

## **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 Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025 at 1000 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Liz Robinson (Unison Convenor) in the Chair

Members:- Councillors Mary Dooley, Steve Fritchley, Tom Munro and Sally Renshaw.

Union Representatives: - Chris McKinney (Unison).

Officers:- Peter Wilmot (HR Business Manager) and Alison Bluff (Senior Governance Officer).

### **UECC9-25/26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Rowan Clarke.

### **UECC10-25/26. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

### **UECC11-25/26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **UECC12-25/26. MINUTES – 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

Moved by Councillor Steve Fritchley and seconded by Chris McKinney (Unison)

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of a Union / Employee Consultation Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 be approved as a true record.

### **UECC13-25/26. SICKNESS ABSENCE (Q1 – APRIL TO JUNE 2025)**

Committee considered a detailed report presented by the HR Business Manager, which provided the Council's sickness absence outturn figures for the Quarter 1, April to June 2025 period.

The average number of days lost per FTE for Quarter 1 was 2.8 days against an annual target of 8.5 days.

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The following was highlighted;

- Long term sickness absence had escalated and accounted for 74% of days lost over the first Quarter.
- Stress and depression had remained in the top three reasons for sickness absence with 12 cases in Quarter 1 of which seven were work related and five were non work related.
- There was a direct correlation of employees who undertook physically demanding work with high levels of sickness absence.
- Twelve days had been lost to Covid in the Quarter.
- Seven services had experienced no sickness absence.

Managers had support from the HR Advisor and were issued monthly sickness absence information. Managers were also able to access sickness information for their teams on a daily basis via the HR21 Self Service.

The Council took steps to support employees which included;

- Autism Awareness Training (April 2025)
- Mental Health Awareness Week (12–18 May)
- Men's Health Week (9–15 June)
- Carers Week (9–15 June)
- Heatwave Safety Reminder
- Sun Safe Workplace Training
- New eLearning Platform Launched
- What is SkillGate (offering a broad range of interactive courses and a dedicated wellbeing section for staff)
- Vivup Rewards & Benefits (since the launch of Vivup in September 2024, the Lifestyle Savings feature had helped employees save a combined total of £1308).
- Go-Active @ the Arc (50% reduction to staff for the Membership fee)

Further details of the above initiatives were provided in the report.

East Midlands Councils were undertaking a benchmarking exercise as neighbouring councils had also highlighted an increase in sickness absence as an ongoing trend. Results from this exercise would be provided to Members in future quarterly reports.

In response to a Member's query, the HR Business Manager advised that health and safety events were always open to Members as the Council felt it was important Members were also supported. It was suggested that Governance could look into promoting these events via the Member Development route.

In response to another Member's query in relation to Covid and those staff who visited customer's homes, the HR Business Manager stated that some people may not be aware they had Covid if they did not feel unwell, however, if someone knew that they had Covid, the HR Business Manager's advice would be to avoid spreading the disease wherever possible.

A Member raised his concern in relation to the figures for stress and depression and noted that these were at a high level compared to previous years and should be

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addressed. The Unison Convenor advised that Unison and HR worked together to implement various assistance and support programmes for staff suffering from stress and depression including independent counselling etc.

The HR Business Manager noted that he looked into national trends, and the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD), had carried out a health and wellbeing study in relation to sickness absence across the country, across all different sectors and had found that sickness absence amongst all organisations had increased over the last 3 years. In 2022 the national average was 5.8 days lost; 2023 was 7.8 days lost, and 2025 was 9.4 days lost. The public sector average was 13.3 days lost which was below these statistics. 41% of organisations included in the survey had indicated that stress and depression and mental health illness were the top reasons for days lost. He added that the Council monitored and provided a lot of support to employees who were off sick so they could return to work as quickly as possible.

A Unison representative added that some staff were able to work from home if they had Covid symptoms and this would help to contain the virus, however, it was acknowledged that not every member of staff was able to work from home as this depended on their role with the Council.

Members noted that the Council was a good employer in supporting staff and thanked Human Resources for their work in undertaking the different support offered.

Another Member requested that the information regarding national trends for sickness absence be included as part of future reports.

Moved by Chris McKinney and seconded by Tom Munro

**RESOLVED** that 1) the report be noted,

2) information regarding national trends for sickness absence in relation to stress and depression and mental health be included as part of future reports,

3) Governance to look into promoting the health and safety events on offer via the Member Development route.

### **UECC14-25/26.**

### **DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

Committee considered a detailed report, presented by the HR Business Manager, which sought Members approval for the implementation of a Domestic Abuse Policy.

The Policy would ensure that the Council provided a safe, inclusive, and responsive working environment for all employees, and formalised the Council's approach to recognising, responding, and supporting those affected by domestic abuse whether as victims or perpetrators.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a statutory definition of domestic abuse and a legal framework to better protect victims. Employers had a duty of care to safeguard

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their workforce, and this policy affirmed the Council's commitment to upholding this responsibility.

Consultation on the policy had previously been carried out with the Council's Specialist Domestic Abuse Officer, Service Managers, Senior Leadership Team and the unions.

A Member referred to the paragraph in the policy regarding confidentiality and felt that this should be highlighted more prominently and earlier in the policy document. The HR Business Manager noted he would look at this.

Members welcomed the report and noted the excellent work of staff in relation to this policy.

Moved by Liz Robinson and seconded by Councillor Steve Fritchley.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council approve the Domestic Abuse Policy,

**RESOLVED** that if Council approve the Domestic Abuse Policy, the HR Team take steps to raise awareness of the policy among staff and management and provide training on how to identify and respond to domestic abuse in the workplace.

The meeting concluded at 1035 hours.