

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 30th October, 2012.

Present:- Councillors Sharif (Chair), Chaudhry, A S Dhaliwal and Plenty (Vice-Chair)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Chohan, Coad and S K Dhaliwal

PART 1

11. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Chaudhry declared a personal interest as his son worked for the council.

12. Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th June 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2012 were taken as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Members noted that a report had been requested on the use of suspensions within the council in the last few years and it was agreed that this report would be placed on the agenda for the January meeting.

13. Update on Wellbeing Strategy - Invest to Save Project & Revised Sickness Absence Policy

The Committee considered a report detailing the work currently in progress to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of staff. It was envisaged that this would contribute to improving current absenteeism rates and encourage staff to attend work. It was also hoped that these initiatives would improve morale, productivity and quality of life for council staff.

In addition to the work on wellbeing, the report also outlined the review that had been carried out and the proposed changes that were to be made to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy.

Members were advised that a Wellbeing Project Group had been established including representatives from all directorates, trade unions and Health and Safety Representatives to consider wellbeing initiatives. A new Occupational Health provider had been appointed with effect from 2nd July 2012 and was working closely with managers to support them with their staff wellbeing issues and provided advice to enable a pro-active response to deal with sickness / health issues. In partnership with Slough Community Leisure, all staff had received an invitation to use the leisure facilities as a 'taster opportunity' at Slough or Langley Leisure Centres during September. In partnership with the Employee Wellbeing contractors, PPC, the council had hired a 'Health Kiosk' which measured employees health metrics, including

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weight, blood pressure, heart rate, body fat content, body mass index and hydration quota.

The Wellbeing Project Group had also addressed the Council's current Sickness Policy and staff were consulted on a revised Sickness Absence Policy in August. A number of comments had been received and these had been reviewed and incorporated into the revised policy, where appropriate. The final draft of the Sickness Absence Policy was attached to the committee report for approval and the report set out the key changes to the Policy for Members information.

Members discussed the proposals in the report and made a number of comments including :

- How the Council intended to monitor whether FTE sickness days were reducing in line with the target. Members were advised that there would be monthly monitoring of the sickness statistics and a new HR system would enable this to be done in "real time".
- Members noted that the revised Policy required staff to produce a GP certificate for every day's sickness (if the member of staff was within the formal sickness absence process.) Members were concerned that this may place an additional burden on GPs and that whilst a member of staff could seek an appointment with the GP there was often some delay in getting an appointment with the doctor with very few practices offering same day appointments unless it was an emergency situation. The Assistant Director Professional Services advised that this particular concern could be raised at the Health and Wellbeing Board (on which GPs were represented) and it was also proposed that the new measures within the Sickness Absence Policy would be monitored for the first 3-4 months of its operation. This council would cover the cost of the GP certificate in these circumstances if it was required. It was noted that the Policy should be reworded to allow exceptions to be made for major health events such as the flu epidemic. It was also agreed that the policy would be reworded to require a GP certificate "or appointment with the Occupational Health physician" if a member of staff was sick within the formal sickness process.
- Typo on p.19 3rd bullet point up, the line to read – this would include undertaking "unpaid" employment or volunteering activities
- Members asked for clarification with regard to calendar days and whether this would include weekends, officers advised that calendar days did not refer to working days and weekends would therefore count.
- Members were concerned that there should be some consideration given to incentives/recognition for those staff who were not absent due to sickness and it was agreed that the guidance be amended to cover support that could be given to teams that were under pressure due to colleague's sickness absence.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Wellbeing Initiatives set out in the report be noted.

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- (b) That the Revised Sickness Absence Policy attached at Appendix B to the report be approved for implementation with effect from the 1st November 2012 subject to the detailed amendments agreed at the meeting and detailed above.
- (c) The Committee requested that the Policy be kept under review and consideration be given to incentives for the staff who did not take sick leave.

14. Review of implementation of the new Occupational Health contract

The Committee received a report updating Members on the implementation of the new Occupational Health contract and the early impact on sickness since the 'go live' date of 1 July 2012.

The implementation process to introduce the new provider for Occupational Health to the Council was carried out over a number of weeks and the contact was being monitored by monthly contract meetings, manager feedback and analysis of sickness data. A number of key improvements had been identified including improved appointment timescales, increased telephone consultations which resulted in more timely advice and less requirement for rearranged appointments and improved return to work dates.

Building on these initial positive outcomes the focus would be on a number of areas to continue to reduce sickness absence and further enhance the benefits of the contract including tackling non-attendance at consultations and monitoring the impact on sickness absence.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

15. Award of Contract for the Provision of Temporary Agency Staff

The Committee received a report updating members on the award of the contract for a Managed Service Provider to supply Temporary Agency Staff to Matrix SCM. The report set out the background to the procurement, the tender process and a summary of the outcome and benefits of awarding the contract to Matrix SCM. The contract had been awarded for 3 years with an option to extend for two further years. Pre-agreed rates would be utilised based on the Council's current job descriptions. Following a request from members it was agreed that the pre-agreed rates would be circulated to members of the Committee. Members were advised that whilst it was not possible to restrict Matrix to employing only local people a number of local Road Shows had been held to encourage local agencies to register with Matrix. Members noted that the new contract would start on 7th January, 2013.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.

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- (b) That a progress report be submitted to the Committee following implementation of the contract.

16. Dress Code

The Committee considered a report setting out the details of the Council's new Dress Code. Members were advised that Managers had indicated that without an agreed policy or dress code they were finding it difficult to encourage some staff to achieve more appropriate standards of dress.

All employees acted as representatives of the Council and should therefore be dressed accordingly and it was accepted that this played an important part in conveying a professional image of the Council to the council's customers and the general public.

Members were advised that the Code had been drafted by David Warren (from JTUC) and Surjit Nagra (HR Business Partner) and had been drafted following research as to how other organisations had tackled this issue.

The Staff Disability forum had been consulted and their comments and views reviewed and incorporated into the code.

Resolved – That the new Dress Code be noted.

17. Date of Next Meeting - 24th January 2013

The Committee noted the date of its next meeting and requested that a report on Temporary Agency Staff statistics be produced for that meeting.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)