

## **SELECT COMMITTEE**

10<sup>th</sup> January 2018

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

**Officer** – Chief Executive, Communications, Partnerships and Customer Services Manager, Senior Human Resources Officer and Committee Officer

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brown.

Start: 6.30pm

Finish: 7.26pm

The minutes of the Committee's Crime and Disorder meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### **Minutes for Report**

OS.401

#### **ABSENCE MANAGEMENT 2017-18**

Further to Minute OS.390/17-18, the Senior Human Resources Officer submitted a report presenting the Council's sickness absence data for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017, together with comparative data in respect of total days lost and long / short term absence in the corresponding period in 2016-17. Details of the number of vacant posts, use of agency staff / consultants, and arrangements in place with other local authorities to cover vacant positions were also provided.

For 2017/18 the target for sickness absence had been set at 8 days absence per full time employee (FTE), compared to 8.5 days in 2016-17. The actual average number of days lost per FTE in the first six months of the year had been 4.05 days; with the total number of days lost amounting to 790.10 compared to 757.10 in 2016-17. Long term absence had increased by 24% (453.80 days in total) and short term had decreased by 19% (336.3 days in total). Members were reminded that absence was classed as long term if it lasted more than four continuous weeks, and in the six month period to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 a total of 12 staff members had experienced a long term absence, with one being absent for the full period. The Waste Management Service which had an older age profile than the Council as a whole continued to show a higher proportion of musculo-skeletal related absences than any other area.

For 2016/17 the total estimated cost of days lost to sickness absence based on an average daily rate of £147.96 had amounted to £167,730.86.

During the course of the ensuing discussion Members raised a number of comments and questions relating to absence and recruitment, including the following, and received replies from the Human Resources Officer as indicated.

a. How was the annual absence target per fulltime employee decided upon? Response : In some respects the figure was the product of informed guess work using knowledge of the Council's workforce / absence performance, and other local authority statistics, the aim being to improve on the previous year's target. The proposed target was discussed with the Chief Executive and Lead member also.

b. How does the Council's performance on long term absence compare with the national position / within the Local Government context? Response : Attempts had been made to obtain that data to enable a comparison but responses were still awaited. Further requests would be made and details

circulated if received, however, absence statistics from other authorities always had to come with something of a health warning as each adopted their own protocols on what they collected, making comparison difficult.

c. Did the Council experience problems recruiting to vacant posts? Response : As a general rule the Council was able to recruit without difficulty, there were some exceptions to this, for example planning officers, where an added complication was competition from the private sector.

d. The age profile within waste management and potential for succession from operative to driver had been raised by the Select Committee on previous occasions, had any policy been put in place? Response : No awareness of such a policy having been put in place, but packages were available to help operatives' fitness, for example gym membership at Craven Leisure.

e. Were incentives in place for not taking any sick days? Could draws or similar be introduced on a monthly or quarterly basis to further reduce short term absence? Response : Those employees with a zero absence at year end were entered into a draw. The possibility of introducing a monthly or quarterly incentive question would be put to Council Leadership Team

f. In discussing absence management at the Committee's July 2017 meeting, reference was made to trialling a medical telephone service for employees, had any progress been made? Response : A number of options for medical support had been looked at, including a GP response service with video consultations but no further action had been taken. For the time being the success or otherwise of such medical support services used by the private sector would be monitored.

In drawing the discussion to a close Members thanked the Senior Human Resources Officer for providing a clear and very readable report and, it was

**Resolved** – That in reporting on the full year absence position in June 2018 the Senior Human Resources Officer is asked to provide in depth figures for the waste management service, and the position for the remainder of the Authority if those figures are excluded.

OS.402

### **CUSTOMER SERVICES PERFORMANCE**

Further to Minute OS.380/16-17, the Communications, Partnerships and Customer Services Manager submitted a report presenting details of changes made in the management of customer services performance in the period from December 2016, planned improvements in performance monitoring and service improvement projects. In each of the first two quarters of 2017-18 the service had failed to meet the key performance indicator target for call handling of 90% of calls answered each quarter, however for the period October to December the target had been met. Copies of the most recent customer services performance management report dated December 2017 appended to the Manager's report provided the following information

#### Customer Services Performance

- A chart giving three years call data for service demand comparison
- Chart of calls offered, answered and abandoned
- Performance compared to service level target
- Chart showing average queue time of incoming calls
- Chart showing average time waited before call is abandoned
- Chart showing average call handling time
- Breakdown of reception queries
- Channel analysis of reception queries
- Analysis of Channel Data : Unique website visits, telephone and face to face interactions.

### Breakdown Analysis of Customer Service Team Performance

- Resourcing of Customer Services including sickness data
- Summary of service specific issues
- Individual agent breakdown of calls answered
- Individual agent breakdown of call handling time

Members were reminded that at Minute OS.380, the Committee had asked that consideration be given to the following potential improvements

- a. Introduce a facility which enabled callers to leave their number and receive a call back when the customer service centre was less busy.
- b. Adapt the telephone system so as to include a message for callers indicating their position in the queue.

A call back facility had now been introduced and was activated during very busy periods, however because of the varied nature and length of calls handled by customer services it had been decided not to pursue introduction of a queue messaging facility, but additional lines for dealing with service specific queries at particular points in the year, eg. garden waste renewals, were now in place and could be activated as necessary. The Communications, Partnerships and Customer Services Manager highlighted the importance of keeping a track of how residents did business with the Council and drew Members' attention to the introduction of a new customer relationship management system which enabled the categorisation of all incoming calls to the contact centre; this in turn facilitated the ability to tailor promotional campaigns and target messaging, including the use of social media. Experience to date indicated that messaging reduced the number of incoming calls.

During the course of the ensuing discussion Members, amongst other comments and queries, made the following points

- a. The new website was much easier to navigate and could be viewed as a good investment.
- b. It was pleasing to hear that the Council was now embracing the benefits of social media as a channel for communication with residents.
- c. The data showed that call handling performance (and potentially customer experience) improved when the number of incoming calls was lower, therefore all attempts to reduce the number of calls should be examined.
- d. For those calls which weren't answered, did the telephone system capture those incoming numbers; if yes was there any value in the contact centre calling those numbers back?
- e. Was there a means of measuring or obtaining feedback on caller satisfaction / how did the service measure customer satisfaction?

In responding to d and e above the Communications, Partnerships and Customer Services Manager stated that she would ascertain what information was held on abandoned calls and whether something could be introduced along the lines suggested. Introducing a means of obtaining feedback and measuring customer satisfaction was within the Service's improvement plan; the aim being to introduce something in the year ahead.

In drawing the discussion to a close the Chairman thanked the Communications, Partnerships and Customer Services Manager for her report and indicated that the Committee looked forward to receiving a further update in due course.

Chairman.