

SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE PANEL.

Minutes of a remote meeting
On 14 September 2021 at 10 a.m.

Present: Councillors Alec Clark (Chair), Laura Brennan-Whitefield, Andy Campbell, Douglas Campbell, Hugh Hunter, Derek McCabe and Bob Pollock.

Apology: Councillor Iain Campbell

Attending: D Hutchison, Depute Chief Executive and Director – People; M Newall, Assistant Director – People; C Caves, Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services; T Baulk, Head of Finance and ICT; W Carlaw, Service Lead – Democratic Governance; K Anderson, Service Lead – Policy Performance and Community Planning; G Farrell, Service Lead – Organisational Development and Customer Services; W Wesson, Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services; S Burdon, Co-ordinator – Public Affairs; J Wood, Senior Manager (Planning and Performance) HSCP and A Nelson, Co-ordinator – Democratic Support.

Apology: T Eltringham, Director - HSCP

Opening Remarks.

The Chair took the sederunt and confirmed that today's meeting was not open to the press and public, which was permissible under the COVID-19 legislation. He also confirmed to Members the procedures to conduct this meeting and that the meeting was being recorded for minuting purposes only.

1. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

The minutes of 17 August 2021 ([issued](#)) were submitted and approved.

3. Action Log and Work Programme.

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme ([issued](#)) for this Panel. The Assistant Director – People provided the Panel with a verbal update on the Action Log and Work Programme and confirmed that the information requested in relation to Freedom of Information Requests (FOI) and Exit Interviews would be circulated prior to the next of the Panel.

Decided: to note the current status of the Action Log and Work Programme.

4. Communication Strategy

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) dated 8 September 2021 by the Assistant Director – People informing the Panel on the progress made to deliver the Communications Strategy which was approved at the Leadership Panel on 9 September 2020.

The Service Lead – Organisational Development and Customer Services facilitated a presentation which illustrated the achievements made towards the objectives contained within the Communications Strategy.

Members thanked the Service Lead – Organisational Development and Customer Services for the informative presentation and the following questions were subsequently raised:

A Member asked if the Schools Media Programme had been rolled out to all schools within the Council area and the Service Lead – Organisational Development and Customer Services advised that the programme had been introduced for the first time and senior pupils from Belmont and Carrick Academies had expressed an interest in being involved, however it would be the intention to develop the programme year on year.

Members asked if social media comments were monitored and if members of the public were directed to a particular Service area to resolve their particular problem and the Service Lead – Organisational Development and Customer Services advised that it very much depended on the situation and the Communications Team had direct messaged individuals to direct them appropriately. She further advised that if general themes were developing, the Communications Team would raise the issue with the appropriate Service Lead. The Service Lead also advised that the Council did not solely rely on social media and used radio and local TV to communicate.

A Member enquired about the cost of the Sky TV advertising campaign and the Service Lead – Organisational Development and Customer Services intimated that the advert had been designed in-house to reduce costs and the advert would only be shown locally. The Co-ordinator – Public Affairs advised that the cost was in the region of £3,000 for a two-week run compared to a radio advertisement in the region on £2,500 for the same period of time. She further advised that she would advise Members, in advance, when the advert would be launched.

One Member asked how community events were promoted and publicised and the Service Lead – Organisational Development and Customer Services intimated that the Communications Team needed to be informed by either the CLT, Service Leads, or Managers and that the Communications Team would work with the Service to promote events being held within the Council area.

A Member asked if the Council had considered using the free press and enquired if there was an opportunity to use this medium and the Service Lead advised that this was something that the Council could consider for the future and further advised the Panel that the installation of outward facing TVs in the main towns so that short videos could be screened to promote specific messages/information was being considered.

Having scrutinised and commended the report, the Panel

Decided: to note the progress made to deliver the objectives of the Communications Strategy.

5. Council Plan 2018/22 (2021 Mid-Term Refresh) – April to June 2021

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) dated 8 September 2021 by the Assistant Director – Place providing the Panel with an opportunity to review the progress made towards achieving the strategic objectives contained within the Council Plan 2018-22 (Mid-Term Refresh).

The Assistant Director – People provided the Panel with an overview of the report highlighting the following actions: -

COPL 04.4C - which related to the targeting enforcement and support at non-compliant businesses to bring them into compliance and ensure that all businesses trade fairly, safely and equitably which was shown as 0% and advised that this was not reflective of the work currently done by staff within Environmental Health and would expect to see an improvement in terms of progress at the next update.

COPL 06.1F - which related to the awareness of the effects of car idling on air quality on climate change and was shown at 25% and intimated that this would continue to be an ongoing action but would expect further progress to be made at the next update.

Members raised questions in relation to:

COPL 01.3A – which related to strengthening tenants' voices through the implementation of the Council's Participation Strategy and a Member asked if the continuation of online meetings would increase participation and would the tenants who had no digital platform continue to be involved. The Assistant Director – People intimated that it was hopeful that the digital age would increase participation and that those who did not have access would still require to be involved. The Service Lead – Policy Performance and Community Planning intimated that events had been arranged to include those that could not join digitally i.e. the Tenants Choir, Gaming Evenings, and a meeting at Belleisle where issues were discussed in a more informal setting.

One Member asked if there were enough tenants involved and the Service Lead – Policy Performance and Community Planning advised that the Service would be expanding the options available to people to allow them to become involved.

COPL 03.1D and COPL 03.1E – which related to contract management within the HSCP and Children's Services and enquired why the figure, of 20%, was so low. The Assistant Director – People advised that he would provide the Panel with further information relating to this item in the form of a Briefing Note.

COPL 04.2B - a Member asked a general question relating to the distribution of staff and how this might assist town centres and asked for an update. The Depute Chief Executive and Director – People brought the Panel up-to-date on the work currently being undertaken relating to the Future Operating Model of the Council.

One Member asked for the details of the refurbishment work being done on the Freemans Hall, Prestwick. The Assistant Director – People agreed to provide the Panel and Prestwick Members with this information in the form of a Briefing Note.

COPL 06.1G – which related to the rationalisation and enhancement of assets on North Ayr, including working with local sporting and community organisations to develop the Craigie Campus site as a multi-centre of excellence, a Member enquired as to the feasibility of a completion date of July 2022. The Assistant Director – People advised that he would seek further information and clarity on the completion date.

Having scrutinised the report and associated Appendix

The Panel

Decided: to note the progress made as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

6. Employee Absence 2020/21

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) dated 8 September 2021 by the Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services providing information and analysis of sickness absence across Council services for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services provided the Panel with a detailed overview of the report and Members raised the following questions:

One Member sought clarify on the figure (7624) in Appendix 1 – Days Lost Per Employee – Community Health and Care Services and asked if this figure included Covid related absences. The Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services advised that the figure related to non Covid absences. The Service Lead advised that the figure was high due to the nature of the work undertaken and was predominately Musculoskeletal however it had been noted that the number of absences relating to psychological reasons had increased and HR, Payroll and Employee Services were supporting the Service in looking at different interventions in conjunction with Occupational Health.

One Member asked if there was a Strategy for Long Covid and the Head of HR Legal and Regulatory Services intimated that there was not a strategy currently but would be considered when information was available relating to the specifics of the illness.

With reference to the question raised regarding Neighbourhood Services – Days Lost per Employee at 17.11 days, the Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services agreed to provide a further breakdown in the form of a Briefing Note relating to this. The Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services also intimated that the Service would engage with the HSCP to ascertain what additional steps could be introduced to reduce their figure. The Depute Chief Executive and Director – People pointed out that in Thriving Communities and Internal Audit, which were small teams, one or two members of staff being off on long term sickness absence would inflate this figure.

One Member asked for further detail on the variance in the figures relating to Monitoring Absence 4.2.2 (ii) of the report particularly in relation to the number of staff dismissed from 2014/15 until 2020/21 and the Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Service agreed to provide further information relating to this in the form of a Briefing Note.

The Panel discussed the direct costs involved with staff absences and one Member asked about the cost of back filling posts and could these be reported. The Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services advised that current systems did not allow for this information to be collated. The Head of Legal, HR and Employee Services agreed to note the comments made, discuss with the Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services and the wider CLT and update the Panel thereafter.

One Member raised concern about the number of psychological absences and asked if a breakdown could be provided so that specific consistent issues could be addressed. Another Member intimated that it would be beneficial if the work-related reasons for psychological absences could be further broken down i.e. overwork, lack of staff.

The Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Service would liaise with the Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services and provide further information on this in the form of a Briefing Note.

In terms of how the Council managed musculoskeletal absences, the Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services informed the Panel that each Service area would have Risk Assessments in place for each role and measures in place, in consultation with OH, to minimise symptoms.

Taking account of the age profile of employees the Service Lead further advised that discussions were ongoing with the HSCP and CLD, Employability and Skills on how the Council could attract modern apprentices and young people into the workforce by liaising with schools and colleges to promote a career in the Council, particularly within HSCP.

One Member enquired if any analysis had been undertaken on the impact that working from home has had on staff, particularly in relation to their mental health or, had working from home had a positive impact by creating a better home life balance. The Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services assured the Panel that for staff who had experienced difficulties in working from home, measures had been put in place to minimise these.

A Member asked if the Service had enough resources and the Head of Legal HR and Regulatory Services advised that additional resource in terms of HR and Payroll staff was being requested in light of the introduction of the new Oracle system, additional Covid reporting, recruitment and additional projects that were coming online.

The Service Lead – HR, Payroll and Employee Services intimated that the workforce planning within the HSCP, in terms of their annual absence plan, agreed to consider temporary staffing and agreed to provide the Panel with further information in relation to this in the form of a Briefing Note.

The Panel having scrutinised the report

Decided: to note the contents of the report within the context of the Local Government Benchmarking Information previously reported.

7. Participatory Budgeting Activity in 2021/21

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 8 September 2021 by the Assistant Director – People advising the Panel of the Participatory Budgeting (PB) Activity undertaken by Council Services in financial year 2020/21.

The Assistant Director – People provided a verbal update and advised that PB was in its infancy within the Council and was a long-term strategy that required to be developed to ensure that all Service areas were aware of their responsibilities in relation to PB.

Members intimated that communication and community engagement were key to PB being successful and a process would be required to be developed to ensure greater community engagement.

The Panel having scrutinised the report

Decided: to note the PB activity detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and noted the value of budgetary spend influenced through the PB process.

The meeting ended at 11:47am