

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Employment & Appeals Committee      **DATE:** 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012

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**WARD(S):** All

### **WELLBEING STRATGY**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

This report discusses the work currently underway to improve overall staff wellbeing and reduce employee absenteeism.

#### **2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to Resolve that the contents of the report be noted.

#### **3 Supporting Information**

- 3.1 The Council is committed to providing a working environment and management practices that promote good health and wellbeing of all its employees thus reducing the occurrence of absence and related costs.
- 3.2 Good health and wellbeing, visible through low levels of sickness, can help, not only to improve an individual's quality of life, but can also play a pivotal role in increasing employees' levels of motivation and engagement.
- 3.3 It is inevitable that people become ill and will sometimes need to take time away from work, but the Council rightly expects a high level of attendance from its employees and needs to be in a position to support that. High sickness absence levels can lead to reductions in service delivery and effectiveness, increased costs and undue pressure on colleagues, all of which are untenable in the current climate. The high sickness absence levels across the organisation have been a cause for concern for some time, with a high number of days taken off sick per employee each year.
- 3.4 The Council had identified a need to improve the overall level of wellbeing amongst its employees. In order to formulate strategies that address employee wellbeing and non-attendance, it is important to understand some of the underlying factors. Causes of absence can be viewed as four distinct areas outlined in the table below ;

<p><b>Health and lifestyle factors</b></p> <p>Genuine illness/poor health Smoking Excessive use of alcohol Lack of exercise Body weight</p>	<p><b>Workplace factors</b></p> <p>Working patterns Health and safety concerns Travel times Excessive hours Safe place of work</p>
<p><b>Attitudinal and stress factors</b></p> <p>Job satisfaction Career satisfaction Intention to leave Organisational commitment Stress Absence 'culture'</p>	<p><b>Domestic and relationship factors</b></p> <p>Number of children under 16 Lack of flexible working arrangements Caring responsibilities Financial worries</p>

3.5 Specific action to address some of these will be incorporated into the Councils overall Wellbeing Strategy to include

- Improve timeliness of Occupational Health referral to ensure employees are supported at early stages of ill health.
- Increase access to exercise and fitness opportunities.
- Increase take up of smoking cessation programme by publicising service.
- Review council sickness absence policy to ensure it reflects contemporary practice
- Work with council catering contractor to improve awareness and access to healthy eating choices.

#### **4. Managing the Implementation of the Wellbeing Strategy**

4.1 A project team drawn from across the council and its staff side representatives has already met and commenced work upon the initiatives, the terms of reference for this group are attached as an appendix to this report.

## 5. Role of Employment & Appeals Committee

- 5.1 Members of the Employment & Appeals Committee have an important role in ensuring the Strategy is successful. Members have a number of methods to monitor progress and provide challenge. Management information is provided on the number of sickness days in a quarter profiled by directorate, salary and absence type. Members will also receive updates on the specific activity required to implement the strategy, including amendments and improvements to Council Policy which they will need to agree.
- 5.2 Timetable of Significant actions in line with Employment & Appeals Committee dates

20 <sup>th</sup> September 2012 Meeting	Update on increase in staff lifestyle and exercise activity.  Review of new Occupational Health contract implementation.  Proposed Changes to Sickness Absence Policy, following consultation with trade union.
24 <sup>th</sup> January 2013 Meeting	Staff Lifestyle screening report  Smoking Cessation Update and Council Smoking Policy
April 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2013 Meeting	Review of Sickness Absence Policy Implementation

## Appendix 1: Wellbeing Project Group

**Authors:** Harminder Bassi / Sarah Cargin

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012

### Version 1

#### Purpose

This document describes the terms of reference, membership and methods of communication for the Slough Borough Council Wellbeing Project Group.

#### Background

There is clear evidence to demonstrate that improved physical and mental health and wellbeing leads to decreased absenteeism and encourages staff to attend work, in addition to improve morale, productivity and quality of life.

Slough Borough Council is keen to deliver a holistic approach to health and wellbeing and therefore the establishment of the Wellbeing Project Group is critical to assist in providing an environment where employees want to come to work and improve their physical and work life balance.

#### Terms of Reference

1. To agree new approaches for supporting staff that ensure high levels of overall employee wellbeing
2. To develop new approaches to supporting attendance management
3. To ensure managers are properly trained and equipped to support staff
4. To analyse levels of wellbeing across the council to identify trends or areas of particular need
5. To make proposals for other measures to incentivise attendance

#### Membership

Sarah Cargin – HR Project Co-ordinator	Daryl Reading – Wellbeing Representative
Harminder Bassi – HR Project Co-ordinator	Sue Binfield – Communications
Kevin Gordon – Assistant Director (Professional Services)	Robin Pringle – Health and Safety Representative
Julie Bell – HR Business Partner	David Warren – UNISON
Alison Hibbert – Customer and Communities Rep	Peter Thomas – UNITE
Dympna Sanders – Customer and Communities Rep	Carolyn Cotterall - GMB
Sanjay Dhuna – Customer and Communities Rep	
Wesley McCarthy – Customer and Communities Rep	
Alex Deans – Resources & Regeneration Rep	
Mandeep Bhogul – Housing Representative	
Donna Briggs – Education and Children Services	

Karen Ehret – Education and Children Services	
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**Frequency of Meetings**

It is expected the Wellbeing Project Group will meet monthly for the first 3 - 6 months of the project. Subsequently, the regularity of the meetings will be reviewed.

**Methods of Communication**

In addition to regular group meetings, the Assistant Director of Professional Services will provide updates to Corporate and Directorate meetings and Member Meeting (e.g. Employment & Appeals Committee, Corporate Consultative Forum and Departmental Consultative Forums).

The nominated managers will also keep their teams up to date on a regular basis of any progress.

The Corporate Communications Team will ensure that a Communication Strategy is agreed to ensure that any activities agreed by the Project Group are advertised promptly and that appropriate messages are being sent to all staff. In addition the Communications Team will establish and maintain any links onto the SBC Insite, which will incorporate all appropriate materials.

Project Group minutes and other related documentation will be sent to all members of the project group for reference.

Theme Objectives	Examples of the Actions
<p>Reduce council sickness rate to below 10 days a year.</p> <p>Improve overall health and wellbeing of council employees</p>	<p>Improve timeliness of Occupational Health referral to ensure employees are supported at early stages of ill health.</p> <p>Increase access to exercise and fitness opportunities.</p> <p>Increase take up of smoking cessation programme by publicising service.</p> <p>Review council sickness absence policy to ensure it reflects contemporary practice</p> <p>Work with council catering contractor to improve awareness and access to healthy eating choices.</p>