

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **26<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

### Present:

Cllr. Aaby (Chairman);  
Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Apps, Bartlett, Bennett, Feacey, Galpin, Hodgkinson, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Robey

### Apologies:

Cllr. Yeo

Cllr. Shorter (received after the meeting)

### Also Present:

Cllr. Taylor

Head of Personnel and Development, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

## 60 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 61 Sickness Absence

The Head of Personnel and Development introduced the report. She explained that there had been an error in the figures contained within paragraph 18 of the report, and tabled a paper containing the correct figures.

In addition to some comparison data, the report provided an overall picture of sickness absence at the Authority for the previous year. The average number of days per full time employee had reduced to 5 days which was in line with the national trend of reducing sickness absence rates. The Head of Personnel and Development highlighted the key points contained within the report before the Chairman invited Members to debate the item.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:

- It was accepted that managing short term absence was still very much based on trust and respect. Whilst there potentially could be individuals who would take advantage, there was no evidence to support this and managers and the

Human Resources team routinely looked for patterns in absence. Few members of staff were off for more than 1 or 2 days, and as the report highlighted, this too was on the decline.

- The 7 day self certification rules were based on statutory sick pay legislation. With regard to the suggestion of reducing this to 3 days, it was unclear as to what this would achieve as there was no evidence of a pattern of absence amongst staff. Insisting on Doctor's certificates for less than 7 days would incur a cost from GP's, for which the Authority would be responsible. Members debated this at length. Some Members felt that it could send a negative message to staff if the self certification rules were altered without justification. The process of change would involve costly consultation and there was little financial gain to be achieved.
- A Member in favour of this change suggested that there was a cost to the Authority incurred when members of staff were off between 3 and 7 days. The Authority was very efficient at covering for short term sickness absence without incurring any cost to the Authority. It was the covering of long term sickness that was a bigger cost to the Council. A 3 day self certification arrangement would mean more work for staff, managers and doctors.
- There was a suggestion that a further report come back to Committee detailing the implication of reducing self-certification to 3 days. This motion was not supported.
- Members agreed that it would be useful to have an idea of the cost of absence to the Authority in terms of temporary cover and overtime. The Head of Personnel and Development agreed to circulate these figures.
- The Authority should be congratulated on the reduction in sickness absence that had been achieved and the Committee wished the report to be presented to Cabinet so that they too could consider this achievement.

**Resolved:**

**That the Sickness and Absence report come back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in one year and that it contain the costs of covering the sickness absence.**

## **62 Future Reviews and Report Tracker**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer introduced the report which suggested 3 further items to be included in the tracker. Members agreed that these should be added. It was also suggested that it was preferable to have more items on the agenda. The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that the aim was to have more on the agenda but it was not always possible due to the time demands on those needing to prepare reports and the availability of supporting documentation.

In view of their being no Cabinet meeting in August and the likelihood of Members and Officers taking holiday, it was suggested that the August meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be cancelled.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- (i) That the items Apprentices, Listed Buildings in the Borough; and Sports and Leisure, be added to the tracker.**
  - (ii) That subject to the comments made being noted, the Future Reviews and Report Tracker be noted.**
  - (iii) That the August meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be cancelled.**
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HC

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Hayley Curd:  
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