

Time began: 10.30am
Time ended: 11:00am

**Personnel Committee
23 June 2022**

Present Councillors A Holmes (Chair), Carr (Vice Chair), Jennings,
Swan, Rawson, Skelton, and Evans

Officers present Adele Ashmore – Acting Strategic HR Manager
Tania Hay – Apprenticeship Project Manager
Paul McMahon, Principal Lawyer

01/22 Apologies

Apologies were received for Cllr Bonser, Potter and Liz Moore, Head of HR

02/22 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

03/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

04/22 Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 April 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

05/22 Apprenticeship Project Update

The Committee received a report on the Apprenticeship Project update. This report was sponsored by the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources and was presented by the Apprenticeship Project Manager. The report was to keep the committee updated on the work of the team.

It was reported that the Apprenticeship Team work closely with managers and service areas and had circulated apprenticeship training packages at Easter to different services across the council. The packages inform managers of opportunities available in their areas of expertise to support colleagues in workforce and personal development including career progression suggestions. There had been a lot of expressions of interest and the next stage would be to attend departmental management meetings to further explain the opportunities available which could be cascaded down to the relevant areas.

It was reported that the Apprenticeship Team were working with internal and external partners to raise awareness of Derby City Council's apprenticeship

opportunities to promote inclusion in learning and employment. The partners included:

- Representation on the Employment, Education and Training (EET) Development Board to improve outcomes for the care leaver population and support them into the workplace and other opportunities like training. An apprenticeship opportunity event would take place on 14 July 2022 which officers would attend.
- Representation on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Board to raise awareness to colleagues and community groups
- Representation on the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) Partnership Strategic and Operational groups. There had been an event to support youth employment at Enthusiasm on Cotton Lane in June which officers had attended.
- Derby Adults Learning Service and Derby Employment Hub to support people into the workplace and apprenticeships
- Economic Growth, who manage Derby City Council's Levy transfer to external employers in the city.
- Officers had attended the East Midlands Apprenticeship Ambassador Network
- D2N2 Public Sector Compact Group which was a combination of four councils and the NHS and local training providers this was a good networking opportunity to raise the profile of the Apprenticeship Programme. The officer would be attending and chairing the "Apprenticeship in the Public Sector" event on 24 June.

It was reported that the group meeting of the "Trailblazer" Group scheduled on 2 May had been cancelled as more work was required by the Institute from the Chair for the Trailblazer Group. There was no update available for this meeting and a further meeting was not planned until the work had been completed. Further updates would be provided to the Committee.

It was reported that the next intake for the University of Derby Leadership and Management Programme would be in September 2022 communications had been sent out and expressions of interest are being collated. Currently there are 12 colleagues going through the induction process. There are also 9 colleagues under assessment to begin the Team Lead/Supervisor Level 3 programme with Derby Adult Learning Service (DALs) in September.

It was reported that there are currently 11 colleagues on the Social Work Apprenticeship programme with Nottingham Trent University across three groups. The Board heard that there were only two Social Work Apprenticeship Programmes in this area and that they must go through a rigorous process to be able to deliver the programme. Nottingham Trent was the university nearest Derby providing this programme. The next intake in January 2023 will be promoted by the Workforce Development Team to the Social Care Teams over the next few months.

The officer updated the Committee regarding the action from the last Committee meeting to recommend to the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources that the salary for council apprentices was increased to match the

minimum wage. The officer reported that a report and recommendation was with the Strategic Director, he was considering the option and impact on the organisation and the Committee would be updated on his decision at a future meeting.

It was reported that as of 31 May 2022, the Council had transferred a total of £3,666,183 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 £1,757,100 for internal apprenticeship training programmes and transferred £52,388 of its Levy Fund to outside organisations.

The Committee noted that between April 2021 and May 2022, £86,454 of the Councils Levy Fund had expired. It was reported that in the last nine 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 May 2022 was £2,345,476. There was a breakdown of the levy payment to Training Providers used and the number on role with each provider at Appendix 1 of the report.

The officer informed the Committee that a meeting with the Department for Education to discuss the programme and how it was going quarterly. At the recent meeting participation statistics based on all of Derby City Council's apprentice starts, both new recruits and existing colleagues between August 2021- April 2022 had been provided. The percentages would be circulated to the Committee. Categories included were:

- Registered Disabled including Learning Disabilities 15.5%,
- 16 to 24 year olds 35.5%,
- Disadvantaged Background 27.4%,
- BAME 19.7% and
- Females into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) 14.3%

A councillor commented that it was good that Care Leavers were included in the Apprenticeship Programme.

A councillor asked whether the percentages given for different groups showed an improvement from the previous year. The officer confirmed they were an improvement on the previous year but explained that they did not have statistics for previous year due to the Pandemic. However, more work in the community had been done this year.

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 update on the Committees recommendation to the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources that the salary for Council Apprentices is increased to match the minimum wage
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.

06/22 Attendance management – Quarter 4 - 2021/22

The Committee received a report on Attendance management – Quarter 4 - 2021/22. This report was sponsored by the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources and was presented by the Acting Strategic HR Manager.

The officer highlighted the Council's Performance on attendance management for Quarter 4 2021/22 was 3.67 days lost for each full-time equivalent colleague (FTE) against a target for 2.12 days.

The Committee heard the overall Council target was 8.5 FTE days lost and that if COVID-19 (suspected and confirmed illnesses) were removed from the data the Quarter 4 performance would be 10.75 FTE days lost. The officer would explain the impact COVID-19 later in the meeting.

The top three reasons for absence in Quarter 4 were:

1. Stress/Anxiety: 18.30%, a decrease of 0.15% on Quarter 3 (position 1)
2. COVID-19 related illnesses: 16.05%, an increase of 2.23% on Quarter 3 (position 2) which was the expected position following UK public sector employers guidance
3. Musculoskeletal: 12.28%, a decrease of 0.06 % on Quarter 3 (position 3)

The Committee noted that the top three reasons for absence in Quarter 4 remain the same, COVID-19 has been the only absence reason to increase on the data from Quarter 3, this was forecasted in previous reports to the committee and the impact has been shown in the data. All other absences show a decrease.

The increase in COVID cases may be linked to the relaxing of the COVID -19 regulations over Quarter 4. 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%. The reported 16.5% still puts Derby within the expected range of COVID-19 related absence rates for the Councils.

The officer highlighted the breakdown table on page 2 of the report which shows how each directorate has performed over the quarter. There are FTE days totals lost for Quarter 4 for each directorate.

It was reported that all Directorates had reported FTE days lost greater than their year-end target, which was to be expected after the challenging period of the country and the Council in managing within the context of a global pandemic.

The Committee noted that the overall year end forecast at the end of Quarter 3 was 12.14 FTE days, at the end of Quarter 4 the overall end was reported 12.81 FTE days, slightly over forecast. There was a decrease on the number of Stress/Anxiety absences along with Musculoskeletal cases for Quarter 4, the increase of COVID related absence pushed the Council above the end of year forecast of 12.62 FTE days.

The Committee heard that during 2021/22 they had been kept informed of the impacts of the COVID-19 absence rates for each quarter, correctly forecasting when an increase in cold/flu virus transmission and COVID-19 absence levels were expected. There was a slight increase over Quarter 4 on the number of confirmed COVID-19 absence cases as of 1 April 2022. The Committee noted that the government had replaced all domestic COVID regulations with guidance, details of which can be found in the report.

The Committee noted that the Council had seen sickness absence rates reduce year on year from 2018/19 to 2020/21. It was reported that this was an 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.

Uncertainty remained regarding the likelihood, timing, and severity of any potential future wave of COVID-19 in the UK, but it was anticipated in the year ahead that COVID-19 cases would decline. It was reported that HR review on an ongoing basis the Council's approach to COVID 19 and the associated guidance in collaboration with occupational Health and Wellbeing, Public Health and Health and Safety colleagues

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 Occupational Health continues to perform above industry benchmarks in delivering Occupational Health Appointments for colleagues. It was noted that they are within their service level agreement of delivering appointments in 8 days or less. Management reports are issued within 48 hours of appointments attended; 100% performance was being achieved currently.

It was reported that the focus was now on annual health surveillance Driver Assessments within Street Pride with the aim of achieving 100% completion by February 2023.

An employee assistance mobile app had been successfully launched and the first set of data about usage would be available in mid-June. This was another positive addition to Derby City Council’s wellbeing approach to support colleagues and families. The service can be accessed on the go and at the touch of a button.

The Committee were informed that the health and wellbeing strategy was being devised and an update would be provided at the next September Personnel Committee.

It was reported that HR continued to focus on the health and wellbeing of colleagues and Occupational Health continues to perform very well with its delivery of appointments and services for colleagues.

The officer reported that consultation with Trade Unions on an amended Managing Attendance Policy was ongoing and it was planned to bring a report to next Personnel Committee.

A councillor asked if the council had any cases of Long COVID reported as these will continue to affect figures. The officer confirmed there were only four Long COVID cases within the council as at the end of May 2022, which was good in terms of managing going forward. It was explained that there was a revised approach in dealing with COVID, currently it was not included within sickness triggers for the council. However, as we are moving to a more normal way of working a report was being prepared to examine whether COVID should be included in sickness triggers as it was now considered to be a respiratory illness moving forward.

A councillor asked whether the data from the mobile app would be collated and reported. The officer confirmed that the Occupational Health Manager would bring a report to the committee giving details of the number of people who access the services, highlighting the services that are provided and the take up within the council for the EAP service.

A councillor asked if an annual staff survey had been undertaken in terms of how people feel about working at the council now. The officer explained that they were just embarking on taking forward a People Strategy. Currently they are undertaking Focus Group work in the wider workforce which will include putting in place more feedback opportunities for collating and capturing some of the workforce data moving forward.

A councillor looked forward to seeing the new Attendance Management Strategy but commented that the figure of 10.75 FTE days lost was still too high in comparison with the private sector, it was nearly 11 days lost and would be putting strain on working colleagues and it was hoped to see improvement with the new strategy.

A councillor noted that stress/anxiety was the top reason for staff absence and asked whether there was support available for staff and if any preventative work was undertaken to bring the figure down. He asked for an explanation of the support work that was available for staff to try and reduce the absence stress and anxiety. The officer explained the actions available, one of which was coaching sessions for managers on how to have conversations with staff and included for example filling in wellbeing support plans to encourage conversations with staff to discuss reasons for stress. However, she highlighted the main reason for stress was listed as personal rather than work based. Colleagues with stress were supported to access occupational health. The committee heard that eight counselling and support sessions were available for staff alongside regular sessions with managers to support their staff returning to work by reviewing workloads and putting in place phased return to work systems. HR undertakes monitoring across the organisation on a quarterly basis for each directorate, down to each level of stress and then does targeted work with managers in terms of dealing with colleagues in a supportive manner

Another councillor was concerned that there might be false cases of sick leave. The officer explained that all cases are treated as genuine, however, as part of informal monitoring when someone has not got a disability, or an absence related to equality, a zero target was set as part of the monitoring. As part of the consultation on the Attendance Management Policy there are some key changes in the policy of how it was hoped to manage, take forward and gain understanding of this approach to attendance.

A councillor stated that she had previously been assured that COVID-19 cases are being monitored in terms of numbers of absences. However, she would like to know at what point would the information on “with or without COVID-19” be amalgamated into the quarterly reports. The officer stated whilst there is still the potential of not including COVID-19 within the sickness triggers then it would be covered in the following quarters report. There will potentially be a change in position in how COVID-19 was dealt with following a report which was being considered where COVID-19, unless it still comes out as one of the top three absence reasons, could be removed from quarterly reports

The Committee resolved to approve the recommendations detailed below.

- 1. To note that the Council's performance on attendance management for Quarter 4 2021/22 was 3.67 days lost for each full-time equivalent colleague (FTE) against a target of 2.12 days. Quarter 3 2021/22 also showed 3.67 days lost for each full-time equivalent making the two periods comparable.**
- 2. To note that if the COVID-19 (Suspected and Confirmed) illnesses were removed from the attendance management data, the Quarter 4 performance would be 10.75 FTE days lost.**
- 3. To note that a report will be brought to the September Personnel Committee meeting which updates the Committee on the positive approach of the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing offer and a revised Managing Attendance Policy**

MINUTES END.