

Meeting	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (SITTING AS A SELECT COMMITTEE)
Portfolio Area	RESOURCES
Date	15 JANUARY 2019
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SICKNESS MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with the information requested at the evidence gathering meeting on 14 November 2018, including an outline of early recommendations for the review.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the information provided by officers, which is appended to the report, be noted as evidence for the review.
- 2.2 That Members agree or amend the early recommendations from the review below:
 - (i) When the third party sickness absence provider, First Care, provide their Nurse led sickness reporting programme to staff that a comprehensive communication plan is provided which, amongst other points, will highlight that this measure has been introduced to improve employee wellbeing which in turn should reduce sickness levels.
 - (ii) That the initial target of a 2% improvement on sickness levels for the Council in the first year of First Care's contract be reconsidered by the Portfolio Holder and by officers and that a higher target, which is more in line with the providers average of a 4-5% improvement in their first year of operation at other work places, be established.

- (iii) That officers work with the Portfolio Holder to seek to reduce sickness absence which has been specifically associated with the undertaking of the Business Unit Reviews.
 - (iv) That the seasonal variations and peaks and troughs in certain Business Units sickness levels be recorded by officers and be provided to Members through the quarterly performance report.
 - (v) That the Portfolio Holder and officers consider specific measures which might help reduce sickness absence associated with stress, anxiety and depression (Please see Appendix E – Time to Change Action Plan and Section 4 of the Report dated 14 November 2018).
 - (vi) Approximately half of all staff has little or no sickness leave each year, the other half account for the remainder of the sickness figures (16-18 days a year). As such, Scrutiny Members support the Senior Leadership Team's efforts and measures they have introduced to address this issue and request that an update report be provided in approximately one year to further consider performance in this regard.
- 2.3 That the evidence obtained from the witness interviews at the 15 January 2019 meeting and Members observations and further recommendations from this meeting be submitted to a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree a final report and recommendations resulting from the review.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In October 2018 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed a scoping document to scrutinise this issue and a meeting was arranged for 14 November 2018 where a number of witnesses provided evidence to Members. At this meeting Members requested further information and witnesses to be invited to a future review meeting.
- 3.2 The review has so far established (i) The introduction of First Care is a positive step by the Council to address its Sickness Management issues but care needs to be taken regarding its communication and delivery; (ii) Sickness Management remains within the control of SBC; (iii) Some Business Units which are going through reviews are experiencing higher sickness figures; (iv) SLT and Members share a commitment and passion for the health and wellbeing of SBC staff; (v) There are seasonal peaks and troughs in certain Business Units which are not always recorded; (vi) Approximately half of all staff have little or no time off work through ill health each year, the other half account for the remainder of sickness (16-18 days a year); (vii) Scrutiny Members support the measures that SLT have put in place so far to address sickness absence; and (viii) a focus on the issues that generate the highest number of absences is needed for stress, anxiety and depression.

4 INFORMATION THAT MEMBERS REQUESTED AT THE EVIDENCE GATHERING MEETING ON 14 NOVEMBER 2018

- 4.1 That officers from Customer Services and Housing Investment be invited to the next SBC Sickness Management review meeting.
- 4.2 That Union representatives be invited to the further Sickness Management review meeting.
- 4.3 That data collected for FirstCare's East of England clients be shared with the Committee – see Appendix A (First Care Case Study Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council); Appendix B (First Care Case Study London Borough of Hillingdon); and Appendix C (First Care Case Study Dacorum Borough Council).
- 4.4 That officers clarify the projections for reduction in sickness absence after the engagement of the third-party sickness absence provider (FirstCare) – see Appendix D (First Care Return on Investment Dec 2018).
- 4.5 That the “Time to Change” pledge be circulated to Members – see Appendix E (SBC Time to Change Action Plan).
- 4.6 That the SBC Volunteering Policy be submitted to the Committee - see Appendix F (Employee Volunteering Policy).
- 4.7 That the current and revised Sickness Policy (when available) be submitted to the Committee - see Appendix G (SBC Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure).
- 4.8 That details of the employee assistance programme be submitted to the Committee.
- 4.9 That details of East of England LGA Sickness Absence Survey be provided to Members – see Appendix H (East of England LGA Survey Summary October 2018).

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications within this report.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 There are no direct legal implications within this report.

Other Implications

- 5.3 All corporate implications will be addressed in the reviews final report and recommendations which will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - First Care Case Study Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Appendix B - First Care Case Study London Borough of Hillingdon

Appendix C - First Care Case Study Dacorum Borough Council

Appendix D – First Care Return on Investment December 2018

Appendix E - SBC Time to Change Action Plan

Appendix F – SBC Employee Volunteering Policy

Appendix G – SBC Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure

Appendix H – East of England LGA Survey Summary October 2018