

Notice of meeting of Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- To:** Councillors Steward (Chair), Douglas, Firth, Funnell, Hodgson, McIlveen (Vice-Chair), Scott and Warters
- Date:** Thursday, 19 April 2012
- Time:** 5.00 pm
- Venue:** The Guildhall, York.

AGENDA

- 1. Declarations of Interest**
At this point Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on this agenda.
- 2. Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2012.
- 3. Public Participation**
At this point in the meeting, members of the public who have registered their wish to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Committee's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is **5pm on Wednesday 18th April 2012.**

**4. Sickness Absence Management Scrutiny (Pages 7 - 14)
Review - Interim Report.**

This report provides information on the work of the Sickness Absence Management Task Group to date, and based on their findings asks the Committee to agree to the Task Group being reformed in the next municipal year to complete their work on this review.

**5. Attendance of the Cabinet Member for
Corporate Services - End of Year Update.**

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services will attend the meeting to provide an end of year update following her attendance at a meeting of the Committee in June 2011 at which she outlined her priorities and challenges for 2011/12.

6. Draft Work Plan for 2012/13. (Pages 15 - 16)

Members are asked to consider a draft Work Plan for 2012/13 and to undertake a discussion to establish possible topics for scrutiny review for the forthcoming municipal year.

7. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972

Democracy Officer

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For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting whose contact details are given above.

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

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Further information about what's being discussed at this meeting

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The majority of councillors are not appointed to the Cabinet (39 out of 47). Any 3 non-Cabinet councillors can 'call-in' an item of business from a published Cabinet (or Cabinet Member Decision Session) agenda. The Cabinet will still discuss the 'called in' business on the published date and will set out its views for consideration by a specially convened Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC). That SMC meeting will then make its recommendations to the next scheduled Cabinet meeting in the following week, where a final decision on the 'called-in' business will be made.

Scrutiny Committees

The purpose of all scrutiny and ad-hoc scrutiny committees appointed by the Council is to:

- Monitor the performance and effectiveness of services;
- Review existing policies and assist in the development of new ones, as necessary; and
- Monitor best value continuous service improvement plans

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

MEETING	EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	28 FEBRUARY 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS STEWARD (CHAIR), DOUGLAS, FIRTH, FUNNELL, HODGSON, MCILVEEN (VICE-CHAIR), SCOTT AND WARTERS

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting, Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Hodgson declared a personal interest as a member of Unison, the Public and Commercial Services Union and as an ex-employee of the NHS Trust.

Councillor Firth declared a personal interest as part of the Civic Party elect for 2012/13.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 11th January 2012 be approved with the following amendment:

Minute Item 32 - be amended to acknowledge that the Chair had made a comment to the effect of that while he believed equality was important, he did not believe diversity was an important target for the Council.

Following a vote, the Committee agreed that this comment should be included in the minutes of the last meeting.

The Chair clarified his position and that he believed that diversity would be achieved as a result of the Council promoting/prioritising equality.

36. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

37. 2011-12 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITOR 3.

Members considered a report which provided a summary of the finance and performance progress for the third quarter monitor period of 2011-12.

Officers outlined the report in particular that York continues to perform well against the national picture in areas such as youth unemployment and crime levels.

Members queried the terminology used in the report, in particular the way which monetary figures are expressed as some Members felt it is unclear.

Members asked that for future reports, survival rate information for business start ups would be useful.

RESOLVED: (i) That Members noted the performance issues identified in the report.

REASON: So that corrective action can be taken.

RESOLVED: (ii) That Members noted the current projected pressures of £921k and note that strategies are being prepared to mitigate this position.

REASON: In order to ensure expenditure is kept within budget.

RESOLVED: (iii) That Members noted the use of £714k 2011/12 New Homes Bonus to support the revenue budget and delegate to the Director of CBSS authority to consider the final allocation as part of the outturn process.

REASON: In order to ensure expenditure is kept within budget.

38. PRESENTATION ON THE STAFF WELLBEING SURVEY RESULTS.

Members received a presentation on the recent staff wellbeing survey results.

Key highlights from the presentation were as follows:

- The survey was based upon the 6 Health & Safety Executive stress indicators.
- 2 indicators, role and demands had been identified as areas with need for improvement.
- Some bullying behaviour had been reported at the Council.
- As a result of the survey, Corporate and Directorate Action Plan had been developed and will be monitored by the Joint health and Safety Committee.
- A series of events and initiatives had been planned as a result of the survey and a Wellbeing Fair had recently taken place at the Guildhall and had been well attended by Council staff.

Members thanked Officers for the presentation and were pleased to note that action was being taken to improve areas of concern.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the Staff Wellbeing Survey Results.

REASON: To keep Members informed on

39. REPORT ON THE FUTURE USE & OPTIONS FOR THE GUILDHALL.

Members considered a report which provided them with an update on the current plans for the future use of the Guildhall in light of recent changes to the Administrative Accommodation Strategy and asked them if they wished to proceed with a proposed scrutiny review on the topic.

The Director of City Strategy was in attendance to present the report and advised that he had been tasked to undertake a piece of work on heritage analysis but also on the future use of the Guildhall. The remit did not include an option for the Council not to continue to own the building and wider consultation on any resulting options would be carried out.

Members commented that it is important to keep the building for the people of York and to allow it to continue to be used for public events.

The Committee decided not to proceed with a scrutiny review as the Director of City Strategy will be continuing his work on the future use of the Guildhall, but noted that they would have the opportunity to comment at the consultation stage, should they wish to.

RESOLVED: Members agreed not to proceed with a scrutiny review on the future use and options for the Guildhall.

REASON: Due to ongoing work being undertaken by the Director of City Strategy in response to the recent Cabinet decision.

40. WORK PLAN

Members received a copy of the committees work plan for the forthcoming year. Members were asked to consider any additions and/or amendments they wished to make to the work plan.

Members noted that an additional meeting had been scheduled for 19 April to consider the Innovation, Work force, Customer and Procurement strategies.

RESOLVED: That the work plan be noted.

REASON: In order to provide the committee with a programme of work for this municipal year.

Councillor Steward, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 7.10 pm].



Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee

19 April 2012

Sickness Absence Management Scrutiny Review – Interim Report

Summary

1. This report provides information on the work of the Sickness Absence Management Task Group to date, and based on their findings asks the Committee to agree to the Task Group being reformed in the next municipal year to complete their work on this review.

Background to Review

2. At a Scrutiny Event for Members in July 2011, the Committee agreed to carry out a scrutiny review on staff sickness, specifically to identify ways of reducing sickness absence levels across the organisation.
3. At a meeting in September 2011, Members received a briefing on City of York Council's (CYC) current sickness absence procedures and policies together with statistics and information on actions previously taken. The Committee agreed to set up a Task Group to gather information on the potential areas of focus for the review for the full committee's consideration.
4. The Task Group met twice to receive information on a range of associated issues including:
 - National survey of annual absence & labour turnover
 - Recent scrutiny reviews carried out by other Local Authorities
 - Comparative figures from other Local Authorities
 - Comparisons with other organisation types
 - CYC Attendance at Work Policy
 - HR Management Information Digests
 - Headlines from CYC Quarter 1 2011
 - Statistics on long and short term sickness & ill health retirements
 - iTrent – new CYC HR management system
 - Occupational Health – NHS Contract & Costs

- CYC sickness absence management training for managers
- Induction programme for new staff
- CYCs current procedures for recording and monitoring sickness absence

5. In January 2012, this Committee received a scoping report for the review detailing the Task Group's initial findings and as a result, agreed the following objectives for the review:

Objectives:

- To revise the Council's Absence Management Policy & procedures to ensure they take account of iTrent, are in line with best practice, and written in a more formal assertive language;
- To identify improvements in:
 - the provision of Management training
 - the induction programme for all new staff
- To explore ways of introducing a change in culture within the workforce moving away from a policy of 'managing absence', towards one of 'encouraging attendance'.

Review Findings to Date

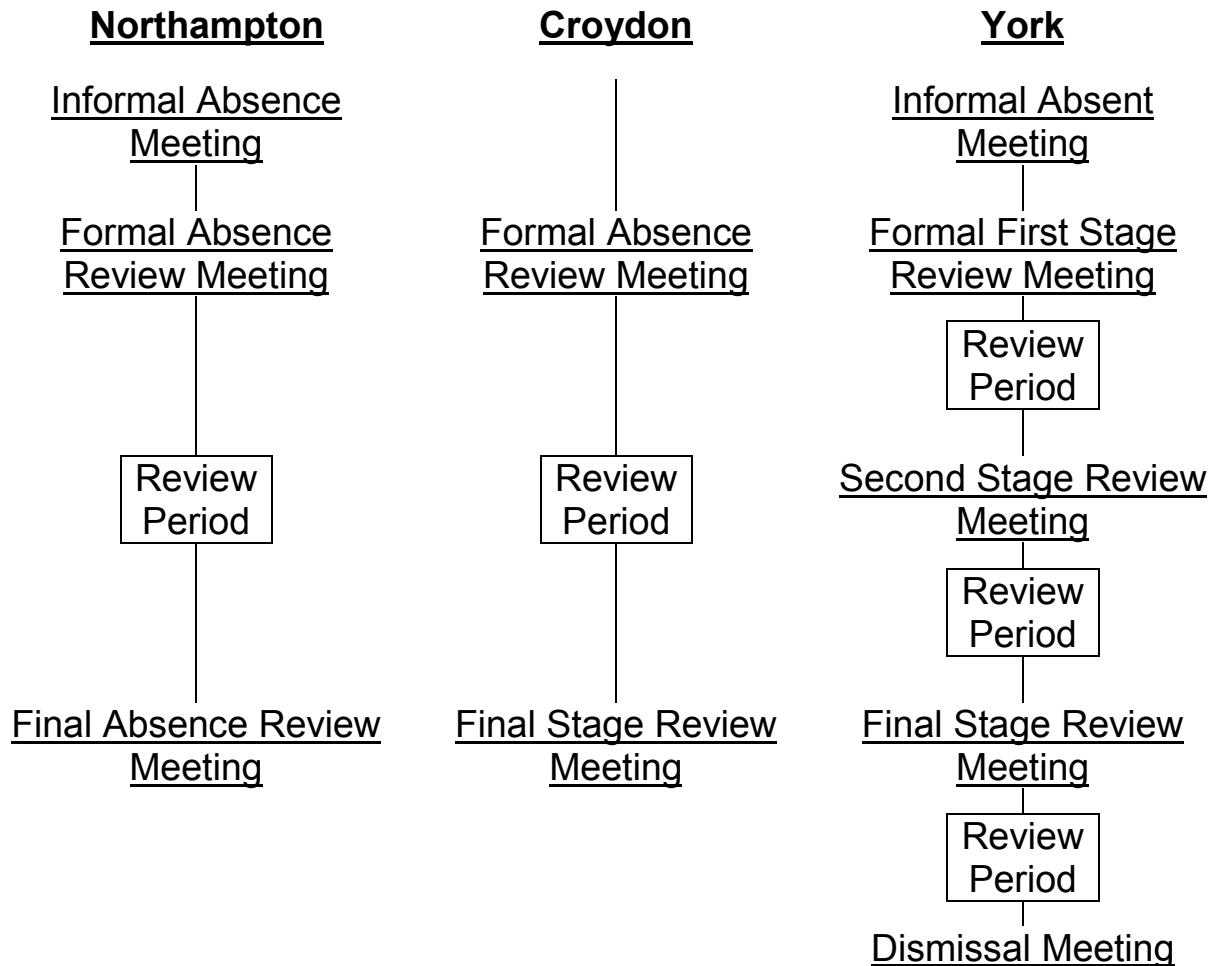
6. Objective 1 – To revise the Council's Absence Management Policy & procedures to ensure they take account of iTrent, are in line with best practice, and written in a more formal assertive language

As part of their initial investigation, the Task Group looked at a number of previously completed scrutiny reviews on managing sickness absence, carried out by other Local Authorities. They identified that a review completed by Northampton Borough Council in 2011 had been based on a similar remit as that set for this review and therefore agreed to look closely at their review findings. The changes they subsequently made to their policy were based on the best practice they identified as part of their review. Their final report also referred to Croydon Council's Sickness Management Policy which had been noted as another example of best practice, and which had resulted in a significant drop in staff absence since its introduction (see paragraph 9 below). The Task Group therefore agreed to use the policies from both those councils to carry out a comparison with CYC's policy.

7. In March 2012 the Task Group met to consider and compare the policies. Their initial finding was the need for more assertive, clear and formal language within CYCs policy. HR officers confirmed that the council's

current working practices and the policy would need to be revised to take account of the introduction of iTrent, and therefore the change in style suggested by the Task Group could be incorporated into the revised policy at that time.

8. In addition, the Task Group received detailed information on the trigger points and different stages within each Council's policy.



9. The Task Group learnt that following Croydon Council's scrutiny review of their processes which led them to introduce their current trigger points and formal stages shown above, they had managed to reduce their levels of sickness absence from 9.07 days per employee in 2005/6 to 5.9 in 2007/8. Members noted the difference in their trigger points and their limited number of stages, in comparison to those in place in both York and Northampton.

10. The Task Group also noted that:

- Croydon have no informal stage
- Only York includes a second formal stage review

- Only York allows for a further final review period following the final stage review, before considering dismissal

11. In order to support a revision of CYC's policy, the Task Group carried out a detailed comparison of the wording of the three Council's policies. Having previously agreed that the language used in City of York Council's (CYC) policy needed to be clearer and firmer, in line with the others looked at, the Task Group also noted that CYC's policy was lengthy, repetitive, in parts not in plain English, and trying to be all things to all parties. For example, the main body of the policy included links to letter templates for Manager's use, employee's guidance notes, flowcharts etc. The Task Group also found it difficult to find and access the policy on the Council intranet site.
12. The Task Group agreed that one document covering everything for all was not appropriate and that it would be better to have a short, clear and succinct policy for employees, together with a separate guide for managers to support them through the different stages of the review, which could include the letter templates etc and cross references to other appropriate policies.
13. As a result of their comparison work, the Task Group identified a series of amendments in regard to wording and format. They also agreed that there were too many formal stages within the CYC procedure compared to the two best practice policies looked at. They therefore agreed to recommend the removal of the formal second stage review, taking into account that the current policy allows a Line Manager to use their discretion to either progress to the next stage of the process or extended the review period as appropriate. The Task Group acknowledged that this still left a further additional stage in the CYC formal process that the other two policies did not include i.e. that of a further review period between a final stage review meeting and a dismissal meeting, but agreed that in their view this should remain in place.
14. Objective II - To identify improvements in the provision of Management training & the induction programme for all new staff
In the early stages of the review, the Task Group queried whether there was anything relating to managing staff absence in the Council's training programme for Managers and Team Leaders, and whether as a matter of course, the council's sickness absence process was included in the induction procedures for new officers.
15. They learnt that the Council used to run a corporate induction programme which covered health and safety but made no specific reference to the sickness absence procedures. They also identified that there was

currently no compulsory absence management training for managers. And, although there was a specific module on managing absence within the Effective Manager Programme, only 21 managers had participated since its re-launch in September 2010. However, at their meeting in February 2012 the Task Group was informed that the Corporate Management Team had recently agreed that a revamp of management training at the Council was required.

16. In regard to new staff induction, the Task Group learnt that the Council currently provides an induction checklist for managers to use and an employee evaluation form, both of which are made available to officers via the Council intranet. However, as those only cover absence reporting, Human Resources (HR) had already identified there was a need to provide new starters with information on the council's sickness absence procedure as a whole, particularly in terms of expectations of attendance and how the Council manages non attendance.
17. The Task Group endorsed HR's view, and agreed that in order to enable managers to properly monitor absence within their individual service areas and allow them to properly support their staff through periods of absence, all managers should be required to carry out relevant training. They agreed that suitable absence management training for managers and induction for new officers should be introduced to coincide with the introduction of the absence management module which is part of phase II of the introduction of iTrent, as it could incorporate the new working practices as appropriate. The Task Group have requested that HR draft some proposals for such training and induction for their consideration.
18. Objective III - To explore ways of introducing a change in culture within the workforce moving away from a policy of 'managing absence', towards one of 'encouraging attendance'
The Task Group have acknowledged that changing the culture of any organisation is difficult and takes time, and that there is no 'quick fix'. They believe their suggested amendments to the current CYC Attendance at Work Policy and the introduction of appropriate training and induction, are a good start to making a positive change within the organisation, particularly in conjunction with the introduction of iTrent . The Task Group would like this Committee to continue to closely monitor sickness absence levels following the completion of this review, and to revisit the question of how best to create a change in culture once the revised policy and change to working practices have had chance to embed throughout the organisation.

Progressing the Review

19. Taking into account all the Task Group findings to date, and the forthcoming introduction of the absence management module as part of Phase II of the introduction of iTrent, scheduled for later this year, HR Officers are currently drafting a revised version of CYC's Attendance at Work Policy for the Task Group's consideration. However, this work will not be completed before the end of this municipal year due to the ongoing work in HR to introduce iTrent.
20. The Task Group have agreed they would like to continue their work on this review in the new municipal year so that they may:
 - a) Consider the draft revisions to the policy - the Task Group recognise that any such revisions will require wider consultation with officers and the unions and would like to assist in facilitating some initial consultation where appropriate.
 - b) Consider and comment on draft proposals for any absence management related training and new staff induction. They would also welcome the opportunity to meet with a number of managers later in the year once the draft proposals are available, to facilitate some informal consultation ahead of them being formally considered.
21. At the end of the review, the Task Group would like to present a revised draft of the CYC Attendance at Work Policy which takes account of their review findings, for the full Committee's consideration. The Task Group recognise that once this Committee have had the opportunity to comment on it, HR will need to formally consult with the Unions and CMT as part of their normal HR practice in such cases.

Options

22. Members may choose to:
 - Progress this review in the new municipal year as outlined in paragraph 20 above or;
 - Agree that the review be concluded at this stage and recommend that HR:
 - i) carry out appropriate revisions to CYCs Attendance at Work Policy in line with the review findings to date
 - ii) carry out appropriate consultation on the revised policy and;
 - iii) introduce appropriate management training and new staff induction in line with the review findings to date

23. In the new municipal year 2012/13, this Overview & Scrutiny Committee is to be amalgamated with Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC). In February 2012, SMC received an update report on the work of all the standing scrutiny committees which suggested this review would not be completed in this municipal year and therefore was likely to be carried forward. SMC will be informed of the decision taken at this meeting on whether or not to continue with this review.

Implications

24. There are no known implications associated with the recommendation in this report. Implications associated with the introduction of a revised policy will be identified once the work to revise the policy has been completed.

Council Plan 2012-15

25. The Council Plan recognises that the Council's employees are the most important resource of the Council and without them it could not deliver its services and priorities. Ensuring staff receive the proper levels of support in times of illness etc is one way in which staff can be made to feel valued and engaged.

Risk Management

26. There are no known risks associated with the recommendation below.

Recommendation

27. Having considered the information contained within this report and provided at the meeting, Members are recommended to agree to the continuation of this Task Group review in the new municipal year, in order that the additional work identified within paragraph 20 above can be completed.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

Date

19 March 2012

Wards Affected:

All

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Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2011-12

Meeting Date	Work Programme
28 June 2011 @ 5pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to Committee Remit & Terms of Reference 2. Presentation by Assistant Directors on ongoing work within Resources Directorate & future planned work 3. Attendance of Executive Member for Corporate Services to discuss her priorities and challenges for this municipal year 4. Report on Draft Workplan for 2011-12 5. 2010-11 Year End Outturn Report
13 September 2011 @ 5pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Quarter Monitoring Report 2. Workplan Report (Scrutiny Officer) 3. Staff Sickness – Briefing Report (Chris Tissiman)
22 November 2011 @ 5pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Absence Management Review - Scoping Report 2. Monitoring Report on Implementation of recommendations arising from previously completed scrutiny reviews (Apprenticeships & Customer Complaints) 3. Second Quarter Monitoring Report 4. Workplan
11 January 2012 @ 5pm (Published 3/1)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budget Briefing Paper 2. Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Workforce Plan 3. Workplan
28 February 2012 @ 5pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Third Quarter Monitoring Report 2. Presentation on recent staff wellbeing survey results 3. Report on the Future Use & Options for the Guildhall 4. Workplan
19 April 2012 @ 5pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sickness Absence Management Task Group Review – Interim Update Report 2. Attendance of Cabinet Member for Corporate Services – End of Year Update 3. Draft Workplan for 2012/13 - Discussion re Possible Topics for Scrutiny Review in Coming Municipal Year

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