

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 18 July 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor J Mutton (Cabinet Member)
 Councillor T Sawdon (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees:

People: D Ashmore, A Durrant, S Griffin, G Haynes, R Perks

Place: A Oluremi, U Patel

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February, 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

3. Sickness Absence to Year Ending 31 March, 2019

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) that enabled him to monitor levels of sickness absence for the year ending 31 March, 2019 and the actions being taken to manage absence and promote health at work across the City Council.

The report was based on a 12-month rolling period and excluded schools' workforce data (as this was inconsistent with the data of the workforce as a whole) and measured sickness absence as days lost per Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

The target of 8 days was approximately 15% lower than actual performance which was 9.4 days. The main reasons for absence remained Stress, Depression and Anxiety. However, at present it was difficult to determine to what extent this was work related or for other reasons. The other main reasons for days lost due to sickness absence were cited as 'Other Musculo-Skeletal Problems and Infections, Colds and Flu'.

The HR team aimed to ensure a consistent approach to sickness absence management and to provide information on a monthly basis on sickness absence to Management Teams/Senior managers. HR colleagues also supported managers in the application of the Council's 'Promoting Health at Work' procedure.

The report also provided information on the proactive strategies undertaken by the HR teams to support the managers in the reduction of sickness absence levels.

The cost of sickness shown in the report was a calculation of the pay of individuals who have been absent from work due to sickness. The actual impact on the Council is the financial cost of replacement cover where this is required in specific service areas plus the notional cost of the effect of the absence on the Council's ability to deliver its services.

The Cabinet Member expressed disappointment that the levels of sickness absence had remained more or less the same over the past 3 years. He expressed concerns over the cost of sickness to the authority and how this could be considered in the future.

He noted that a third of cases were attributed to stress, anxiety etc and wanted to know whether these were a direct result of staff cut backs which were now impacting on those who remained in work.

The Cabinet Member requested that patterns of sickness be identified such as in school holidays and that any patterns that emerged be examined and a comprehensive report be submitted for consideration. In addition, he requested a breakdown of sickness levels in adult social care to better understand the change in percentage of sickness in that directorate.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finances and Resources:

- 1. Receive the report providing sickness absence data for the year ending 31st March 2019 and endorses the actions taken to monitor and manage sickness absence.**
- 2. Notes the need to keep under review the Council's sickness and absence policies and procedures and invest in sickness absence management training in order to deliver a sustained reduction of absence levels.**

4. Agency Workers and Interim Managers - Performance Management Report Q4 - 1 January to 31 March, 2019

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided performance information on the use of agency workers procured for the Q4 period 1 January to 31 March 2019.

Coventry City Council has a Master Vendor Contract with Reed for the supply of agency workers through their own agency or via a 2nd tier arrangement with other agencies, using rates of pay based on an agreed pay policy and a negotiated mark-up rate with the Master Vendor. However, Reed is not always able to supply the required agency workers and where this is the case, service areas would use other suppliers.

The report provided information on the overall cumulative spend on the use of agency workers with Reed and outside Reed and compared Q3 and Q4 2018/19 which showed an overall decrease in spend.

A further table in the report showed comparative expenditure for the Master Vendor Contract between Q3 2018/19 and Q4 2018/2019 as well as Q4 2017/18 and Q4 2018/19. There has been a decrease of £51k in spend between Q3 and Q4 2018/19 and a decrease of £99k compared to the same quarter in 2017/18.

The report provided detailed information on the following service areas:

- Children's Services
- Adult Services
- Customer Services & Transformation
- Streetscene – Waste Services
 - Streetpride
 - Planning and Regulation

In addition, the report provided comparative expenditure outside of the Reed contract between Q3 and Q4 2018/19 and Q4 2017/18 and Q4 2018/19.

The report showed an increase in agency social workers in adult services and this was mainly to cover vacancies and to ensure that statutory duties were met. The Cabinet Member requested that in future, the report provide information in relation to the reasons for the need of agency staff, i.e. sickness, holiday periods etc.

The Cabinet Member requested clarification on whether there were processes in place which required all requests for agency spends to be cleared by a senior manager to justify the need.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources notes:

- 1. The recruitment and retention challenges impacting and affecting the business and strategies in place or working towards to support these.**
- 2. The agency/interim spends for Q4 2018/19**
- 3. The cumulative spend for both agency workers via Reed and outside Reed (Table 2.1)**
- 4. The upward trajectory of permanent filled jobs in Children Services (Appendix 1).**

5. Outstanding Issues

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources noted that work was currently being undertaken in relation to the Apprenticeship Levy and that a report would be submitted in due course.

6. Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.35 am)