

Date of Meeting	Item	Members wished to make the following comments and conclusions:	Response/Comments
31-Jul-2017	Council's Performance against its Commitments and a Summary of its Financial position at Year End for 2016-17	<p><b>Sickness Absence</b></p> <p>The Committee expressed concern regarding the sickness absence figures across the Authority. Members commented that the figures relating to stress/Anxiety/Depression/Mental Health provide a worrying figure and questioned whether there was a direct correlation between the budget reductions and asking staff to take on more work and the sickness absence figure increasing and similarly whether there was a correlation between sickness absence and budget overspend.</p> <p>The Committee requested that they receive the following information in relation to sickness absence:</p> <p>a) comparative information with other Local Authorities to determine where we are ranked in relation to Wales on sickness absence and if possible to receive these comparisons at a Directorate level;</p> <p>b) any possible costings associated with sickness absence;</p> <p>c) information on how many agency staff have been employed over the past 6-12 months and at what cost?</p> <p>d) How many staff out of the FTE figure have never been off sick and how many staff relate to recent sickness figures; in order to give a more accurate picture;</p> <p>e) A response as to whether Members could receive Apse data to assist them in considering comparisons with other LAs as the Authority are a member of APSE and its involves public sector benchmarking data for over 200 LAs.</p> <p>In response to the issue of staff remaining off on sick due to waiting for scans and tests on the NHS, the Committee recommended that some form of FastTrack system to provide financial assistance for tests be explored as the cost of this could be far less than the cost of the sickness and therefore would benefit both the individual involved and the Authority.</p>	<p>a) The all Wales data for sickness absence is published annually and this year will occur on 14th September 2017. Data is not collected on a Directorate basis</p> <p>b) as we do not have a "costed payroll" we cannot give figures indicating the cost of sickness absence to the Council</p> <p>c) the management information we receive from Ranstad [our agency worker provider] do not provide details of how many agency requests were made specifically to cover sickness, we could explore whether this is possible in the future. The robustness of this data will always be questionable in the sense that: we will be relying on line managers to declare the reason at the time of the request; this will not be the only mechanism for covering sickness [eg, long term cases may be filled by moving resources and back-filling at a lower level, recruiting on a short term temporary contract, etc</p> <p>d) HR would be unable to easily extract this information. This would require large resource to check individual staff records and collate the information</p> <p>e) We will investigate what APSE are able to offer and report back to the Committee but the work would have to be commissioned.</p> <p>The Authority has a responsibility to treat all staff equally, whether they are ill or not. Therefore funding for a private healthcare scheme would need to be offered to all staff in the Authority, a decision of which Cabinet would need to make.</p>

<p>The Committee reiterated the views of the previous CRI Overview and Scrutiny Committee in that there was a need for a strategic stance to be taken with sickness absence to determine if there were common issues across the Authority and whether there were pockets of concern so that focus can be provided specifically in these areas. Whilst recognising that the WLGA has carried out a piece of work in this field the Committee commented that things have changed since then and further budget cuts have occurred. They therefore recommended that an overview was required where consultation was carried out with staff and the Trade Unions to determine if there were any correlations. The Committee also once again recommended that the Chief Executive incorporate a specific percentage reduction target for sickness absence in his appraisal so that there is a strategic focus from the top.</p>	<p>“The Council does have a strategic approach to the management of absence in the sense that:</p> <p>There is a corporate policy which is supported by a “Management of Absence” toolkit – readily available on the intranet</p> <p>Corporate training has been provided to support managers in the management of both long and short term absence</p> <p>A new Occupational Health provider has been appointed with whom we are working closely to ensure proactive approaches on preventative measures, eg, health surveillance</p> <p>Management information reports have been and are being developed and refined to make sure line managers are reminded of their required actions and “chased” if necessary</p> <p>An “escalation process” has been put in place should line managers not fulfil their responsibilities</p> <p>A robust approach towards employees who are not adhering to the management of absence policy is being taken, eg, if sick notes are not provided and after warning the employee of the consequences, employees are told their sick pay will not be paid</p> <p>Via Care First we provide a wide range of on line and face to face support services , including Counselling which is available to all employees and their families . The Chief Executive's appraisal requires a strategic approach to the reduction of sickness. The views of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee will be provided to the appraisal panel</p>
<p><b>Social Services and Wellbeing</b></p> <p>The Committee requested that they receive breakdown information on the Looked After Children Population including how many are in Out of County Foster Care.</p>	<p>Please see attached figures as at the end of July 2017.</p>
<p><b>Communities</b></p> <p>The Committee requested that they receive the Town Centre Footprint for Bridgend.</p>	<p>Bridgend Town Centre footprint will be forwarded to all Scrutiny Members</p>
<p>Community Asset Transfer (CAT) – the Committee expressed concern over the CAT process and recommended that a decision needed to be made over the policy and whether to introduce definitive timelines as to when the Council will no longer support the Assets and thus and end date for communities and organisations to put in bids to take them on. It is hoped this would encourage interest as without a deadline there is no urgency for organisations.</p>	<p>The points made will be considered as part of the review of CAT that is ongoing</p>

Members expressed concern over the delays with the Extra Care Scheme in relation to the Authority signing off on the project with Linc and also slippage mentioned in terms of the selling of a school. Members queried whether there was a common theme or issue causing such delays.

*Extra care - info provided in separate document also.*

Extra care : the delays in relation to the granting of the long leases were due to Linc contending that the sites had nil or nominal value due to the level of site development abnormalities. We did not agree and the District Valuer was appointed to provide an independent valuation and confirmed our stance. As a result we safe guarded and generated a capital receipt of £1,105,000. A number of complex legal agreements were required to protect the long term position of both parties and these were time consuming to draft and agree.

Sale of school : delays - not sure which property is being referred to

The sale of properties do not generally impact on projects – for example the School Modernisation programme - the sale of land occurs once the school has been vacated and is used as match funding. Sites with potential residential development and high land values, require complex legal agreements to protect the Council’s position and the sales will be reliant on planning consent which can be time consuming. Since 2014, £15million has been generated from the sale of surplus assets which is a real success story.

Acquisition of property can delay projects particularly if compulsory purchase powers are used. However, in relation to the new Pencoed Primary School a very swift acquisition of an adjoining house was delivered by Property Services, which required sensitive handling due to the personal circumstances of the householder and overcame the need to use a CPO.

Property transactions can be complicated, particularly in circumstances where the Council wishes to retain control / influence in the long term, for example where long leases are granted. This can sometimes result in delays, particularly if not adequately built in to the timeline of the project plan.

However, there is currently a significant capacity issue to deliver these projects. Property Services have struggled to recruit and retain over the last few years due to more competitive salaries being offered elsewhere, including in the public sector , compared to the salaries we can offer. There is currently a dearth of Chartered Surveyors employed by the Authority and unless this can be resolved this will undoubtedly result in delays going forward which involve property transaction.

	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>Members requested that they receive information on when the Authority expects to go live with Baseware Solutions.</p>	<p>Electronic ordering will commence in Q3 with full implementation (including e-invoicing) on initial supplier/s in Q4. Priority has been given to replace goods previously fulfilled by County Borough Supplies in order to benefit the widest group of internal customers including schools</p>
	<p>The Committee requested that clarification be provided in future reports in relation to paragraph 3.2 of the cover report and the Capital programme figure.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
	<p><b>General Comments</b></p> <p>The Committee agreed that work needed to be done on a different way to report Performance information to the Committee as it was currently too much information with not enough time to consider it. Members agreed that a small workshop be undertaken to consider the best method for reporting the Authority's performance and budget position to the Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>Workshop has been organised</p>