

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 5 April 2017 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30 pm
 Concluded 8.05 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
BM Smith Cooke	Warburton Green Arshad Hussain Watson Bacon	J Sunderland

Councillor Arshad Hussain in the Chair

92. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

93. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017 be signed as a correct record.

94. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.



95. **MANAGING ATTENDANCE**

The Director of Human Resources submitted a report (**Document “AO”**) which provided an update with regards to managing attendance Authority wide as requested in the Committee resolution of 3 February 2016.

The report illustrated an authority wide overview with departmental actions outlined.

The Director gave an overview of sickness absence, stating that overall there had been a decrease in sickness absence, although the final figures for 2016/2017 were not complete. Services where absence showed an upward trajectory, managers were taking corrective action. The primary reasons for sickness absence remained muscular/skeletal and mental health.

During the discussion a Member ascertained what the financial cost was to the Authority as a result of sickness absence. In response the Director confirmed that some initial calculations had been done with HR Plus and they could be circulated to Members.

In relation to a question regarding mental health as a reason for sickness absence, it was explained that although mental health was categorised in several ways, incidence of work related stress was decreasing.

In response to a question regarding work being done to address mental health, the Director confirmed that a lot of work had been done to address the stigma around mental health, and to this end a number of courses had been delivered with our health colleague partners on tackling stress. In addition it was proposed to roll out a mental health e-learning course as well as support being offered by health and wellbeing services.

A Member ascertained whether there had been a genuine decrease in work related stress or was it related to managers having more frank discussions with staff on the issue. In response it was stated that a number of initiatives had improved the way in which mental health is recorded with a concerted effort to reduce the stigma surrounding it.

In terms of understanding the root causes, many incidents around mental health stemmed from issues outside of work.

In response to a question on how the sickness absence figures compared with the private sector, it was pointed out that although the levels were lower in the private sector, when compared to organisations of 5,000 staff or more, the levels were similar.

In addition it was stressed that the Council now had an ageing workforce and as a result there were more muscular/skeletal related illness that were being reported. In addition HR plus were actively working with managers to monitor sickness absence and flag up any issues once a trigger point is reached.

In terms of the support provided to people suffering from age related sickness, it was pointed out that front line workers were particularly prone and HR Plus were targeting resources effectively and providing appropriate advice to managers.



A Member stated that the report did not fully identify the reasons behind some of the sickness absence or give a clear analysis of the figures contained in the report.

In relation to a question on whether the reductions in the Council budget had had a correlating impact on the levels of sickness absence, the Director confirmed that the figures had remained static over the years and therefore it was difficult to draw any correlation to the budget reductions.

A Member stated that in order to get a better understanding of sickness absence and the reasons behind it, that a deeper analysis of the services which had a high level of sickness absence would be more useful.

Resolved –

- (1) That this Committee requests that a further report be presented in 3 months, which focuses on service areas where sickness levels are significantly high such as:**
 - **Children’s Services**
 - **Health and Wellbeing**
 - **Environment and Sport**
- (2) That all Departments continue to prioritise sickness absence and maintain all efforts to further improve performance.**

ACTION: All Strategic Directors

96. INCOME STREAMS OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES

At the meeting of this Committee held on 3rd November 2016, a request for a more detailed report on the income streams of both Adult and Community Services and Children’s Services was made, following the presentation of a report on Income generated by Council Services from fees and charges.

The Strategic Director Health and Wellbeing submitted a report (**Document “AP”**) which detailed the income streams of Adult and Community Services and Children’s Services.

During the discussion a Member stated that in relation to Adult Services there was a lot of income that was not accounted for. In response it was explained that the money would be accounted for and the reason for this current position was related to timing and how client contributions were accounted for during a particular point in time. In response the Member suggested that this information could be incorporated into the financial monitoring report the Committee will be considering later in the year.



In response to a question regards client contributions and evidence asked for during the assessment process, the Assistant Director confirmed that as part of the assessment, evidence was sought from the client in relation to income/expenditure, however if money was moved around by a client there were limitations on what the Service could do.

In relation to Children's Services, a Member stated that from the information provided it was difficult to understand the different income streams, and whether or not income was set to increase or decrease and how this was being tracked. In addition it was difficult to ascertain from the report how many schools were buying services from the Council.

In response it was stated that it was envisaged there would be a reduction in overall income, as more schools gained academy status.

In relation to a question regarding unaccompanied child asylum seekers, it was pointed out that any costs incurred in relation to this group would be met by the Home Office.

Resolved –

That information which provides a breakdown on trading services within Children's Services be incorporated as part of the Quarter 4 Financial Position Statement for 2016-17 report.

ACTION: Strategic Director Health and Wellbeing/ Strategic Director Corporate Services

97. COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION

The Strategic Director Corporate Services submitted a report (**Document "AQ"**) which detailed the performance of Council Tax collection and the Council Tax Reduction scheme, including the current and future challenges affecting council tax collection and council tax support arrangements.

The Assistant Director Revenues and Payroll stated that collection rates continued to improve on the margins, however collecting Council Tax from low income families remained a challenge.

The Assistant Director also alluded to how Council Tax support could be configured in the future, to support the most vulnerable, in a way that was easy to administer.

During the discussion Members suggested that any changes to the Council Tax Support arrangements should be flexible, so that if the scheme was not working it could be amended accordingly.



Members suggested that it would be useful to receive an options paper on a scheme which drew on what other local authorities were doing.

In relation to Council Tax collection, a Member suggested that some work should be done with In-Communities on improving collection rates, as there were similarities they experienced when it came to collecting rent arrears.

In relation to collecting Council Tax arrears, the Assistant Director stressed that ensuring arrears were collected was about equity, and the cost to the Authority was not significant, however the aim would always be to try and collect any outstanding amounts.

Resolved –

- (1) That the on-going work to both increase council tax collection and to support the District's most vulnerable residents be noted.**
- (2) That this Committee requests that further options for the development and delivery of future Council Tax support be presented to this Committee in 3 months.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Corporate Services

98. IMPROVING OUR CORPORATE APPROACHES TO CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “AR”**) which provided information on the review and improvement of the corporate approach to consultation and engagement.

During the discussion, the Chair ascertained the costs associated with undertaking statutory and non statutory consultation. In response it was stated that costs were factored into existing service budgets and that there was no earmarked budget relating to consultation.

A Member stated that although he appreciated the need to consult, there seemed to be little point in consulting people on the budget setting process or on strategy documents. However the Council had to be clear why it was consulting and what it would be doing with the responses.

A Member suggested that the use of plain language and easy read format were also important issues to bear in mind when consulting.

A Member commented that the views of ward members were crucial in any consultation exercise, and that all views expressed through the consultation process should be made available.



Resolved –

That the views and comments made by Members of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to the consultation improvement plan be taken on board.

ACTION: Chief Executive

99. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “AS”**) which set out the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2016/17.

Members suggested that it would be useful to have site of the draft work programme for 2017/18 at the next meeting of the Committee, and it was therefore:

Resolved –

That the draft work programme for 2017/2018 be considered at the next meeting of this Committee.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THIS AGENDA AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

