

STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 13 November 2023. Minute of Meeting of the STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Copland, Convener; Councillor Al-Samarai, Vice-Convener; Councillor David Cameron, the Lord Provost; Councillor Steve Delaney, the Depute Provost; and Councillors Ali, Davidson, Fairfull, Macdonald, MacGregor, Massey, McLeod and Thomson.

Trade Union Advisers:- Zem Chefeke and Carole Thorpe (EIS); Kevin Masson and David Willis (GMB); Mark Musk and Alison Robertson (UNISON); and Fiona Sales (UCATT).

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be viewed [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. There were no declarations of interest nor transparency statements made.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 4 September 2023 for approval.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

3. The Committee had before it the business planner, as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance (Legal).

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would try to reflect in the business planner where decisions had been taken at earlier meetings which had an impact on future reports, to ensure greater transparency for those who may not have been involved in the earlier decision; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the planner.

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STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REPORT - COM/23/338

4. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Commissioning which presented the third annual Staff Governance Committee effectiveness report for consideration.

The Convener thanked officers for the report and noted that it reflected the good work of the Committee, concluding by thanking Members and Trade Union Advisers for their input at meetings.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) provide comments and observations on the data contained within the annual report; and
- (b) note the annual report of the Staff Governance Committee.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the report.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT UPDATE - CUS/23/344

5. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which presented the annual update on the work that had been undertaken in respect of leadership and management development since November 2022.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the continuing progress made on developing leaders and managers and the assurance provided within the report that the programme equipped managers to deal with the challenges ahead; and
- (b) note that a coaching approach to managing and leading was now a core foundation within all the Council's management development programmes.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE - CUS/23/250

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which sought approval of the revised Whistleblowing Policy. The report advised on the process that had been undertaken to review the policy, and set out the revisions made.

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During the discussion of the report, Members requested that officers ensure that the information was cascaded to staff. It was also noted that if any Members had any queries in relation to the application of the policy, officers in People and Organisational Development would be happy to meet to discuss further.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee approve the revised policy.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to request that Chief Officers ensure that their managers cascaded information on the revised policy to all staff; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendation.

MANAGING SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY - CUS/23/349

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which presented the revised Managing Substance Misuse Policy for consideration and approval. The report advised of the process which had been undertaken during the review, and set out the proposed changes to the policy.

During the discussion, Mr Willis expressed concern as to whether there was a meaningful resource within the Council for employees to access. Officers advised that while there was no in-house support, employees were directed to a wide range of external support. They noted that there was still work to be done around the supporting guidance for the policy and invited the Trade Unions to participate in that work.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) approve the revised Managing Substance Misuse Policy; and
- (b) instruct the Interim Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development to ensure that managers had access to the required guidance, training and support to allow them to support employees through the process with confidence.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would be undertaking work on the accompanying guidance, and that Trade Union colleagues were to be invited to participate in that work; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY QUARTERLY UPDATE - COM/23/346

8. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Commissioning which presented a summary of statistical health and safety performance information for the three

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month reporting period from July to September 2023, to provide the Committee with the opportunity to monitor compliance with health and safety legislation.

Members asked a number of questions on the report, specifically around the number of incidents within the Education Service. It was further noted that there had been two dog bite incidents during the reporting period, and officers advised that the incidents had been checked and monitored against the trend from August 2022. Staff had been reminded of procedures and officers had produced a short training presentation which had been shared with relevant staff and would be made available on the Council's intranet.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the report and provide comment on the health, safety policy, performance, trends, and improvements.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would liaise with Councillor Thomson outwith the meeting in relation to the anecdotal reports she had received about a possible lack of consistency in schools who were reporting incidents;
- (ii) to request that officers provide a service update to Members and Trade Union Advisers in respect of the work of the Health and Safety sub group, which had been set up to undertake analysis of health and safety data generated by schools, to include the action being taken to address short-term behavioural incidents;
- (iii) to note that officers had prepared a short training presentation for relevant staff on how to deal with any incidents involving animals, and to request that the presentation also be circulated to Elected Members; and
- (iv) to note the report.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SCHEME / OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH / SICKNESS ABSENCE SIX MONTHLY REPORT - CUS/23/347

9. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which provided (a) an update on the utilisation of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) through the provider VIVUP during the last 6 month period (1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023) and (b) a 6 monthly update on the Occupational Health and Absence for the period 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023.

Members asked a number of questions on the report in respect of absence data and the high levels of low mood, anxiety and depression reflected in the self-help download statistics and what was being done to mitigate this.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) consider the contents of the report; and

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- (b) note that the data included within the report evidenced progress made to date against the specific aims of the Absence Improvement Project as detailed in section 3.4 of the report.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would include data around Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in the Mental Health and Wellbeing update report which was due to Committee in January 2024;
 - (i) to note that officers had undertaken to include information on SAD within the toolkits and leaflets available to staff, and would liaise with VIVUP to ascertain whether any other support was available;
 - (ii) to note that officers had made information available on the intranet in respect of wellbeing in winter, including a podcast on SAD, and that this would be circulated to Members and Trade Union Advisers for information;
 - (iii) to note the potential impact on the mental health of staff who were either being investigated or who had raised matters through the other Policies for People, and that officers would include detail on this in the January Mental Health and Wellbeing update report; and
 - (iv) to note that the data included within the report evidenced progress made to date against the specific aims of the Absence Improvement Project as detailed in section 3.4 of the report.
- **COUNCILLOR NEIL COPLAND, Convener**