

**COMMUNITY, CUSTOMER AND ORGANISATIONAL SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 22nd September, 2020

Present:-

Councillor P Innes (Chair)

Councillors Borrell
 Blakemore
 L Collins

Councillors Dyke
 Fordham
 Kellman

Councillor J Innes, Cabinet Member for Business Transformation &
Customers +

Councillor Mannion-Brunt, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing +
Councillor Sarvent, Cabinet Member for Town Centres & Visitor
Economy +

Ade McCormick, Executive Director +
Kate Harley, Human Resources Manager +
Brian Offiler, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

+ Attended for Minute No. 53

**51 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.**

No declarations of interest were received.

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

**53 CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND
CUSTOMERS - ALLOCATION OF STAFFING RESOURCE DURING
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Ade McCormick, Executive Director, submitted a report which gave an overview of how the Council workforce had adapted in order to initially respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and then to support the Council's recovery plans.

The report outlined the range of revised working methods which had been adopted in the various service areas and identified some of the lessons learned and potential options for future working arrangements. Common themes emerging from these included:

- Effective use of information technology to enable and support home and agile working;
- Development of virtual or online options for service delivery;
- The cooperation of trade unions and willingness of staff to embrace change and be prepared to go the 'extra mile';
- Development of more generic skills and cross discipline working for staff to provide increased opportunities and resilience.

It was recognised that these lessons and themes would support the planning which was currently being undertaken for dealing with the future uncertainty that the Covid-19 pandemic presented. It was noted that the Council's Business Continuity Plan would need to be reviewed in the context of the experience of the pandemic and that this was scheduled to be considered at the meeting of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum in November.

The presentation submitted by the Executive Director also provided detailed monthly data on the numbers and proportions of staff in the various service areas who had been working from home, redeployed or on furlough during the pandemic. The total number of staff on furlough had reduced from 228 in April to 41 (including some on flexible furlough) in September as most services had gradually resumed operation. Members requested information on the level of funding received from central government in respect of staff on furlough, and it was agreed to circulate this to the members of the Committee outside the meeting.

Arising from Members' questions and discussion, the following points were raised:

- Some non-essential work had been delayed as a result of having to respond to the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, including development of the Asset Management Strategy, the Investors in people assessment, follow up activity to the 'Beat the Street' programme and some property repairs and alterations due to difficulties in obtaining supplies, although some of these backlogs were now being cleared;

- The positive impact from the innovative use of social media and virtual communication for services such as the museum whilst it had not been able to open for visits in person;
- Support had been provided to staff working at home, through checklists to assess safe working arrangements, provision of equipment where required, updating of the Agile Working Policy and a recognition that staff may need to work flexibly to fit around domestic requirements, especially home schooling;
- Risk assessments for working in Council premises had been completed to enable staff to physically come to work where home working was not feasible (subject to the limits of any wider restrictions);
- Support was available for staff through the Employee Assistance Programme – a 24/7 telephone service – and the rolling out of the Mental Health 1st Aider programme, with more staff being trained as Mental Health 1st Aiders.

Members expressed their appreciation of the flexibility and commitment demonstrated by staff in adapting to new ways of working, and the Cabinet Members welcomed the views of Scrutiny Members on the continuing need to adapt in order to provide services safely.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members for Business Transformation and Customers, for Health and Wellbeing and for Town Centres and Visitor Economy, the Executive Director and the Human Resources Manager for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the response of the Council workforce in adapting to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and to support the recovery and the lessons learned for future working be endorsed and supported.