Public Document Pack



The Arc High Street Clowne S43 4JY

To: Chair & Members of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee

Friday, 6th September 2024

Contact: Matthew Kerry Telephone: 01246 242519

Email: matthew.kerry@bolsover.gov.uk

Dear Councillor,

UNION / EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee of the Bolsover District Council to be held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 23rd September, 2024 at 10:00 hours.

<u>Register of Members' Interests</u> - Members are reminded that a Member must within 28 days of becoming aware of any changes to their Disclosable Pecuniary Interests provide written notification to the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

You will find the contents of the agenda itemised on page 3 onwards.

Yours faithfully,



J. S. Fieldrend



Equalities Statement

Bolsover District Council is committed to equalities as an employer and when delivering the services it provides to all sections of the community.

The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between all groups in society.

Access for All statement

You can request this document or information in another format such as large print or **language** or contact us by:

- Phone: 01246 242424
- Email: enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk
- **BSL Video Call:** A three-way video call with us and a BSL interpreter. It is free to call Bolsover District Council with Sign Solutions, you just need WiFi or mobile data to make the video call, or call into one of our Contact Centres.
- Call with <u>Relay UK</u> a free phone service provided by BT for anyone who
 has difficulty hearing or speaking. It's a way to have a real-time conversation
 with us by text.
- Visiting one of our <u>offices</u> at Clowne, Bolsover, Shirebrook and South Normanton

Monday, 23rd September, 2024 at 10:00 hours taking place in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne

Item No.		Page
1.	Apologies For Absence	No.(s)
2.	Urgent Items of Business	
	To note any urgent items of business which the Chairman has consented to being considered under the provisions of Section 100(B) 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	Members should declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and Non Statutory Interest as defined by the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of:	
	a) any business on the agenda;b) any urgent additional items to be considered;c) any matters arising out of those items;	
	and if appropriate, withdraw from the meeting at the relevant time.	
4.	Minutes	4 - 8
	To consider the minutes of the last meeting held on 5 th June 2024	
5.	Sickness Absence - Quarter 1 (April - June 2024)	9 - 17

Agenda Item 4

UNION / EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Wednesday, 5th June 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillors Rowan Clarke, Mary Dooley and Vicky Wapplington.

UNISON: Liz Robinson (UNISON Convenor) and Violet Parker.

Officers:- Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Peter Wilmott (HR Business Partner) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

UECC1-24/25 ELECTION OF CHAIR 2024/25

Moved by Violet Parker (UNISON) and seconded by Councillor Rowan Clarke **RESOLVED** that Liz Robinson (UNISON) be elected as Chair of the Union / Employee

Consultation Committee for the ensuing year.

Liz Robinson (UNISON) in the Chair

UECC2-24/25 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2024/25

Moved by Liz Robinson (UNISON) and seconded by Councillor Vicky Wapplington **RESOLVED** that Councillor Mary Dooley be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee for the ensuing year.

UECC3-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Duncan Haywood, Councillor Sandra Peake and Chris McKinney (UNISON).

UECC4-24/25 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to be considered.

UECC5-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

UECC6-24/25 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Councillor Rowan Clarke **RESOLVED** that the minutes of a meeting of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee held on 14th March 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

UECC7-24/25 QUARTER 4 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE: 1ST JANUARY 2024 - 31ST MARCH 2024

Due to a miscommunication, Item 7 was added to the agenda by mistake and removed from the meeting.

UECC8-24/25 SICKNESS ABSENCE - QUARTER 4 (JANUARY - MARCH 2024)

The HR Business Partner explained this report covered the Sickness Absence data for Quarter 4 2023/24.

The average number of days lost per employee for 2023/24 was 8.98 days; this was above the annual target for the Local Performance Indicator to the end of March 2024 (8.5 days). While over the target and something to work on, the HR Business Partner noted it was still good it fell within 9 days.

One key trend highlighted was the average number of days lost per employee for Q4 2023/24 was 2.44 days; this was an increase from Q3 2023/24 and was the highest quarter of the year in terms of average days lost. However, the 2.44 days lost per employee for Q4 2023/24 was lower than the same quarter in 2022/23.

3 Services experienced zero sickness in Q4 2023/24 and a further 4 Services experienced less than 1 day per full-time equivalent employee.

Table 3 of Appendix 1 listed the top reasons for absences, with a direct correlation between physically demanding work and health issues/problems sustained. However, Stress/Depression was in the top 3 reasons for 2023/24 and had remained in the top 3 for every quarter since 2019/20. Work-related cases of Stress/Depression had increased in Q4 2023/24.

Cases of COVID-19 had dropped, with only 5 days lost in Q4 2023/24; with future variants this may change.

There were 15 long term cases of absence in Q4 2023/24; 10 from physical health ailments and 5 related to Stress/Depression (3 of which were work-related).

Listed at Figure 2.4 were the steps the Council had taken to support employees. These included: Mental Health awareness sessions being available 'on demand'; Mental Health awareness initiatives being continually published on the Council's intranet and weekly bulletin; the Cycle to Work Scheme; and the subsidising of gym membership.

A Menopause Policy had been introduced, the Neurodiversity Policy would be presented

to Committee at the meeting, and a Transgender Policy would be developed in the future; the intent with such policies was for the Council to be proactive.

A new all-in-one employee benefits platform would be established, with the use of a new service called Vivup. This would take over from previous schemes like Cycle to Work and introduce other promotional health schemes and preventative Mental Health provisions like a 24/7 helpline for independent advice (covering areas from health to finance), shopping discounts, support with medical costs and the rollout of green initiatives. This in turn would improve staff retention, work productivity, and increase organisational savings.

An employee Health and Wellbeing Survey would take place to provide specific feedback on working at the Council to help improve offerings, and workplace health checks would be arranged; these are what the recently recruited Employee engagement Officer would develop.

It was important for the Council to always be looking for opportunities to help its employees.

A Member thanked the HR Business Partner for the report and asked how the 24/7 helpline would work. The HR Business Partner responded that this would be provided by Vivup, which would provide even more assistance than previously offered. Employees had many different lifestyle and benefits choices, with some being more inclined to make use of the gym membership subsidy than others, who may prefer something similar to shopping discounts.

The services previously offered through another employee assistance company proved unsatisfactory, with no publicity material provided and specific data to know how many were accessing the services being difficult to collect; Vivup would be a far more proactive and professional service.

To a question on the second employee survey, the HR Business Partner stated this would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting; it had been necessary to generate the budget and build a draft survey for Managers and the Unions to ensure it encompassed everything the Council needed and maximised the number of responses. The intent was to identify key issues and work collaboratively with stakeholders.

The Strategic Director of Services noted that the average number of days lost per employee for 2023/24 being 8.98 days was only a 5% variation above the annual target. The Committee should also highly commend those involved, particularly HR, for the support employees received and for their handling of long term sickness cases. The Committee asked this statement be put on the record.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

UECC9-24/25 NEURODIVERSITY POLICY EXECUTIVE REPORT 2024

The HR Business Partner explained the purpose of the report was to seek approval for the implementation of a Neurodiversity Policy and was, like the Menopause Policy, designed to help create policy, increase awareness, and provide inclusivity at the Council.

There was a natural variation in thinking in society and conditions such as Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Dyslexia could bring unique skills and perspectives to the workplace, including enhanced problem-solving abilities, creativity, and a high attention to detail.

The Neurodiversity Policy aligned with the Council's commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion. All employees deserved opportunities, encouragement and support to realise their full potential. This would, in turn, provide a unique quality and skill set to the Council.

Key components of the Neurodiversity Policy were to raise awareness and education, tailor recruitment and hiring practices to provide inclusivity and accessibility, identify potential workplace adjustments, and provide an inclusive and supportive workplace where all employees could thrive.

The Chair stated the Unions' point of view was that they favoured the implementation of a Neurodiversity Policy.

A Member expressed concern on the recruitment and interview process of potential employees; how would the Council as an employer react when a neurodivergent individual applied for a role. The HR Business Partner stated it would be up to the individual whether they informed the Council or not, but if informed the Council could make any required adjustments. One example was the ability to work in a quiet location. Another was lowering the brightness of artificial lighting.

Awareness sessions were also key to encouraging responses to make these adjustments in the first place. The HR Business Partner reiterated that diverse teams brought individual qualities and strengths to the Council; opportunities to bring other ways of working was important. The Member noted it was excellent to accommodate all at the Council.

In response to questions from the UNISON Representative, the HR Business Partner stated the Council would be providing training, support, and awareness sessions. The latter would highlight the capabilities of neurodiverse individuals, and these sessions could be comprehensive that Managers would not necessarily need further in-depth training.

In response to further questions form the UNISON Representative, the HR Business Partner explained the Neurodiversity Policy would provide enough adjustments so a recent fire alarm would not have had as an issue to those with sensory sensitivities. Managers would also have flexibility to make work adjustments; a high level of detail on this may not be necessary (working hours are already adjusted regularly across the Council).

To a question regarding handling disciplinary matters towards neurodivergent individuals, the HR Business Partner admitted it was difficult to imagine a disciplinary action affecting conduct, but if it was a factor it would be part of the mitigation process for what had taken place; this would be factored into the disciplinary process. It would likely be more of a factor to performance management, but this would be geared towards making improvements for the employee and workplace.

The Chair, as UNISON Convenor, had emailed the HR Business Partner prior to the

meeting the recommendation to add onto Section 8 the Neurodiversity Policy, with the Committee's approval, the access to work programme, which was set up to fund practical support to employees who had a disability or Mental Health condition.

A Member noted that during interviews, people would likely disclose more information about any of their conditions if they were in a comfortable environment. Job interviews could be quite stressful, but if neurodivergent individuals felt comfortable, they would likely explain their requirements, and this would likely help them and the Council if mentioned earlier on in the hiring process.

On disciplinary matters, the Member stated it was important for the Council to be mindful of those on the spectrum who could struggle on what was or was not right; it would need to be black and white for those who would be part of the Neurodiversity Policy – be specific and direct.

The Strategic Director of Services explained, in terms of disclosure of any condition, the Council may invariably find it would be disclosed on the Pre-Employment Occupational Health form, but there was no guarantee the occupational health provider reviewing that form would disclose it to the Manager of the relevant team.

In terms of disciplinary matters, the Strategic Director of Services agreed that if the Council was aware of any conditions, it was important to set it out in black and white to highlight future expectations. If adjustments had been made but the level of performance and conduct fell short of what was then expected, Managers could take reasonable action; it was important to set out what was expected of the employer and the employee.

A Member stated they approved of the Neurodiversity Policy and added one way to improve inclusivity was to highlight the relevant international days of recognition of the multiple conditions the Policy would cover. The HR Business Partner explained awareness was something the Council promoted, though the recently appointed Employee Engagement Officer would make sure these awareness initiatives take more of a centre stage.

Moved by Councillor Vicky Wapplington and seconded by Councillor Rowan Clarke **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10:35 hours.



Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee on 23rd September 2024

Sickness Absence - Quarter 1 (April - June 2024)

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Resources

Classification	This report is Public
Report By	Oliver Fishburn HR and Payroll Manager

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

To report the sickness absence figures throughout the Council for Quarter 1 (April – June 2024).

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 Figure 1 shows a summary of sickness absence levels within Bolsover District Council for the months April June 2024.
- 1.2 Absence for the Senior Managers Group is shown as 50% of the total absence for Joint Senior Managers as this is split with Bolsover/NE Derbyshire District Councils. For other employees the absences included are for the employing authority only.
- 1.3 The average number of days lost per employee for Quarter 1 was 2.24 days.
- 1.4 The 2024/25 projected outturn figure for the average number of days lost per employee is 8.96 days.
- 1.5 The annual target for the Local Performance Indicator to the end of March 2024 is 8.5 days.
- 1.6 For the purposes of sickness reporting, Senior Management is accounted for as follows:
 - 1 Joint Assistant Director Post (0.5 FTE). 0 days sickness experienced during Quarter 1.

2. <u>Details of Proposal or Information</u>

2.1 Tables 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix 1 detail the key patterns and trends being experienced corporately in relation to sickness absence.

2.2 Key Trends

- The overall average days lost due to sickness in Quarter 1 was 2.24, this has decreased from Quarter 4 and is the lowest Quarter 1 in terms of average days lost since 2022/23.
- There is a direct correlation between employees undertaking physically demanding work and high levels of sickness. This is reinforced by Muscular/Skeletal absences regularly being in the top three reasons for sickness absence.
- 3 Services experienced zero sickness in Quarter 1 and a further 6 Services experienced less than 1 day per FTE employee.
- Stress/Depression has remained in the top three reasons for absence since Quarter of 2019/20.
- There were 10 cases of absence due to Stress/Depression during Quarter 1, 5 of which were work related, and 5 were none work related.
- Covid19 accounted for 12 days lost due to sickness in Quarter 1 which have slightly increased in comparison to 5 days lost in Quarter 4 in 2023/4.
- There are 18 long term cases in this quarter. 14 are due to physical health ailments and 4 cases are related to stress/depression (all of which were work related). Appropriate support and assistance are being provided to facilitate support for those who have returned to work and those planning to do so.
 5 Employees have now returned to work, 8 remain absent, 5 of which have left the Council's employ.

Actions

- 2.3 Managers have support from the HR Advisor and are issued monthly sickness absence information. Managers are also able to access sickness information for their teams on a daily basis via HR21 Self Service.
- 2.4 Steps the Council has taken to support employees include:
 - Mental Health awareness sessions are now available 'on demand' for all employees via Eric and have previously been delivered across the Council as part of the Council's quarterly corporate training programme.
 - Awareness training explains that colleagues and managers are not specialists in mental health and their role is to listen to employees and signpost them to appropriate support.
 - Mental Health awareness initiatives and possible support is continually publicised via Eric and the weekly bulletin. Recent examples of which include:
 - the Mental Health Map, which features all the pathways and support options available in Derbyshire.
 - Mental Health Awareness week promoting the available guidance and support available.
 - SHOUT an organisation which provides 24/7 confidential support to anyone struggling to cope.

- Cycle to Work Scheme is also available to encourage health and wellbeing and to address carbon emissions, the number of employees who have subscribed during 2024/25 will be reported in Quarter 4.
- The number of Employees subscribing to the Gym during 2024/25 will be reported in Quarter 4.
- Managers and Employees have accessed Occupational Health, Counselling, Physiotherapy, the Council's Employee Assistance Programme, and other support.
- Employees are signposted to incentives which are available via Leisure i.e.:
 - To encourage health and wellbeing staff can take up membership for Go! Active which includes gym, swim, and classes for only £15 per month.
 - There is a Health Referral Programme (Physical Activity & Lifestyle Support) which is available, all employees can access the Bolsover Wellness Programme if they meet the criteria. This is a programme aimed at changing behaviours and finding solutions to assist people facing daily challenges resulting in a concentrated approach regarding service users health and wellbeing.
- 2.5 Operational concerns about the management of sickness absence cases that exist are being raised with the respective managers and dealt with as per standard practice and policy.
- 3. Reasons for Recommendation
- 3.1 The report contains data relating to employees' absence levels.
- 4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection
- 4.1 Not applicable this report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the repot be noted.

Approved by Councillor Clive Moesby, Portfolio Holder for Resources

IMPLICATIONS.			
IMPLICATIONS:			
Finance and Risk:	Yes⊠	No □	
		ntribute to poor	service levels, low morale, and
higher costs for the Counc	cil.		
		On	behalf of the Section 151 Officer
Land Carlo Para Data Da		V -	NI - E
Legal (including Data Pr	otection):	Yes□	No ⊠
Details:			
		On ho	ehalf of the Solicitor to the Council
		On be	enan of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment: Yes□No ⊠ Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment. Details: Staffing: Yes⊠ No □						
Details: The	report's topic relates to employees and t	heir absence levels	S.			
	On bel	half of the Head of	Paid Service			
DECISION INF	FORMATION					
Is the decision A Key Decision on two or more to the Council Revenue - £7	No					
	Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)					
District Ward	ls Significantly Affected	None				
_	uty Leader □ Executive □ Relevant Service Manager □	Details:				
Links to Cou	ncil Ambition: Customers, Economy,	and Environment				
LIIKS to Cou	nen Ambition. Customers, Economy,	and Environment	•			
N/A						
DOCUMENT I	NFORMATION					
Appendix No	Title					
1	Figures for the Quarter by Directorate					
preparing the	Papers npublished works which have been relied report. They must be listed in the section of the background must provide copies of the background.	on below. If the rep				

Table One: Organisational Outturn Average Number of Days Absence

(Average sickness days per fte employee)

	2021/22	2021/22 Costs	2022/23	2022/23 Costs	2023/24	2023/24 Costs	2024/25	2024/25 Costs
Quarter One	1.91	£81,917.94	2.29	£84,309.63	2.26	£74,265.11	2.24	£88,097.39
Quarter Two	2.31	£91,025.58	2.02	£84,144.83	2.39	£86,396.88		
Quarter Three	2.29	£85, 306.37	2.27	£93,954.00	1.89	£73,327.02		
Quarter Four	2.19	£84,857.65	2.82	£118,763.85	2.44	£99,520.51		
Overall Outturn	8.7	£343,107.54	9.4	£381,172.31	8.98	£333,509.52		

Table Two: Organisational Long Term/Short Term Split Days Percentage

	2021/22		2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	Short Term	Long Term						
Quarter One	40%	60%	48%	52%	23%	77%	28%	72%
Quarter Two	67%	33%	46%	54%	37%	63%		
Quarter Three	48%	52%	46%	54%	41%	59%		
Quarter Four	69%	31%	43%	57%	41%	59%		
Overall Outturn	57%	43%	46%	54%	36%	64%		

Table Three: Top Three Reasons for Absence

(Top 3 reasons based on sickness days lost)

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Current Year 2024/25	
Quarter One	1.Stress/Depression	1. COVID Symptoms	1. Operations/Hospital	1.Other Musc. Skeletal	
	2. Other Musc Skeletal	2. Other Musc. Skeletal	2.Stress/Depression	2.Operations/Hospital	
	3.Operations/Hospital	3.Stress/Depression	3. Other Musc. Skeletal	3.Stress/Depression	
Quarter Two	1. COVID 19 Symptoms	1. Stress/Depression	1 Operations/Hospital	1.	
	2. Other Musc. Skeletal	2. COVID 19 Symptoms	2. Stress/Depression	2.	
	3.Stress/Depression	3. Other Musc. Skeletal	3.Other Musc. Skeletal	3.	

Quarter Three	1.Stress/Depression	1. Stress/Depression	1. Stress/Depression	1,
	2.COVID19 Symptoms	2.COVID 19 Symptoms	2. Other	2.
	3. Other Musc. Skeletal	3.Other Musc. Skeletal	3. Other Musc. Skeletal	3.
Quarter Four	1.COVID19 Symptoms	1.Stress/Depression	1. Stress/Depression	1.
	2. Other Musc. Skeletal	2.Operations/Hospital	2.Other Musc./Skel	2.
	3. Stress/Depression	3. Other Musc. Skeletal	3.Operations/Hospital	3.
Overall Outturn	1.COVID19 Symptoms	1. Other Musc. Skeletal	1.Stress/Depression	1.
	2. Stress/Depression	2. Stress/Depression	2.Other Musc. Skeletal	2.
	3. Other Musc. Skeletal	3. COVID19 Symptoms	3.Operations/Hospital	3.

Summary Figures for the Quarter by Directorate/Service

Figure One – Service Breakdown Short/Long Term Split

		No. of	Long	No. of	Total	FTE No. in	Average days
	Short term	Employees	term	Employees	Days	Section	lost per FTE
Service	days	absent	days	Absent	lost		
Directors and Assistant Directors	0	0	0	0	0	6.5	0
Governance	0	0	0	0	0	5.6	0
Elections	0	0	0	0	0	2.5	0
Health & Safety	5	2	0	0	5	5	1
Human Resources & Payroll	3	1	0	0	3	7.42	0.4
Legal	1	1	31	1	32	8.35	3.83
Communications	2	1	0	0	2	5	0.4
Procurement	0	0	32	3	32	3.35	9.55
Performance	0	0	55	1	55	3.62	15.19
Finance	3	1	0	0	3	10.8	0.28
Revenues & Benefits	15	5	0	0	15	25.17	0.6
Customer Services	8	4	58	2	66	23.84	2.77
Leisure	31	9	102	3	133	52.84	2.52
Leaders/Executive Team	4	2	0	0	4	7.41	0.54

Streetscene	100	38	204	6	304	104.75	2.9
Housing Management (including CS)	44	9	102	2	146	70.45	2.07
Planning	16	3	0	0	16	22.4	0.71

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – EMPLOYEES HOSTED BY NEDDC

			No. of	Long	No. of	Total	FTE No. in	Average days
		Short term	Employees	term	Employees	Days	Section	lost per FTE
17	Service	days	absent	days	Absent	lost		
	Environmental Health	11.5	5	65	1	76.5	52.08	1.47
	ICT	9	6	0	0	9	33.15	0.27

Figure Two: Stress Cases During Quarter One

Work Related	Outside of Work Related	Total
5	5	10