

SELECT COMMITTEE

21st November 2018

Present –The Chairman (Councillor Staveley) and Councillors Mason, Mercer, Moorby, Pighills, Shuttleworth, Solloway and Whitaker.

Officer – Committee Officer.

Also present the Chief Executive and Human Resources Manager (Absence Management), Lead Member for Enterprising Craven, Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration and the Programming and Venue Development Manager, Museums and Arts (Skipton Town Hall Project).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brown, Graham, Sutcliffe and Thompson.

Start: 6.30pm

Finish: 8.30pm

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 6th November 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Minutes for Report

OS.413

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT 2018-19

Further to Minute OS.409/18-19, the Human Resources Manager submitted a report presenting the Council's sickness absence data for the period 1st April 2018 to 30th September 2018, together with comparative data in respect of days lost and long / short term absence in the same period in 2016-17 and 2017-18. The data provided included details of

- Reasons for long term absence.
- Reasons for short term absence.
- Absence by service area.
- Reasons for absence in waste management.

For 2018/19 the annual target for sickness absence had been set at 8.5 days absence per fulltime employee (FTE), compared to 8 days in 2017-18. The actual average number of days lost per FTE in the first six months of the year had been 4.68 days; with the total number of days lost amounting to 950.10 compared to 790.10 in 2017-18. Long term absence had increased by 42% (678.6 days in total, compared to 453.80 days in the corresponding period in 2017-18), but short term had fallen by 23% (271.50 days in total compared to 336.3 days in the same period in 2017-18). As first requested at Minute OS.401/17-18, the Human Resources Manager provided an analysis of the absence figures for the waste management service, if excluding those figures the total number of days lost in the period would have been 471.10.

The largest single cause of short and long term absences was stress, depression and anxiety, however the vast majority of such absences were non-work related and ranged from depression, financial and relationships, often linked to the home environment. In responding to Members' comments and questions, the Human Resources Manager highlighted the availability of the Oasis Counselling Service which employees were encouraged to contact if experiencing difficulties, also seminars on stress had been provided to help employees and managers. Positive feedback had been provided by employees accessing the Counselling Service.

The Human Resources Manager reminded Members that at Minute OS.409/18-19 she had undertaken to examine possible more inclusive approaches to recognising employees with a zero absence rate, consultation with employees had generated just three replies, one suggesting an extra day off for those with a zero absence, another expressing the view that use of a draw was

unfair and the third suggesting all those with nil absence should receive the same amount of money. The Chairman expressed the view that given the size of the establishment and the number with zero absence, granting an extra day could raise questions of affordability.

In closing the discussion the Chairman thanked the Senior Human Resources Officer for her attendance and indicated that the Committee looked forward to receipt of the full-year position in due course.

Resolved – That the half year sickness absence data for 2018-19 is noted.

OS.414

SKIPTON TOWN HALL PROJECT

Further to Minute OS.411/18-19, the Chairman welcomed Councillor Myers, Lead Member for Enterprising Craven, the Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration and the Programming and Venue Development Manager for Museums and Arts, who had been invited to the meeting to discuss delivery of the Skipton Town Hall Project. In requesting the discussion the Committee had expressed a desire to better understand the financing and delivery of the project, and the organisation and management of the Town Hall, particularly its aim of becoming a cultural hub.

The Lead Member expressed his appreciation to the Committee for taking the time to discuss the project. He highlighted the Council's bravery in 2013 in agreeing to retain and improve the Town Hall at a time when many authorities faced with austerity had taken decisions to reduce expenditure on their assets and withdraw services. It was anticipated that on project completion the Town Hall would no longer be a drain on the Council's finances. Officers were to be commended, both in demonstrating commitment to the project beyond what could ordinarily be expected, and in securing funding from such bodies as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council.

On conclusion of the Lead Member's introduction the Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration and the Programming and Venue Development Manager delivered a comprehensive presentation which covered

- work carried out in identifying and addressing weaknesses, and implementation of changes to address those weaknesses with a view to providing a high quality venue.
- identification of the future overarching message, themes and direction for the new museum.
- explained the overall vision for the Town Hall as a cultural hub, and the principles underpinning that vision which were designed to lead towards the Hall becoming a financially sustainable building.
- work carried out in delivery and completion of Phase One of the project ie the building's repair, accessibility and functionality.
- progress in seeking to deliver Phase Two which on completion would produce a refurbished and modernised museum and tourist information centre which functioned as a hub linked to the entire cultural service operating from the Hall, and a refurbished / improved main hall with multi-functional changing facilities.
- service development and staff restructuring.
- retention of the main hall as a community events space and commercial opportunities.

In responding to questions regarding the timing of the closure of the building ahead of Phase Two construction works, and other concerns, the Strategic Manager explained the risks associated with not meeting the Heritage Lottery Fund's timescales for contractor procurement, commencement and completion, primarily the potential for funding to be withdrawn if the Council failed to meet the

Fund's timescales and requirements for completion; closing as planned along with other mitigation measures would help to minimise that risk. Meetings had been held with potential contractors and sub-contractors regarding the timescales which included construction works commencing on 4th February 2019 and the building re-opening and fitted out at the end of May 2020. Looking beyond May 2020, conversations were taking place with the Arts Council regarding the scope of securing longer term funding. Consideration was being given as to how productions and the cultural offer could be taken out to villages and communities across the District. Bearing in mind the negative impact poorly organised private events could have on the Hall's reputation, guidelines would be produced for private hirers.

In drawing the discussion to a close Members thanked Officer's for their informative presentation, and

- a. highlighted the need to manage the risks to the successful conclusion of the project and the venue's future success, including the potential loss of key personnel.
- b. expressed a wish that at some future point consideration be given to providing transport to bring people in / encourage and enable residents from around the District to see productions and performances etc at the Town Hall.
- c. expressed an opinion that looking beyond a 30 mile radius in seeking to attract people to performances at the Hall merited consideration.

Copies of the Officers' presentation / progress report would be circulated to all Members for information.

Resolved – (1) That progress made on the Town Hall project is welcomed, but the Audit and Governance Committee needs to keep the financial, reputational and other risks associated with its successful completion under review and monitored through the risk register.

(2) That the Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration, the Programming and Venue Development Manager, Lead Member for Enterprising Craven and all other staff involved are thanked for their efforts and commitment to successful delivery of the project.

Note : Background Information : A copy of the Director of Services' report presenting the proposed business plan and future governance arrangements for Skipton Town Hall to Policy Committee on 19th November 2013 had been circulated for Members' information.

Chairman.