CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Staffing Committee

Date of Meeting: 27th April 2017

Report: Head of Strategic Human Resources

Subject/Title: Attendance Management Project

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Findlow

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 Cheshire East Council is committed to promoting staff health and wellbeing. Effective management of attendance is essential to ensure that staff are supported to meet future challenges and deliver high quality services to our residents, this remains at the heart of our Council's success.

1.2 A cross party working group was established in March 2016 to ensure that attendance management policy, procedures and practice are managed effectively to support staff and meet the business needs of Cheshire East Council. This report provides the outcome of this work and seeks Staffing Committee's endorsement.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That Staffing Committee note the outcome of the Attendance Management Project and the closure of the working group.

3.0 Background

3.1 As part of Staffing Committee's remit and following discussions with the Head of Strategic HR, it was agreed to establish a working group, whose purpose would be to provide assurance that the wellbeing of Staff and Members of Cheshire East Council was aligned to best practice and our organisational values.

3.3 It was proposed that the working group be established to identify and address key issues in respect of attendance management and inform future HR policy which impacts upon attendance ensuring a cohesive and focussed approach that meets individual and business needs. The membership would consist of a four Elected Members, the Head of Strategic HR and the HR Business Partner.

4.0   The Attendance Working Group

4.1   The inaugural meeting of the working group took place on 16th March 2016 to agree the terms of reference and to scope the work programme (attached at Appendix 1).   The working group also received a presentation on sickness absence to inform future action required and to support the development of a programme of work for the working group.

4.2   Five further meetings took place between 29th April 2016 and 6th February 2017 to seek Member feedback and receive progress updates on the programme which also included a presentation from the Internal Audit Team on the review of attendance management procedures.

4.3   Quarterly updates against progress have subsequently been provided to Staffing Committee.

5.0   Methodology

5.1   The five stages of the review were as follows: -

- A detailed analysis of attendance management to identify key issues;
- Development of a programme of work;
- Audit of all existing HR procedures which impact upon attendance management;
- Quick wins identified and implemented; and
- Views sought of Elected Members through the Working Group.

5.2   Scope of policies and procedures to inform working group: -

- Attendance Management Policy
- Sickness Scheme & Entitlements
- Stress Management
- Work Life Balance

6.0   Outcomes

All objectives within the Terms of Reference were addressed and outcomes are detailed below.

6.1   To establish present position in respect of attendance management in order to identify and address key issues in respect of attendance management through a time scaled Programme of Work.

An assessment of attendance management across the Council was conducted and presented to the working group which included details of sickness rates, short and long term absence; trends and reasons for absence, current reporting arrangements and Occupational Health support.

A detailed programme of work was developed to ensure that all key elements of attendance management were progressed including; governance arrangements, monitoring and compliance, target setting, attendance management roles and responsibilities, sickness absence reporting, review of policy and procedure and Occupational Health provision. All the elements have been progressed, with appropriate carry forwards into 2017/18 as mentioned in the report.

6.2 **To audit and review all existing HR policies which impact upon attendance to ensure they meet organisational need.**

The Corporate Audit Team was commissioned to undertake a comprehensive audit of the reporting, recording and management of sickness across the Council. Findings from the audit were reported to the working group and an action plan has been agreed to progress recommendations. Progress against the action plan will be reported to Staffing Committee during 2017/2018.

6.3 **To ensure all agreed HR policies are updated in line with legislative changes.**

HR policies and procedures have been reviewed to ensure they are updated in line with legislative requirements. Further review is currently being undertaken following input from the working group to streamline to attendance management procedures, review sickness absence triggers and staff / line manager responsibilities.

6.4 **To promote the Council's responsibilities to ensure all staff and line managers are aware of their responsibilities in respect of attendance management.**

Further work to promote the individual and line manager responsibilities under the attendance management policy procedures will be communicated following policy revision.

6.5 **To identify best practice from other organisations.**

Benchmarking has been undertaken to inform future policy development. The working group confirmed that Cheshire East Council adheres to ACAS and CIPD good practice and follows similar procedures to other Local Authorities. Further work will take place during 2017/2018 which includes visits to private sector organisations to identify further good practice.

6.6 **To develop future governance and reporting requirements.**

The working group has agreed a suite of sickness absence reports and an HR dashboard which have been introduced across the Council to enable monthly scrutiny and review of attendance. Sickness absence

is a standing agenda item at Directorate meetings and championed at the most senior level by the Executive Leadership Team.

It was agreed by the working group that a robust sickness absence target should be introduced and that the target is reviewed annually by the Chief Executive and included within annual performance review objectives.

Essential target setting is in progress for the current financial year, to finalise a meaningful and robust percentage to be tracked on a regular basis; this involves Leader, all Portfolio Holders, the Acting Chief Executive and the Corporate Leadership Board.

7.0 Next Steps

7.1 Additional attendance management initiatives will be tracked and reported through the People Plan 2017/2018. These will include identifying further good practice from private sector organisations, exploring the feasibility of introducing attendance criteria for selection processes, finalising and annual review of the sickness absence target and the introduction of a medical intervention policy to support long term sickness absence cases.

7.2 The attendance management policy and procedures will be updated by July 2017. Further work to promote the individual and line manager responsibilities under the attendance management policy procedures will be communicated following policy revision. Appropriate training and development will be made available for managers to reinforce attendance management.

7.3 Quarterly report on attendance management will be reported to Staffing Committee.

8. Conclusion

8.1 That the work of the Staffing Committee Working Group provides reassurance that sickness absence is managed effectively and continually reviewed to ensure the Council maintains a proactive approach to attendance management. Future performance and introduction of additional initiatives will be reported to Staffing Committee.

9.0 Wards Affected

9.1 Not applicable.

10.0 Local Ward Members

10.1 Not applicable.

11.0 Policy Implications

11.1 Policy changes highlighted through this review will be taken through the appropriate approval route for formal approval by the Portfolio Holder.

12.0 Implications for Rural Communities

12.1 Not applicable.

13.0 Financial Implications

13.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Further reductions in sickness absence would realise non-cashable savings and increase productivity across the workforce.

14.0 Legal Implications

14.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

15.0 Risk Management

15.1 Failure to adequately address attendance management would impact upon the reputation of Cheshire East Council and result in significant resource implications.

16.0 Access to Information

16.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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Terms of Reference – Attendance Working Group

1. Purpose of Joint Member/Officers Working Group

To ensure that attendance management policy, procedures and practice are managed effectively to support staff and meet the business needs of Cheshire East Council.

2. Membership

- Councillor P Findlow
- Councillor B Moran
- Councillor J Jackson
- Councillor D Marren
- Sara Barker
- Karen Begley

3. Objectives

i.   To identify and address key issues in respect of attendance management through a time scaled Programme of Work.

ii. To establish present position in respect of attendance management.

iii. To identify measures to improve sickness absence.

iv. To audit and review all existing HR policies which impact upon attendance to ensure they meet organisational need.

v.   To ensure all agreed HR policies are updated in line with legislative changes.

vi. To promote the Council's responsibilities to ensure all staff and line managers are aware of their responsibilities in respect of attendance management.

vii. To identify best practice from other organisations.

viii. To develop future governance and reporting requirements.

ix. To make recommendations to Staffing Committee.

4. Scope Policy/procedure documents to be considered

- Attendance Management Policy
- Sickness Scheme & Entitlements
- Stress Management

- Work Life Balance

5. Resources and financial implications

CEC Officers/Members
Other than staffing costs no other financial implications are highlighted at this stage.

6. Governance arrangements

Frequency of meetings yet to be determined.

7. Risks/Issues/Dependencies/Assumptions

Failure to address adequately will impact upon the reputation of Cheshire East Council and result in significant resource implications.

Timescales

Yet to be determined.

Methodology for review (Independent reviewer)

Agree Programme of Work to review Attendance Management.