

**TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP: HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF THE WORKFORCE**

**Report of the Task and Finish Working Group**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the task and finish working group established to look at the health and wellbeing of the workforce.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee Work Programming session held on 15 June 2023 provided Members, officers and partners with the opportunity to discuss a variety of scrutiny topics, compiling a shortlist of potential issues for task and finish work during the coming year.
- 2.2 Following the workshop the Committee agreed to establish a task and finish working group to look at the health and wellbeing of the Council's workforce.

***Context to the Working Group***

- 2.3 Sunderland City Council employs over 2,650 people across approximately 175 workplaces. The majority of City Hall employees are desk-based, although this is not the only office-based location, or much of their work is undertaken from a computer. However, there are also a number of employees at key council sites that are in manual roles. These include Jack Crawford House, South Hylton and The Port to name a few, with a range of roles including environmental services, catering, cleaning, drivers and machinery operators etc.
- 2.4 The workforce is ageing with over 50% aged 50+ and an average age across the organisation of 48. Interestingly the workforce is generally older than the Sunderland population (22.27% residents aged 16-29 vs. 8.3% Council employees).
- 2.5 The investment and promotion in the health and wellbeing of employees is important to any organisation as it can help to improve morale, understand and reduce sickness absence, and increase productivity and performance across the organisation. There are many issues that impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals through lifestyle choices, personal and professional circumstances to the impacts of the recent pandemic and the current cost-of-living issues. How people deal with these issues and how that affects their own health and wellbeing can vary greatly. It is however important for an organisation to understand its workforce and support groups and individuals through policies, schemes and initiatives that can promote improved health and wellbeing both in the workplace and outside of it.

**3. The Aim and Terms of Reference of the Working Group**

- 3.1 The working group was established with the specific aim of looking at how the council supports the health and wellbeing of the workforce through policy development and

key initiatives as well as identifying the challenges and key achievements in employee health and wellbeing.

3.2 The working group consisted of Cllrs Tracy Dodds, Michael Hartnack, Beth Jones, Katherine Mason-Gage, Antony Mullen, Pat Smith and John Usher; the group selected Cllr Dodds as the Chair.

3.3 The following Terms of Reference for the working group were agreed:-

- (a) To understand the factors that contribute to the health and wellbeing of the workforce;
- (b) To look at the policies and initiatives in the workplace that promote and support the health and wellbeing of the workforce;
- (c) To consider the challenges and barriers to health and wellbeing in the workforce; and
- (d) To recognise the benefits of health and wellbeing to the workforce and the organisation.

#### **4. Gathering the Evidence**

4.1 The task and finish working group gathered evidence from a number of sources and this was coordinated, on behalf of Members, by the scrutiny officer. Members gathered evidence from the following:

- Desktop research;
- Director of Smart Cities and Enabling Services;
- Learning and Organisational Development Manager;
- Specialist Lead – People Management.

4.2 Attached for Members information at **Appendix 1** is the draft report developed by the working group. The report covers a number of issues relating to the health and wellbeing of the organisation's workforce. Some of the key areas covered include:

- The Workforce
- Health and Wellbeing
- Strategy, Support and Recognition
- Challenges, Barriers and Communications
- Priorities.

4.3 The intention is that the report and the recommendations support and complement the current and future work in relation to the health and wellbeing of the workforce within the organisation.

#### **5. Next Steps**

5.1 Following discussion and agreement on the draft report by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee it will be submitted to Cabinet for discussion and agreement.

5.2 Following submission and subject to agreement by Cabinet, the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee will monitor progress against the agreed recommendations through its work programme.

**6. Recommendations**

6.1 That the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee discuss and following any amendments agree the final report of the working group.

6.2 That Members agree to the submission of the final report to Cabinet.

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