

## SCRUTINY BOARD (CENTRAL AND CORPORATE)

MONDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER, 2008

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Dobson in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, J Bale, S Bentley,  
P Davey, J Dowson, P Ewens, M Hamilton,  
V Kendall, A Lowe, B Selby and  
P Wadsworth

Apologies Councillor B Chastney

### 38 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Chastney.

### 39 Minutes - 6th October 2008

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2008, be confirmed as a correct record.

### 40 Scrutiny Inquiry - Absence Management - Session 2

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which updated the Board on the Sickness Absence Management Inquiry. Appended to the report was a summary of an Absence and Labour Turnover survey carried out by the Confederation of British Industry. It was also reported that a major private company had been approached to contribute to the Board's Inquiry.

The Chair welcomed Rachel Allsop, Director of Human Resources, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) to the meeting.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Further to comments regarding the upset and anxiety caused to Leeds City Council staff due to the pay and grading review, it was reported that LTHT had gone through a similar process with the introduction of a national pay scheme and local evaluation. The impact of this on sickness and absence had not been measured at LTHT.
- LTHT focussed on investing in Managers to deal with attendance management issues and how to incorporate this into routine performance management.
- Stress related illness – it was reported that the LTHT had participated in a Health And Safety Executive project that assessed stress standards. Absence due to stress was closely monitored both at individual and team level.

- LTHT had seen a 1% drop in sickness absence.
- Staff workloads and the impact on sickness were monitored through various methods including staff surveys.
- Health manuals for staff had been developed and health promotion initiatives such as issuing staff with pedometers had been used.
- Staff who worked in areas considered to be high stress such as Intensive Care and Accident and Emergency Units. It was reported that these areas did not have higher levels of sickness and that critical incident training was available for staff.
- Staff cover and use of agency and pool staff.
- Managing attendance for staff with long term and permanent illnesses and the involvement of occupational health.
- Occupational health referral and capability procedures.
- Human resources performed an advisory role in relation to attendance management with managers performing immediate duties.
- Identification of work areas where staff could face aggressive or violent behaviour.
- The need for staff with viral infections to be absent, particularly where working with people suffering from other illnesses.

The Chair introduced the following trade union representatives to the meeting:

- Betsy Saidani – UNISON
- Brian Mulvey – UNISON
- Dick Banks – UNITE
- Michelle Robb – GMB
- Steve Terrington – GMB

In response to Members questions and comments, the following issues were discussed:

- Further to a question of how the Unions dealt with malingerers, it was reported that in the first instance, that all employees who had reported sick followed the same procedures. Continual monitoring and occupational health referrals identified genuine cases although it was accepted that on occasions it was difficult to identify cases where staff used the sickness procedures for their own benefit. The Unions aimed to support staff to enable their attendance at work.
- It was reported that the Unions did have a constructive working relationship with Human Resources and sickness was one of the major issues. There had been instances of poor management when procedures had not been followed correctly.
- It was felt that improvements could be made with regards to staff with disabilities and that the Council should sign up for the Positive About Disabled People two ticks symbol. Some employees with disabilities had constantly been caught up in sickness monitoring

procedures and it was felt that this could be avoided in certain circumstances.

- The provision of reasonable adjustments to allow those with disabilities to continue working.
- Procedures to get staff who had been absent to return to work, possibly on light duties and the role of managers in achieving this.
- The proposed closure of Leodis. Leodis supported employers and employees to work together and carried out work place assessments for those with medical or other support needs. Members requested further information on the role of Leodis, how their services were used by Leeds City Council, the contribution to attendance at work and whether it was a service that Leeds City Council could invest in.

**RESOLVED** – That the report and discussion be noted.

#### **41 Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined the Board's current work programme. Also appended to the report was a copy of the Forward Plan and the minutes of the Executive Board held on 8 October 2008.

**RESOLVED** –

- (1) That the Executive Board minutes and Forward Plan be noted.
- (2) That the Board's work programme be agreed.

#### **42 Dates and Times of Future Meetings**

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008

**\*Tuesday** 6<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2009

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009

\* All at 10 am (Pre- Meetings at 9.30am) **except** re-arranged meeting on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January, which will commence at 2.00 pm (Pre-Meeting 1.30 pm).