

Time began: 10.30am

Time ended: 10.52am

## **Personnel Committee 14 April 2022**

Present                      Councillors Sandhu, Dhindsa, A Holmes and Potter

Officers present        Adele Ashmore – Acting Strategic HR Manager  
                                  Tania Hay – Apprenticeship Project Manager

### **29/21        Apologies**

Apologies were received for Liz Moore, Cllr Pegg, Cllr Carr, Cllr Skelton and Cllr Pandey.

### **30/21        Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair**

There were no late items.

### **31/21        Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

### **32/21        Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 January 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

### **33/21        Apprenticeship Project Update**

The Committee received a report on the Apprenticeship Project update. This report was sponsored by the Head of Organisational Development and was presented by the Apprenticeship Project Manager.

It was noted that the Apprenticeship Team were currently developing apprenticeship training packages including career progression suggestions, to support current recruitment and retention issues and succession planning. The Committee noted that the desired outcomes would be to have career pathways in place with colleague development support whilst reducing in service spend on other training.

It was reported that the Apprenticeship Team were exploring opportunities to externally promote Council apprenticeships, to build a pool of potential apprentices. It was noted that during apprenticeship week in February, the Council attended University of Derby and Derby College events, both were very successful and generated high levels of expressions of interest. It was reported that the Council were actively seeking further opportunities including

utilising its current network involvement, for example the East Midlands Apprenticeship Ambassador Network and the D2N2 Public Sector Compact Group.

It was noted that the Apprenticeship Team were looking at ways to increase the Council's involvement with schools to promote apprenticeships as a viable option to university; the learn while you learn route.

It was noted that the Apprenticeship Project Manager had also been reaching out to the Council's partners in private businesses to ask for their support and engagement in the 'Trailblazer' group. It was reported that there was a group meeting scheduled on 2 May and that the Committee would be provided with an update at the next meeting.

It was reported that the next intake for the University of Derby Leadership and Management Programme would be in May 2022 and that the Council had sent out communications to collate expressions of interest.

It was reported that at the last Committee meeting one of the actions was to report on the challenges being faced by the Apprenticeship Team in relation to funding and the impact this was having on the Council's ability to spend the Levy Fund.

The Committee noted that there were three aspects to this:

1. The funding of the Apprenticeship Team – To enable the Council to spend more of its levy, the LGA peer review recommended that the Council adopt an apprenticeship first approach when recruiting, retaining, and developing colleagues. The apprenticeship first approach was currently being considered and part of this consideration the resources needed to successfully deliver this were being reviewed.
2. Apprentice recruitment and salary – There was a 'Resource Panel' in place where all vacancies must be authorised before they could be recruited to. The Apprentice Team were aware that a small number of apprenticeship vacancies had been declined along with several other Council vacancies. The Council continued to pay the 'Apprenticeship Salary', which was below the salary offered in other councils local to Derby and made Derby city council less desirable as an employer impacting on its ability to attract candidates.
3. Workforce development – The apprenticeship team continued to actively work with services to explore all possible opportunities to enable the existing workforce to access relevant apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Team recognised however, as reflected in the national picture, the 20% 'Off the Job' element of the apprenticeship could be seen as a barrier to accommodating apprenticeships within already very busy teams.

It was reported that as of 31 March 2022, the Council had transferred a total of £3,487,149 into the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Apprenticeship Levy Digital Account since the start of the Levy in April 2017. It was noted that to date the Council had drawn down £1,663,825 for internal apprenticeship training programmes and transferred £45,382 of its Levy Fund to outside organisations.

The Committee noted that between April 2021 and March 2022, £86,454 of the Councils Levy Fund had expired. It was reported that in the last seven months the Council had only experienced the expiration of funds once. It was noted that the total amount of Levy drawn down between May 2017 to March 2022 was £2,244,788.

A councillor asked whether any of the Council's apprentices were mature apprentices. The Committee noted that many workforce development apprentices were mature and that the majority of new start apprentices were younger.

A councillor commented that the Council was failing to offer a competitive salary to apprentices. The committee agreed that the Council's apprentice salary should be increased to match the minimum wage.

**The Committee resolved to approve the recommendations detailed below.**

- 1. to note the update on the Apprenticeship Team's current priorities.**
- 2. to note the challenges the Apprenticeship Team are facing in relation to funding and the impact on the Council's ability to spend the Levy Fund.**
- 3. to note the Levy payments made to date, the drawdown for training programmes that we have instigated and expired funds as of 31 March 2022.**
- 4. to recommend to the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources that the salary for Council apprentices is increased to match the minimum wage.**

## **34/21 Attendance management – Quarter 3 - 2021/22**

The Committee received a report on Attendance management – Quarter 3 - 2021/22. This report was sponsored by the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources and was presented by the Acting Strategic HR Manager.

The top three reasons for absence in Quarter 3 were:

1. Stress/Anxiety: 19.02%, a decrease of 0.21% on Quarter 2 (position 1)
2. COVID-19 related illnesses: 13.82%, an increase of 2.49% on Quarter 2 (position 3)

3. Musculoskeletal: 12.34%, a decrease of 2.2 % on Quarter 2 (position 2)

The Committee noted that COVID-19 had moved from position 3 to position 2 reflecting the increase in cases reported by Public Health across the city of Derby. It was noted that on Monday 4 January 2022, the Cabinet Office warned UK Public Sector employers to prepare for worst-case-scenario staff absence rates of 10-25%. It was reported that all Directorates had reported an FTE day lost greater than their Quarter target, which impacted on the end of year forecast for 2021/22.

The Committee noted that overall year end forecast at the end of Quarter 3 was 12.14 FTE days against a target of 8.5 FTE days. It was reported that on 28 February 2022, the end of year forecast was 12.62 FTE days against a target of 8.5 days.

The Committee noted that the Corporate Leadership Team had been presented with the Quarter 3 data and an analysis of the trends and absence levels over the last three years. It was noted that the presentation showed that the Council had seen sickness absence rates reduce year on year from 2018/19 to 2020/21. It was reported that this had been a very encouraging trend, and whilst the absence rates had seen an increase in 2021/22, the increase needed to be seen in the context of both the direct and the indirect impact of the continuing pandemic.

It was reported that the HR team and the Strategy and Performance Team were working on a joint approach to determine future attendance targets, as well as capturing the positive trend on reducing absence and mapping future actions. It was noted that these would include, but weren't limited to;

- departmental targets will be monitored and reported to Service Directors
- service action plans will continue to be owned by the Head of Service, supported by advice and coaching as appropriate from HR Business Partners
- bite-size coaching presentations delivered by HR to support managers to confidently manage attendance.

The Committee noted that the joint work by the HR team and the Strategy and Performance Team would be captured in a "Turning the Curve" report, which would also detail the positive approach of the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing offer.

It was reported that HR and Occupational Health had been working closely to review the absence reasons currently recorded within the absence reporting system and had made recommendations for change effective from 1 April 2022. The Committee noted that the updated absence codes should ensure that there was greater clarity recorded about the reasons for absence, and in turn, appropriate actions could be identified from the absence data.

It was reported that face to face statutory Health Surveillance had now re-started following a directive from the Health & Safety Executive to suspend activity over the past 18 months during the pandemic. It was noted that the Council had, potentially, 1800 physical tests to undertake across 450 colleagues. It was reported that the work on this had progressed well with the focus now on outstanding Driver Assessments.

The Committee noted that the Menopause Friends sessions launched in October 2021 had been very well received and it was estimated that between 150-200 colleagues in total had been supported. It was reported that the focus for Mental Health Champions' continuing professional development session in November 2021 was the impact of menopause on mental health. It was reported that overall, the Council aimed to provide information and opportunities to generate discussion and share experiences that empowered all colleagues to support each other and their families and friends.

It was reported that occupational Health continued to perform very well with its delivery of Occupational Health appointments for colleagues. It was noted that the Council was well within its service level agreement, delivering appointments within five days or less.

A councillor questioned whether the Council monitored staff absence levels excluding long-term sicknesses and colleagues who intended to leave the Council. The Committee noted that this was monitored in each service area by Heads of Service.

**The Committee resolved to approve the recommendations detailed below.**

- 1. To note that the Council's performance on attendance management for Quarter 3 2021/22 was 3.67 days lost for each full-time equivalent colleague (FTE) against a target of 2.12 days. This shows an increase against the previous Quarter 2 2021/22 result of 2.97 days lost per FTE for the period.**
- 2. To note that if the COVID-19 (Suspected and Confirmed) illnesses were removed from the attendance management data, the Quarter 3 performance would be 3.04 FTE days lost.**
- 3. To note that a report will be brought to a future Personnel Committee meeting which updates the Committee on the positive approach of the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing offer.**

MINUTES END.