Raju, Dhindsa, Froggatt, Keith and Hudson

Officers present Liz Moore – Head of Human Resources  
Tania Hay – Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager  
Nicola Sykes – Service Director for HR & OD  
Diane Sturdy - Organisational Development Manager  
Hannah Prince – Health and Attendance Adviser  
Paul McMahon - Principal Lawyer

### 40/18 Apologies

Apologies were received from

### 41/18 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

### 42/18 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

### 43/18 Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 February 2019

The minutes of the meeting on 14 February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

### 44/18 Attendance Management Project Update

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources updating them on recent progress. The report was presented by the Organisational Development Manager.

Councillors noted that the Attendance Management Project Group continues to provide direction in order to support the aim of reducing sickness absence rates in the Council. The Project Group has been extended to include Heads of Service and managers from high absence areas. This will help to inform and update the action plan which is shared with the Corporate Leadership Performance Board.

Councillors noted that at the end of February 2019, the full time equivalent days lost per employee was 11.96 days over the 12 months rolling period. The Council's current target for 2018/19 is 11.5 fte

Councillors noted that the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) has confirmed their commitment to managers managing attendance. Monthly data reports on sickness

absence rates are presented to Directorate Management Team meetings and also to the CLT Performance Board.

Members were informed that Directorate targets have now been developed and issued to all Directors and these are included in their objectives. The targets were developed after the Health, Wellbeing and Attendance Team (HWAT) carried out a review of absence across the Council. The team identified 4 common factors in areas with high absence:

- Age profile of the workforce (staff between 45-65 taking more absence)
- Non office based operational model
- High number of FTE within the service
- Poor sickness absence performance from the previous year

Officers advised that five services were identified as meeting all four common factors as listed above which makes them more vulnerable to high sickness absence. To reduce the impact of the factors above HWAT have put in place support for managers including access to Health and Attendance Clinics FirstCare System, Absence monitoring on FirstCare and Training.

Councillors noted that Mental Health and stress related absence is the biggest cause of sickness by absence spells and working days lost across the organisation. Councillors also noted that this was particularly high in People Services where every 1 in 3 days lost to sickness absence is mental health related. HWAT have contacted Peoples Service Director to arrange for Mental Health First Aid to be promoted and set up across the service.

Officers advised that the HWAT have begun to review all attendance triggers that have been hit on the FirstCare system during January and February 2019

Councillors noted that Mental Health First Aider training is in place to recruit and train 100 Mental Health First Aiders. The Council currently has 88 accredited Mental Health First Aiders trained and a further 16 will be trained by end of March 2019

Officers advised that First Care now has an absence monitoring tracking facility which has been added to the system. This allows managers to track and update any action that they are taking when employees are hitting absence trigger alerts. It is now easier for managers to use and keep all of their health, wellbeing and attendance support and actions in one central system.

Councillors noted chart 3 Appendix 1 Return To Work Compliance Rate which highlighted that Stress/Anxiety were the highest cause of absence for employees. Councillors asked if the figures could be broken down into work or home related stress issues. Officers advised that the reporting of stress was broken down into four different categories: stress and anxiety, stress and anxiety personal, stress and anxiety work; depression and psychological illness. The majority of illnesses were recorded as just stress and anxiety and sometimes staff were reluctant to indicate whether stress was work or home related. Even if it was home related – managers would still need to discuss the absence and support needed, with their staff. However, influence over the causes of absence would be limited. Councillors

questioned whether there should be a fifth category for Brexit, they queried how it was affecting staff. Officers confirmed that certain areas would be more susceptible after Brexit, as a result of insecurities. However, there were a number of pressures that could impact on the health and wellbeing of colleagues.

Councillors questioned the extent to which managers were completing E Learning courses on Attendance Management. Officers confirmed that the completion rate of courses was increasing and that there are also Leadership Workshops in place for difficult conversations to support managers. HWAT are aiming to put in place preventative measures to arrive at a situation where staff can be supported before they take sickness absence and are supported so that they return to work sooner.

Councillors also queried whether the continuous underfunding of services has an affect on stress and pressure. Officers confirmed that this would have an impact, trying to do more with less. However a variety of support measures had been put in place for Managers and staff. HWAT are discussing a colleague-focused Action Plan to help staff. HWAT were planning to bring this to the next meeting for discussion. Councillors noted the support but requested a report which highlighted the impact of reduced resources as they would like to identify pressure points. Officers advised that Derby City Council was currently undertaking a Soapbox Survey with staff which would enable all staff to give an opinion, the survey was still ongoing but it was hoped to have headline results by the end of May and full results by July. OD should be able to identify some of the main issues from the Survey by the next meeting and it was suggested that this option would be more helpful to Councillors..

Councillors queried if there were any indicators for bullying of staff by managers. Officers confirmed that there were some references to bullying in 2017 survey, but this was anonymous. Councillors have heard evidence from different departments about bullying and they queried the Council's position. Officers confirmed that there is zero tolerance of bullying in Derby City Council and that if any incidences are reported by staff HR will discuss with appropriate managers.

#### **Resolved to**

- 1. Note the updated absence data and the continued support from the Project Group, with the aim of reducing sickness absence rates in the Council**
- 2. Receive a report on the headline results/full results if available of the Soapbox Survey for all staff for the next meeting.**

#### **45/18 Inclusion of Ethics Statement to the Employee Code of Conduct**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of HR and OD, the report outlined the purpose of the Ethics Statement which was to provide guidance for Council colleagues on the ethical framework within which the Council seeks to conduct its activities. The Head of HR attended the meeting to present this report.

Councillors noted the purpose of the statement and that in June 2018, the Council's Internal Audit Service (Central Midlands Audit Partnership) undertook a review of the Council's risk and ethical framework. The purpose of the review was to highlight key areas for improvement; in particular ensuring ethical behavior is understood, promoted and encouraged across the Council

Councillors were informed that the report identified a number of policy documents that are in place with an ethics related theme, but also highlighted that the Council does not have a separate overarching Ethics Policy document that consolidates and provides a complete and clear message on the high ethical standards expected from all colleagues, councillors and stakeholders.

Officers confirmed that the Ethics statement would only be included in the Employee Code of Conduct. It was noted that Councillors have their own specific Code of Conduct. The Committee resolved to approve the changes to the Employee Code of Conduct to include the Ethics Statement.

### **Resolved**

- 1. To approve the changes to the Employee Code of Conduct, to include the Ethics Statement.**
- 2. To note that the Code of Conduct is part of the Council's Constitution.**
- 3. To recommend Council to include the Ethics Statement in the Code of Conduct in the Council's Constitution.**
- 4. To note that a Council wide communications strategy will be undertaken to raise awareness of the Council's Ethics Statement**
- 5. To commit to a review of the Ethics Statement**

## **46/18 The Apprenticeship Project Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources updating them on the progress of the Apprenticeship Project. The report was presented by the Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager.

Councillors noted that the Key work streams are Apprenticeship Group, Business Needs Analysis, Adult Learning Service and Procuring Training Providers, 25% Levy Transfer, 2 year Apprenticeship Plan and Supporting schools to access the levy

The Committee noted that as of 20 March 2019 the Council has transferred a total of £1,468,610 into the levy pot and has drawn down £167,953 for apprenticeship programmes.

The Committee noted that the aim was to update the digital account system by the end of March with a retrospective drawdown payment of approximately £57,000

Officers reported that HR has processed leadership programmes for 49 managers which brings the total spend to the end of March to £231,000. This equates to spending 15.32% of the levy pot which is above the national average spend of 14%.

Councillors expressed concern that the national target was low and they were concerned that Derby City was on track to recouping all the funds invested and more. Officers reported that a two year apprenticeship plan was being developed which will support the effective use of the Apprenticeship Levy. One of the aims of the plan was to ensure that apprenticeships within the Council are seen and valued as high quality pathways to successful careers. Linking the apprenticeship opportunities with the Appraisal scheme that was to be re-launched will enable managers to support the development of staff.

Officers reported that an initial business needs analysis was completed at the end of September 2018 and that there were approximately 220 expressions of interest across all three directorates for various apprenticeship opportunities including leadership, project management, professional and operational programmes. The expressions of interest have converted to 56 staff having started on programmes, 44 staff currently being progressed, aiming to start on programmes in the near future and 29 staff that the Apprenticeship Team are currently working with managers to further explore how to support them to access programmes.

Councillors expressed concerns that the schools were not accessing the Apprenticeship Levy. Officers reported that they are continuing to communicate with the council maintained schools and offer guidance and advice on using the Levy when approached by schools. They have developed a toolkit with advice and guidance on recruiting new apprentices and developing existing staff. However, Councillors noted that the need for 20% off-the- job training is causing issues in schools. Officers advised that the 20% training could be learning in the workplace. HR are continuing to work with schools to enable access to the Apprenticeship Levy. Councillors noted that the levy is deducted at source from schools (0.5% of paybill).

Councillors noted that a separate Apprenticeship Scheme was in place at Derby Homes, which is mainly used for their trades apprentices i.e. Electricians, Joiners, Plumbers, Plasterers. HR would look into how Derby City Council can utilise the the Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing, Gardening and Arboriculture programmes. There was also an HGV licence programme in place.

Officers reported that a part of the levy was being used for management training which had been cut over the last few years. Councillors were concerned that the levy is only used for existing staff Apprenticeships and requested a breakdown of the Apprenticeship Levy, how it was working and how many opportunities have been given. Officers will bring this information to a future meeting.

#### **Resolved to**

- 1. Note the levy payments made to date and the drawdown for training programmes that we have instigated as of 20 March 2019**
- 2. Note the Project Group members**
- 3. Progress made on the key work streams**
- 4. Note the Council's procurement processes for external training providers**
- 5. To note the options put forward regarding the 25% Levy Transfer**
- 6. To note the development of a two year Apprenticeship Plan**

- 7. To note HR is continuing to work with our maintained schools to support them to access the levy and develop their staff**
- 8. Request a breakdown of the Apprenticeship Levy, how it is working and how many opportunities have been given.**

**MINUTES END**