

# EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 6 December 2017

## 12. REFERRAL FROM COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE- STAFF SICKNESS LEVELS

The Committee was advised that the Community Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017, had, following consideration of the Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2016/17, resolved that "the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be requested to give consideration to the increase in staff sickness levels within the Authority, possibly, by revisiting the work of its previous task and finish group thereon."

Members were reminded that the same concerns had been raised at the last meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017 [Minute 8 thereof refers] during its consideration of the '2017/18 Well-Being Objectives and Governance & Resources - Departmental Performance Monitoring Report'. It had subsequently resolved that 'a report on sickness absence be submitted to the next meeting'. The report is referred to in minute 13 below.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Community Scrutiny Committee be advised that the Policy and Resources Committee has considered a report on attendance management incorporating sickness management.**

## 13. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT APRIL 2017 TO SEPTEMBER 2017

Further to minute 8 [resolution 8.2] of the last meeting the Committee considered a report on Attendance Management Performance for the period April 2017 to September 2017 which detailed sickness absence figures for the Departments for quarter 2 (April to September) along with benchmarking and performance ranking tables. The report also included a breakdown of the key causes for absence to enable the Committee to scrutinise the council's performance in relation to managing attendance. The Committee was advised that departments were presented with the data on a regular basis and challenged to address any issues of concern.

The Chair thanked officers for arranging the recent informal visit by the committee members to the occupational health unit following which there had been excellent feedback.

The following issues / observations were raised on the report:

- It was noted that improvements in sickness absence figures were being seen in most departments and these were likely to be reflected in the data for quarter 3. An important factor in reducing days lost through sickness was ensuring that appropriate interventions were made in a timely manner. Increased flexible working was also viewed as a contributory factor in reducing staff absence levels. The recently relaunched Employee Wellbeing Service was able to offer a range of therapies to support employees;
- It was noted that all new staff were apprised of the sickness policy, which took a supportive stance, as part of their induction and all managers had responsibility for monitoring absence. The Authority also liaised with colleagues from Hywel Dda University Health Board with regard to the

provision of flu vaccination for employees who were carers or worked in the care sector;

- Members were informed that a recent half day session had been held with headteachers focussing on sickness absence following which there had been a number of queries regarding stress and it was considered that the openness of such approaches was to be welcomed so that the relevant support and intervention could be offered;
- Whilst the report was welcomed it was considered that more in depth data would enable the Committee to better scrutinise sickness absence and, for instance, ascertain non-financial implications such as the effect the employment of a supply teacher due to staff sickness might have on a child's education. Members were advised that more detailed data was available which could be provided;
- Schools had been provided with benchmarking information and a quarterly hr newsletter was also despatched. A schools staff absence scheme had also been launched.

## **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**

**13.1 that the report be received;**

**13.2 that arrangements be made for a development session for members of the Policy and Resources Committee focussing on the issues raised above with a view to enabling members to gain a greater understanding of sickness management within the authority and schools and agreeing the type of data it wishes to see in future reports.**