

## **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, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 10:01 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Liz Robinson (UNISON Convenor) in the Chair

Councillors Rowan Clarke, Mary Dooley, Duncan Haywood, Sandra Peake and Vicky Waplington.

UNISON:- Chris McKinney.

Officers:- Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Mark Giles (Assistant Director Streetscene, Community Safety and Enforcement), Peter Wilmot (HR Business Partner) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

### **UECC15-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **UECC16-24/25 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business to be considered.

### **UECC17-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

### **UECC18-24/25 MINUTES**

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Duncan Haywood

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of a meeting of the Union / Employee Consultation Committee held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

### **UECC19-24/25 SICKNESS ABSENCE - QUARTER 2 (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2024)**

The HR Business Partner presented the report to the Committee.

The average number of days lost per employee was 2.35 for Quarter 2 2024/25. The 2024/25 projected outturn for the average number of days lost was 9.22 days. This would likely change once Quarter 3 2024/25 was reviewed and Quarter 4 2024/25 data was finalised.

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Attached at Appendix 1 were Tables 1, 2 and 3, which detailed the key patterns and trends being experienced corporately in relation to sickness absence.

Key trends included:

- The overall average days lost due to sickness in Quarter 2 2024/25 was 2.35 days – higher than Quarter 1 2024/25 but lower than Quarter 2 2023/24;
- 6 Services experienced zero sickness in Quarter 2 and a further 3 Services experienced less than 1 day per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee;
- Stress/Depression had remained in the top three reasons for absence since Quarter 2 of 2019/20;
- There were 6 cases of absence due to Stress/Depression during Quarter 2 2024/25 (2 were work related, 3 none work related, and 1 a combination of home and work-related issues);
- COVID-19 accounted for 15 days lost due to sickness in Quarter 2 2024/25 – an increase from 12 days lost in Quarter 1 2024/25; and,
- There were 16 long-term cases in Quarter 2 2024/25.

Steps the Council had taken to support employees in their health and wellbeing included:

- Mental Health awareness sessions were now available 'on demand';
- Mental Health awareness initiatives and possible support were published every week and included:
  - Suicide Prevention Day;
  - Mental Health Awareness Day;
  - Mental Health First Aider Training;
  - High-Quality Conversations Training;
  - Alcohol Awareness Week; and,
  - Vivup Rewards & Benefits;
- The number of Employees subscribing to the Gym for Quarter 2 2024/25 was 57;
- Managers and Employees had accessed Occupational Health, Counselling, Physiotherapy, the Council's Employee Assistance Programme and other support;
- Employees were signposted to incentives which were available via Leisure i.e.:
  - To encourage health and wellbeing staff could take up membership for Go!Active for £15 per month;
  - There was a Health Referral Programme (Physical Activity & Lifestyle Support) available.

The Council had arranged free NHS health check referrals and body MOTs (feedback from staff had been positive).

Menopause and Pension Awareness Sessions had also taken place (support like the Pension Awareness Sessions would help provide financial wellbeing).

Work with the Leisure Team had taken place to promote wellbeing walk challenges outside of work (team based and independent challenges).

A Member shared amazement at what the Council was doing to support its staff – far removed from what many Members would have experienced in their careers. The HR Team and those organising this support were greatly appreciated.

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A Member agreed, adding it was good the take up of support provided was high. It was also stated the helpline for staff to use if required was excellent.

The HR Business Partner stated many staff had also downloaded the accompanying Vivup Rewards & Benefits app and were making use of vouchers for grocery shopping and discounted car parking. The 24/7 helpline would also provide support and advice, financial or otherwise, if required.

Due to the recent increase of toxicity in politics, and in relation to the high levels of Stress/Depression experienced by staff, it was asked if similar support could be offered to Members. The HR Business Partner answered some support on offer was also open to Members and could be accessed on Eric (the Council's internal website) via the "Learning and development" link on the "My Skills" tab. Items listed included Counter Terrorism Training and Mental Health Awareness.

Several Members expressed they did not often have time to utilise Eric due to their casework. While there were some banners promoting these services/training across The Arc, the Strategic Director of Services added this disconnect has also been discussed in the recent Safety Committee.

If Members could not access Pdf documents or Eric via iPads, they could contact the Service Desk for assistance. The Strategic Director of Services would contact the Communications Team to request an all Member email be sent to inform how to access Eric and the Vivup staff benefit scheme.

It was also recognised that Members no longer received a weekly bulletin on what was happening at the Council and what training/support was available.

The UNISON representative wanted to express thanks for what the Council did for its employees.

To a question on the Cycle to Work scheme, the HR Business Partner explained it was a UK National Government scheme to promote greener and healthier transport to work. Up to half the cost of a new bicycle would be covered, and the other paid for by the employee from their wages over time (with no financial interest/penalty). This would then promote healthy physical activity, greener travel, and reduce congestion on roads and parking at offices.

A Member stated COVID-19 was still a concern, explaining in their Ward it was currently a pressing concern. A Member remarked Tuberculosis had also seen a concerning increase of late.

The Chair welcomed the new Assistant Director Streetscene, Community Safety and Enforcement to the Council and the Committee. Everyone was wished a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Moved by Chris McKinney and seconded by Councillor Mary Dooley  
**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10:24 hours.