

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

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 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 usefulness of collaborative working with LCC
- The use of targeted training for managers

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:

- The concept that all sick leave was in the first case genuine and all cases should follow the same procedures, however it was acknowledged that on occasions it was possible to identify cases where staff used the sickness procedures for their own benefit. The Unions did not support such behaviour and 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. The issue of consistent and appropriate use of procedures was discussed.
- The Union's view 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. It was the view of the Unions that some employees with disabilities were 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 1st December 2008

***Tuesday** 6th January 2009

Monday 2nd February 2009

Monday 2nd March 2009

Monday 6th April 2009

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