

## Business Improvement, Human Resources and Communications Progress Report

### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To give an overview of the functions of the Business Improvement, Human Resources and Communications Business Unit and related elements of the Annual Governance Statement process in line with the Audit Committee programme.

### 2. Functions of the Business Unit

2.1 The Business Unit has seven broad functions reporting to the Service Director, Business Improvement, Human Resources and Communications:

- Business Improvement and Intelligence (including the Overview and Scrutiny function)
- Communications, Marketing and Campaign Management
- Corporate Programmes, Projects, Feedback and Improvement
- Equality and Inclusion
- Organisation and Workforce Improvement (including the Member Development function)
- HR Business Advisory, Employee Wellbeing and Reward
- Recruitment and HR Traded Services

2.2 The core purpose of the business unit is to,

*'Provide high quality, value for money, customer focussed, professional and strategic core services'.*

The Business Unit is responsible for driving and delivering business improvement and communications to ensure the organisation is a customer focussed, modern, efficient and commercial minded Future Council.

### 3. Related Elements of the Annual Governance Statement

3.1 The business unit has a role in ensuring assurance against the following elements of the Annual Governance Statement:

- **Management Arrangements** – services can demonstrate compliance with the Managing People Framework through the completion of Performance and Development Reviews (P&DR) and managing absence through the Managing Attendance Policy.
- **Business Improvement and Intelligence** –support the development of the Corporate Plan to illustrate progress achieved in delivering the priorities and outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2017-2020.

- **Equality and Inclusion** – Legal obligations fall into two areas; the need to pay ‘due regard’ to the public sector equality duty, and the requirement to publish specific information. Directorates demonstrate compliance with the equality duty through completion of equality impact assessments. Information compliance is achieved through our external facing website.

## **Business Improvement and Intelligence**

- 3.2 The Business Improvement and Intelligence team (BII) supports the development of performance frameworks and co-ordinates performance management arrangements across our organisation, ensuring a consistent and coherent approach.
- 3.3 The BII team delivers the Corporate Plan Performance report on a quarterly basis, to provide an overview of the council’s latest performance, drawing upon information available for each quarter, and to illustrate progress achieved in delivering the priorities and outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2017-2020.
- 3.4 The Corporate Plan contains three priorities, supported by 12 outcomes. These are reflected in the 2020 Outcomes Framework and outline what the council has committed to undertake in order to deliver the priorities. It is also recognised that the council is not solely accountable for delivering these outcomes, as it works in partnership with other organisations.
- 3.5 The framework identifies what the council is seeking to achieve for the people of Barnsley, as defined in our key strategies and plans, and a series of objectives which focus on specific areas of service delivery and support for the borough and its residents.
- 3.6 To support the delivery of the Corporate Performance Plan and to communicate the progress against the Outcomes Framework, 3 products are produced for the public:
  - The Corporate Plan Performance Report
  - Stronger Communities Service narrative report
  - Power BI online report
- 3.7 The Power BI online report is a self-service report that allows users to review the red/amber/green status of each of the key corporate indicators that are measured each quarter, and allows the user to view progress over time (quarterly or annually).
- 3.8 The latest Power BI report for quarter 1 2019/20 is available at:
 

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNzFkZWNIImYtNjEwMy00NWY5LTg4NTktMmViZTY1OTA2OTdkliwidCI6ImJhNmEyNDcxLTMzNDAtNDMxNC1hOTY5LTQ4ZDhjZGM0YzRmOCIsImMiOjh9>

## **Performance and Development Review (PDR)**

- 3.9 The new simplified PDR process was implemented in April 2018 and feedback has been positive.
- 3.10 In June 2019 a visual reporting tool was made available to managers via Power BI to provide them with up-to-date information regarding PDRs for their respective areas. The report shows:
- Percentage of PDRs completed / not completed
  - Dates PDRs are due to be completed
  - PDRs that are out-of-date
  - Details of employees with PDRs due who are currently absent (due to sickness, maternity etc.)
- 3.11 The provision of these reports has provided managers with an oversight of PDR completions within their area, enabling them to manage this effectively.
- 3.12 The Power BI report also shows PDR completions for the council broken down by business unit. As at 23rd August 2019, the completion rate for PDRs for the council was 67.7% which is 17% higher than the completion rate reported to Audit Committee in 2018 (51.6%),

## **Equality and Inclusion**

- 3.13 The public sector Equality Duty (PSED), at section 149 Equality Act 2010, is a duty on public bodies to consider, in their day-to-day work, the needs of people who share particular protected characteristics. There are three strands to the duty stating the Council must pay 'due regard' to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a particular protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a particular protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 3.14 The Council complies with the PSED by conducting Equality impact assessments (EIA). The assessment provides a prediction of how the work could impact different groups. This ensures that the organisation does not discriminate unlawfully against a person or group of people, and actively promotes equality. The EIA template provides an audit trail to record the equality related decision making process.
- 3.15 The outcome of an EIA is subsequently summarised in the relevant Cabinet report, enabling informed decision making. The Equality and Inclusion team assess the robustness of Cabinet reports by dip-sampling cabinet reports throughout the year.
- 3.16 Work is on-going to strengthen equalities compliance through:
- Improved project management guidance
  - Embedding equalities considerations into contract management and guidance
  - Creation of a new simplified EIA template and guidance
  - Face-to-face training across all directorates on the Equality Act and EIA's.

- Updating the Cabinet report template to ensure more robust equalities consideration.

3.17 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty (annually); and to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives (at least every four years). The statute is drafted in such a way to allow for flexibility of interpretation. The information required must include:

- Information relating to employees who share protected characteristics
- Information relating to people who are affected by the public body's policies and practices who share protected characteristics (for example residents).

3.18 Compliance is achieved through publications on the external website. The 'Equality and inclusion strategy 2018-20' contains equality objectives and 'The borough profile' contains demographic details. The Corporate performance report for quarter two will contain details of staff demographics and work undertaken over the previous year which evidences 'due regard' to the Equality Duty.

### **Corporate Programmes, Projects, Feedback and Improvement**

3.19 The service provides three key functions:

- Corporate Programmes and Projects: overseeing a corporate approach to both programme and project management, ensuring governance arrangements are effectively managed; reporting supports decision making and activity contributes towards the Council's corporate priorities
- Customer Feedback, Information and Improvement (CFIIT): supporting our business units to effectively manage complaints, compliments, comments and information requests to drive continuous improvement and improving the customer experience
- Business Improvement and Communications Continuous Improvement: supporting our business unit to strive for excellence through re-designing and re-engineering services, systems and processes
- Change Management: supporting our business units to manage major change initiatives by demonstrating the positive impacts this can bring whilst driving transformation in a planned and seamless way

3.20 In line with the Council's Corporate Plan, the Customer Feedback, Information and Improvement Team is committed to ensuring a genuine focus is placed upon its customers; placing them at the heart of what we do. As such, it is undertaking a schedule of work in reshaping internal processes designed to effectively manage customer expectations.

3.21 The submission of feedback (compliments, complaints, and comments) is an important means in which a customer can inform the Council about their experiences. The Council's Annual Customer Feedback Report 2018/19 sets out a number of headline figures which demonstrates its performance against its values and behaviours.

3.22 In 2018/19, the service received 502 compliments, an increase from 490 in 2017/18 and 333 complaints, an increase from 317 in 2017/18. Budgetary constraints and limited resources are likely to have had an impact on the services mostly affected by

the differential in number. However, it is encouraging to note the continual rise in compliments received.

During 2019/20 the CFIT is committed to undertaking the following activities:

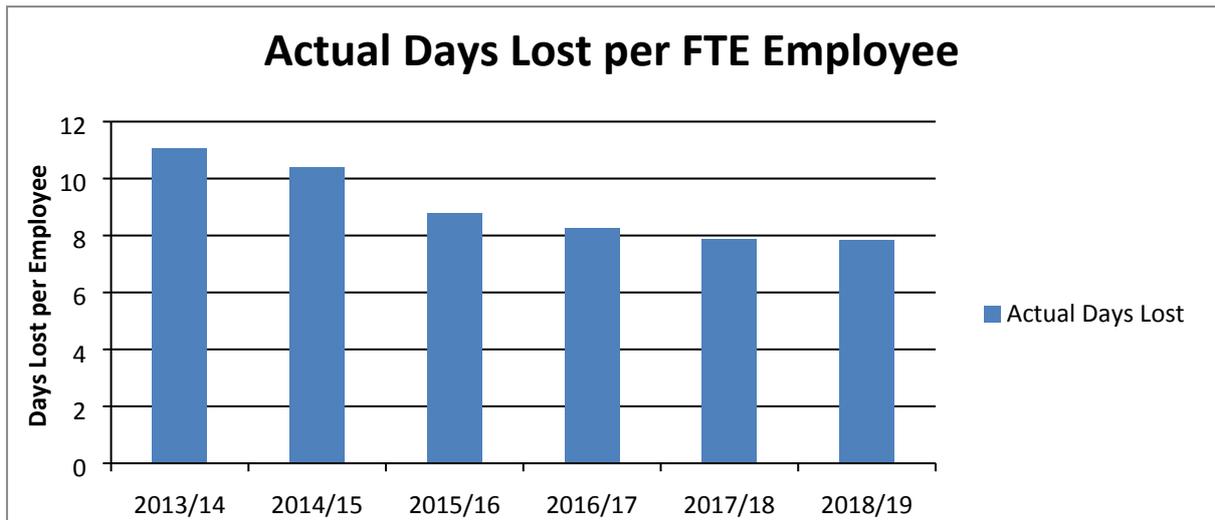
- Work in collaboration with services to strengthen its learning from complaints received and continual review of internal process arrangements
- Explore how it ensures our most vulnerable customers know how to make a complaint, including customers who are receiving a service paid for by the Council whilst delivered by a third party
- Explore how it captures and reports on all compliments and complaints made directly to other organisations that provide services on the Council's behalf
- Implement a new performance management system and reporting software across the organisation to effectively manage feedback received
- Continue to develop a meaningful intranet webpage for staff using new guidance and research available on dispute resolution

3.23 To achieve this, it will act as a 'critical friend' and engage in offering constructive challenge in relation to change programmes, projects and review of customer feedback against corporate priorities, outcomes, strategies and plans in order to drive continuous service improvement.

#### 4. Sickness Absence – 2018/19

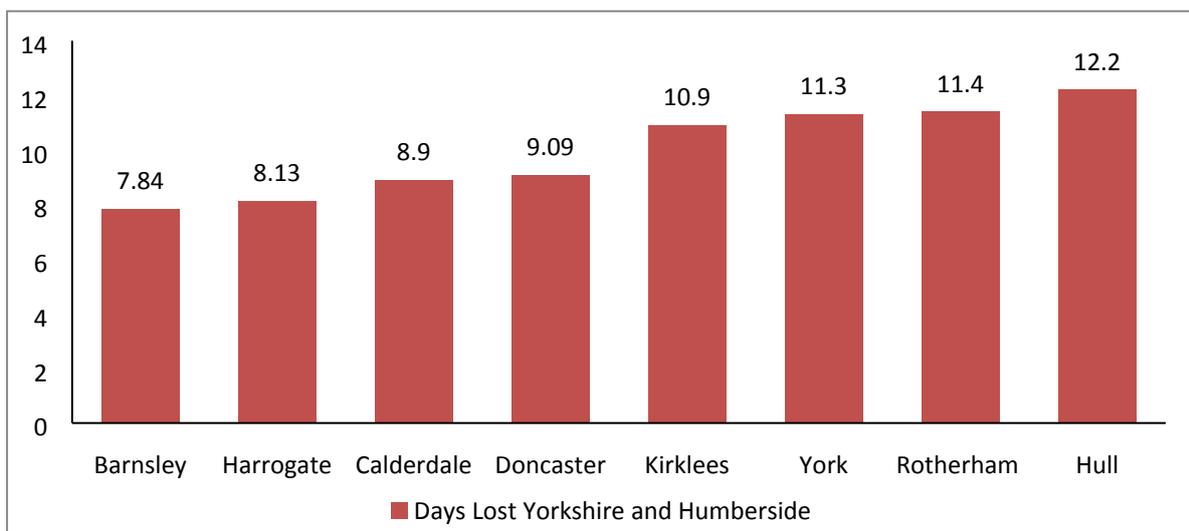
Directorate	Days lost Q1	Days lost Q2	Days lost Q3	Days lost Q4	totals for 2018/19
Communities	1.67	1.85	2.35	2.90	8.77
People	1.75	2.03	2.10	2.22	8.10
Place	2.08	2.27	2.72	2.70	9.77
Public Health	2.11	1.65	2.68	2.63	9.07
Core	1.43	1.82	1.66	1.40	6.31
Total days lost per employee	1.80	2.01	2.01	2.02	7.84

4.1 The absence levels identified above show a total days lost per employee of 7.84 days this is an improvement on the overall days lost for 2017/18 (7.87). The graph below shows a year on year improvement from 2013/ 14 onwards.



4.2 On average, Local Government employees had 8.8 days of absence during 2017/18 according to the most recent (June 19) Local Government Workforce Survey. The Council's current absence level of 7.84 days is below the Local Government average.

4.3 Regional figures for 2018/19 are shown below.



4.4 Across the Council the total number of days lost in 2018/19 was 22,321.45. The Council's average salary is £20,456 p.a. as at March 18 the estimated cost of sickness to the Council is therefore £1,750,894 (this cost does not include the cost of cover for front line positions).

4.5 Mental health issues including stress, anxiety and depression remain the most common reasons for absence with 7,829 days lost in 2018/19. The second is musculoskeletal, back pain and injuries with 6,020 days lost.

4.6 There are many examples of good practice where Directorates and Services are proactively addressing sickness absence. These include:-

- Continued senior management commitment to addressing levels of absence and supporting interventions
- Managers seeking advice and support from Human Resources Advisors on a regular basis when dealing with long term and short term sickness

- Proactive management of sickness including issuing formal sanctions where appropriate
- Majority of managers are actively managing persistent intermittent sickness cases and early intervention for long term sickness cases e.g. Absence review meeting being held at 4 weeks absence followed by a referral to OHU
- Pro-active and early intervention support for employees
- Absence review meetings being carried out across the majority of services and Managers are involving Human Resources Advisors particularly where employees are found unfit for their substantive post
- Across the Council early intervention is assisting in bringing employees back to work earlier from long term sickness e.g. meetings carried out after 4 weeks of absence and early referrals made to OHU, considering temporary alternative working options e.g. working from home, adjusted duties

4.7 In relation to mental health specifically the following interventions have taken place during 2018/19:

- 2 Stretch and Strain courses (159 people attended)
- 3 Mindfulness Sessions (56 people attended).
- In addition to the existing POD self-help courses available to employees a new Mental Health Awareness Course has been developed
- Exercise classes continue to be held on site (Gateway, Westgate, Town Hall), Pilates, Zumba
- Self-help information is available via the Well@Work website

4.8 Workplace counselling is available which can be accessed by employees through the Occupational Health Unit. Counselling support was accessed by 178 employees during 2018/19.

4.9 There have also been 27 workstation assessments undertaken to support predominantly desk based employees.

4.10 A total of 226 employees (172 female / 54 male) attended a Know your numbers Assessment from across the Council with the following outcomes:-

- 197 employees had no issues,
- 9 employees advice was given,
- 20 employees were advised to visit their GP.

4.11 Since the current employee wellbeing strategy was introduced in 2016, attitudes towards health and wellbeing at work have changed. Bearing this in mind we are undertaking a full review of our employee health and wellbeing offer during 2019/20 and the outcome of this review will feature in future Audit Committee reports.

## **5. Other Issues Affecting Elected Members**

### **5.1 Overview & Scrutiny**

The Business Unit is responsible for the Overview and Scrutiny function and annual work programme.

5.2 Barnsley Council's revised scrutiny arrangements include one Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC); however its membership has been increased to 34 Councillors instead of the previous 26.

5.3 The OSC will continue to meet formally 12 times per year in total; 3 of these meetings will be in plenary mode to consider safeguarding topics and other key strategic

business. For the remaining 9 meetings, Committee Members will allocate time to 3 work-streams which will each meet 3 times per year consisting of 12 Elected Members, aligned to the Council priorities of:

- Thriving and Vibrant Economy
- People Achieving Their Potential
- Strong and Resilient Communities

- 5.4 The OSC will maintain 3 Member-led Task and Finish Groups (TFGs) which carry out in-depth investigations.
- 5.5 Further to the corporate peer review recommendation, an annual report of the OSC will now be completed, commencing from 2019-20.
- 5.6 We measure the percentage of Members attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was 44.7% for Quarter 1 2019/20. The target is now more meaningful as all Members on the Committee are expected to attend 50% of the meetings throughout the year. Quarter 1 includes one meeting under the old committee structure (26 Members) and two meetings under the new structure (with the expectation of 12 Members at each).

## **6. Conclusion / Recommendations**

- 6.1 This report is presented for information.

## **7. Background papers**

- 7.1 Business Improvement and Communications Business and Delivery Plans and Annual Governance Statement are available for inspection.

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