

To: Members of the Special Sub-Group

**Councillors D Clews, Hayfield, Jenns, Jordan, Morson
and Parsons**

For the information of the other Members of the Council

For general enquiries please contact Democratic Services on 01827 719221 or via email – democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk

For enquiries about specific reports please contact the officer named in the reports.

This document can be made available in large print and electronic accessible formats if requested.

SPECIAL SUB-GROUP

5 July 2022

The Special Sub-Group will meet on Tuesday, 5 July 2022 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire.

The Meeting can also be viewed on the Council's YouTube channel at: [NorthWarks - YouTube](#)

AGENDA

- 1 Evacuation Procedure**
- 2 Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**
- 3 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

4 **Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to put questions to elected Members. Questions should be submitted by 9.30am two working days prior to the meeting. A period of five minutes will be allowed for each question to be answered.

Members of the public wishing to address the Board must register their intention to do so by 9:30am two working days prior to the meeting. Participants are restricted to five minutes each.

If you wish to put a question to the meeting, please register by email to democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk or telephone 01827 719221/719226/719237.

Once registered to speak, the person asking the question has the option to either:

- (a) attend the meeting in person at the Council Chamber.
- (b) attend remotely via Teams; or
- (c) request that the Chair reads out their written question.

If attending in person, precautions will be in place in the Council Chamber to protect those who are present however this will limit the number of people who can be accommodated so it may be more convenient to attend remotely.

If attending remotely an invitation will be sent to join the Teams video conferencing for this meeting. Those registered to speak should dial the telephone number and ID number (provided on their invitation) when joining the meeting to ask their question. However, whilst waiting they will be able to hear what is being said at the meeting. They will also be able to view the meeting using the YouTube link provided (if so, they may need to mute the sound on YouTube when they speak on the phone to prevent feedback).

5 **Update Report on Human Resources Issues** - Report of the Corporate Director - Resources

Summary

This report summarises work done by the Human Resources (HR) team in 2021/22 and highlights work to be undertaken in 2022/23. It provides details of the sickness levels for the period of April 2021 to March 2022 and provides some further information on action taken in managing absence.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300).

STEVE MAXEY
Chief Executive

Agenda Item No 5

Special Sub-Group

5 July 2022

**Report of the Corporate Director
(Resources)**

**Update Report on Human
Resources Issues**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises work done by the Human Resources (HR) team in 2021/22 and highlights work to be undertaken in 2022/23. It provides details of the sickness levels for the period of April 2021 to March 2022 and provides some further information on action taken in managing absence.

Recommendation to the Board

That the report be noted.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This report provides an update on Human Resources issues and the position on sickness for 2021/22.

3 Coronavirus (Covid-19) work

- 3.1 Further to the report submitted to this group in August 2021, throughout 2021/22, the HR team continued with work in relation to employee issues in response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

- 3.2 The HR team continued to undertake a considerable amount of work in response to the pandemic, including:

- Reviewing the Government guidance and providing regular updates to employees on the current guidance and advising them of any changes.
- Providing information to employees on Mental Health & Wellbeing support.
- Providing advice to employees and Managers on Self-isolation and Testing procedures.
- Keeping records on cases of Self-isolation and testing and reporting on figures regionally and internally to Management Team.
- Risk Assessments and health and safety advice.
- Revising the Flexible Working Policy to include hybrid working.

4 **Summary of Sickness Absence 2021/22 (April 2021 – March 2022)**

- 4.1 Absence Management is recorded for all employees and is then analysed into short- and long-term absence. Comparing the same time period in 2020/21 to 2021/22 there is an increase, 2.12 days in short term sickness absence per full time equivalent (FTE), and a decrease, 0.59 days in long term sickness. The position is summarised in the table below, with additional detail given at Appendix A.

Type	2020/21	2021/22
Short Term	2.97 days per FTE	5.09 days per FTE
Long Term	8.50 days per FTE	7.91 days per FTE
Total	11.47 days per FTE	13.00 days per FTE

It is important to note that the Council's sickness absence rate in 2020/21 was lower than in 2019/20, when it was 13.05 days per FTE. The increase in the sickness absence rate for 2021/22 to 13.00 days per FTE is not unexpected, given the re-opening of society during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Office for National Statistics report on sickness absence in the UK labour market 2021, states that "the sickness absence rate in the UK in 2021 rose to 2.2%, from a record low of 1.8% in 2020; this is the highest it has been since 2010".

- 4.2 The long-term sickness absence is being managed either by getting staff back to work or them exiting the organisation either on ill-health retirement, dismissal or by resignation. Those with significant long-term absence equates to 23 employees having lost a total of 1,661.28 days. 10 of these employees have successfully returned to work, 4 are still absent and 9 left the Council (3 redundancies, 3 resignations, 2 dismissals and 1 retirement).
- 4.3 Appendix B shows the reasons for the number of days lost per FTE. The main reasons for absence relate to Mental Ill Health, Muscular-Skeletal and Coronavirus.

5 **Recruitment, Retention and Selection**

- 5.1 There were a number of starters and leavers between April 2021 to March 2022. There were 58 new starters. There were 91 leavers, including 7 retirements, 1 ill health retirement, 1 dismissal due to ill health, 2 dismissals, 28 redundancies and 52 resignations. This equates to a labour turnover of 31.59% (20.48% voluntary leavers).
- 5.2 The Council has continued with the strategy of reviewing all posts that become vacant. Those posts that need to be filled are recruited to internally where possible. During the current year, 56 posts have been filled internally; this supports the Council's ability in succession planning.
- 5.3 The HR Manager attends a regional Heads of HR meeting and many Councils in the region are experiencing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff. The HR Manager will continue to work closely with the Regional Employers Organisation, West Midlands Employers, who are supporting Councils with a West Midlands approach to talent attraction and retention to meet the future needs of local government, addressing current and future skill gaps and raising the profile of local government and public sector jobs.

5.4 The HR team had vacancies during 2021/22. The Health & Safety Officer position was vacant for most of the year, however following an amendment to the permanent establishment to make it a full-time role, the Council was able to successfully appoint, and the officer started with the Council on 14th March 2022. In addition, an HR Officer left the Council in January 2022; a recruitment campaign has been undertaken but was not successful and the position is currently vacant.

6 Employee Relations

6.1 The HR team provides advice and support to managers on all HR issues. The HR Manager and the HR Officers provide support to managers and lead, where appropriate, on investigations, disciplinary, grievance, and capability relating to performance or attendance. There were 4 disciplinary investigations undertaken / commenced between April 2021 and March 2022.

6.2 The HR Manager and HR Officers also provide considerable support in the actions up to and including hearing and appeals (if required). Out of the 4 investigations, one employee resigned during the investigation/prior to hearing, two employees were dismissed, and one investigation is ongoing.

6.3 Service restructures require staff consultations which the HR Manager and the HR Officers undertake with the line managers. These require HR to provide support to both managers and staff, with the queries and information they require during the process or following implementation. During the early part of 2021/22 this involved considerable support following the decision to end the Borough Care Service. In addition, the HR team have provided support to managers on the required actions for the Admin Review and Polesworth Sports Centre restructures.

7 Pay & Benefits

7.1 The pay award for 2021/22 was agreed as 1.75% in February 2022. The Pay Policy statement has been updated for 2022/23 and will be published on the Council's website.

7.2 No pay award has yet been agreed for 1 April 2022 onwards. Negotiations will take place between the National Employers and the Unions during the year. Officers from the Council will attend the Pay Consultation events held by the Regional Employers Organisation, West Midlands Employers, to understand the potential impact and options around the pay claim(s) and to share views on the impact these may have on the Council to influence these national negotiations.

7.3 Gender pay reporting legislation requires employers with 250 or more employees to publish statutory calculations every year showing how large the pay gap is between their male and female employees. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, reporting was suspended entirely for the 2019/20 reporting year. The gender pay gap information for the reporting years which used a snapshot date of 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021 were submitted during 2021/22. The Council's report for the snapshot date as at 31 March 2021 is:

- The mean gender pay gap for the Council is 2%
- The median gender pay gap for the Council is - 10%

A positive pay gap indicates men are paid more than females and a negative pay gap indicates that females are paid more. Other public sector employers average a pay gap of 7.9% and all industries is 14.9% (Office for National Statistics 2021 provisional data). At 2%, the Council's mean gender pay gap is, therefore, significantly better than other organisations within the public sector and private sector.

8 Learning, Training and Development

- 8.1 Due to other work priorities relating to Covid-19, a formal corporate training plan for 2021/22 was not established. During the year, there were limited requests for training from Divisions, but when received, the HR team reviewed the requests and essential training needs were approved.

9 Safety Management

- 9.1 During 2021/22, the HR Manager provided health and safety advice and support during the pandemic, including work in making the Council buildings Covid secure, reminders on the Government's guidance on hand hygiene and social distancing and ensuring the Council's Covid-19 Risk Assessment was reviewed and updated as appropriate.
- 9.2 Managers undertake risk assessments, safe systems of work and safety audits in their work areas.

10 Policies Procedures and Processes

- 10.1 The HR work plan for 2021/22 included an updated timetable for policy review, however, progress has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and staffing vacancies in the team.

11 Areas to be taken forward in 2022/23

- 11.1 The areas to be taken forward in 2022/23 remain the same as detailed in the report submitted to this group in August 2021, including reviewing the Council's Occupational Health Provider, working toward foundation level of the Thrive at Work initiative and an updated timetable for policy review to ensure that progress is made in this area.
- 11.2 The recently appointed Health and Safety Officer will work with managers and Directors in all the service areas of the Council, to provide health and safety advice and support. Duties include a high-level audit of the Council's work generally and risk assessments in particular. In addition, there are a number of health and safety policies, that the Health and Safety Officer will review.

12 Report Implications

12.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

12.1.1 These will depend on whether additional resources are used to cover periods of absence. Most short-term absence is absorbed within sections. However, if sickness is long term, and the service could potentially fail as a result of staff shortages, then there would be additional costs to maintain services, either through buying in extra resources or acting up arrangements.

12.2 Human Resources Implications

12.2.1 As detailed in the report.

12.3 Equality Implications

12.3.1 Under the Equality Act there are specific responsibilities specified under the public sector equality duty to ensure that local authorities meet the general equality duty. In terms of Human Resources there are specific codes of practice for employment and for equal pay.

12.4 Links to Council's Priorities

12.4.1 Effective recruitment and management of the workforce contributes to the Council's priority of making the best use of our resources.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300)

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

ALL SICKNESS

	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22
Division	Average FTE per Division	Average FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	29.04	28.95	89.11	291.75	3.07	10.08
Corporate Services	22.48	19.76	17.00	79.71	0.76	4.03
Streetscape	73.15	71.37	1523.81	1608.15	20.83	22.53
Leisure & Comm Dev	47.99	44.32	762.98	868.11	15.90	19.59
Community Services	33.50	31.99	406.81	234.64	12.14	7.33
Finance,HR & Audit	15.89	15.33	28.00	123.38	1.76	8.05
Housing	78.12	69.58	692.08	524.90	8.86	7.54
Chief Exec	7.30	6.80	7.20	15.40	0.99	2.26
Total	307.47	288.09	3,526.99	3,746.05	11.47	13.00

SHORT TERM SICKNESS

	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22
Division	Average FTE per Division	Average FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	29.04	28.95	39.11	75.54	1.35	2.61
Corporate Services	22.48	19.76	17.00	46.96	0.76	2.38
Streetscape	73.15	71.37	418.08	619.23	5.72	8.68
Leisure & Comm Dev	47.99	44.32	162.74	308.19	3.39	6.95
Community Services	33.50	31.99	70.61	87.44	2.11	2.73
Finance,HR & Audit	15.89	15.33	28.00	11.38	1.76	0.74
Housing	78.12	69.58	169.27	302.27	2.17	4.34
Chief Exec	7.30	6.80	7.20	15.40	0.99	2.26
Total	307.47	288.09	912.01	1,466.41	2.97	5.09

LONG TERM SICKNESS

	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22
Division	Average FTE per Division	Average FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	29.04	28.95	50.00	216.22	1.72	7.47
Corporate Services	22.48	19.76	0.00	32.75	0.00	1.66
Streetscape	73.15	71.37	1,105.73	988.92	15.12	13.86
Leisure & Comm Dev	47.99	44.32	600.24	559.92	12.51	12.63
Community Services	33.50	31.99	336.20	147.20	10.04	4.60
Finance,HR & Audit	15.89	15.33	0.00	112.00	0.00	7.31
Housing	78.12	69.58	522.81	222.63	6.69	3.20
Chief Exec	7.30	6.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	307.47	288.09	2,614.98	2,279.64	8.50	7.91

Reasons for Sickness

APPENDIX B

	Accident at Work	Back/ Neck	Chest	Cold/ Flu/ Infections	ENT / Mouth	Endocrine	Geni-Urin	Heart	Mental III Health	Muscular/Skeletal	Neurological	Pregnancy	Skin Conditions	Stomach	Coronavirus	Total
NWBC	0.00	249.91	211.96	185.15	88.27	14.61	120.92	9.55	856.29	860.57	233.60	4.82	139.96	316.98	453.44	3,746.05

<u>Sickness Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
Accident at Work	Accident at Work (Accident Form must be completed)
Back / Neck	Back & Neck problems
Chest	Chest / Respiratory: to include Chest infections
Cold / Flu / infections	Cold / Flu symptoms / Infections (<u>not</u> chest)
ENT / Mouth	Ear / Eye / Nose / Mouth including dental and sinusitis
Endocrine	Thyroid / Diabetes and other Endocrine related conditions
Genito-Urinary	Genito-urinary: including menstrual conditions
Heart	Heart / Blood pressure & circulation
Mental III Health	Anxiety, Depression / Stress / Mental Fatigue
Muscular-Skeletal	Musculo-Skeletal Problems
Neurological	Neurological; including headaches and migraine
Pregnancy	Pregnancy related
Skin Conditions	Skin Related Conditions
Stomach	Stomach, Liver, Kidney & Digestion; to include gastro-enteritis
Coronavirus	Coronavirus symptoms - confirmed via testing / following vaccination