

**By:** Eric Hotson – Cabinet Member for Corporate & Democratic Services  
Amanda Beer - Corporate Director – Engagement, Organisation Design and Development

**To:** Personnel Committee

**Date:** 3 July 2017

**Subject:** Workforce Health & Wellbeing Strategy

**Classification:** **Unrestricted**

---

**SUMMARY:** This paper provides an overview of the proposed refresh of the County Council's Workforce Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

---

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 A healthy workforce has significant benefits for an organisation and its customers. Workplace practices and lifestyle choices can influence both physical and psychological wellbeing in ways that can positively influence productivity, commitment and attendance. Other benefits that can be derived from a healthier workforce include improved staff retention, employee resilience and a stronger employer brand.
- 1.2 Kent County Council has been delivering a range of health and wellbeing initiatives over the years. Evolution of this offer has taken place as a result of employee feedback, changing priorities and funding. This paper introduces a refreshed strategy (appendix 1) to address the organisation's current situation and help improve levels of staff engagement, motivation and performance.
- 1.3 The draft strategy went to a number of Directorate Management Teams and Directorate Organisation Development Groups for their views in order to inform the version contained in this report. It was also informed by the Health and Wellbeing Group which has representatives from Health & Safety and Public Health as members.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Kent County Council's employees work in a challenging environment where increasing demand and change can impact on their wellbeing. The Authority's staff survey has identified that for a number of years work pressure has been at a significant level and employees feel they could be supported more by the organisation.

- 2.2 The Council has successfully driven the levels of sickness absence down from double figures to around 7 days per person per year. This compares favourably with the public sector and absence levels in the country overall. However, this still constitutes c.84,000 days of staff absence per year and is behind the private sector by 1 to 2 days. The profile of sickness absence has changed with two thirds of absence being short term as opposed to people taking longer periods of time off work.
- 2.3 The main reasons for absence do not change much and centre around musculoskeletal, mental health and stress. The top five account for 60% of all absence amongst employees in Kent County Council.
- 2.4 Despite the profile above we know through the results of our staff survey that our employees are committed to their jobs. They are reasonably well engaged as an overall group and the Council has a significant track record in recognising and rewarding high levels of performance amongst its staff.

### **3. THE STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The key outcomes that the strategy intends to influence are:
- a) Improved employee engagement, and
  - b) Decreased levels of employee sickness absence.
- 3.2 These outcomes will be achieved by ensuring the Council has a culture which is mindful of the potential impact it has on people's wellbeing coupled with targeted initiatives where required. The strategy provides a flexible framework that enables organisation level developments as well as specific directorate and service level focus where required.
- 3.3 The three key themes of the strategy are:
- a) Addressing the main reasons for absence in the organisation
  - b) Supporting the role management have in improving and supporting employee wellbeing
  - c) Helping people make healthy lifestyle choices
- 3.4 The main tenet underpinning the themes is that the strategy is primarily about prevention. The framework for delivering the strategy will focus on:
- i) Prevention – creating a workplace that avoids placing unnecessary pressure on people, minimise the work based factors that can trigger illness and educate to support people to make choices for themselves in terms of their wellbeing.
  - ii) Intervention – early support to people where there are signs of illness
  - iii) Continued support – a range of services and initiatives for managing, supporting and retaining staff with existing illnesses.

- 3.5 One of this strategy's strongest points is that it embraces significant streams of activity that are currently underway in the organisation. These include the leadership and management strategy; work on developing the Council's culture; managing performance and the health and safety action plan. The influence that these initiatives will have on people's wellbeing is significant. Work will also be commissioned to deliver other component aspects of the strategy.
- 3.6 This strategy has been developed with the involvement of directorate management teams, their Organisation Development Groups and Corporate Management Team.

#### **4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (appendix 2) has identified that the strategy will have a positive impact on all of the protected characteristics. The fact the strategy aims to take a variegated, flexible, inclusive, diverse and multigenerational approach to the delivery of the strategy fundamentally underpins how people can positively experience KCC's approach to improving health and wellbeing amongst its staff. The preventative element of the strategy also will have a positive impact across the workforce.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Personnel Committee are asked to agree the proposed health and wellbeing strategy

**Ian Allwright**  
**HR Strategy & Commissioning Manager**  
**Ext 415774**

**Background Documents: None**