

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Personnel Committee - 12 September 2018

Subject: Being Our Best Selves: Our Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the City Council

Report of: Director of HR & OD

Summary

This report presents the Personnel Committee with a new strategy for Employee Health and Wellbeing in the Council: Being Our Best Selves. The Strategy has been developed informed by a cross-section of employees, the Trades Unions, managers and leaders across the Council and with the input of experts in the field of workforce wellbeing. It is cognisant of the specific context of the Council and presents an ambitious and cross-cutting definition of wellbeing as a key enabler to the delivery of the overall Our People Strategy.

Recommendation

The Committee is requested to agree the appended employee health and wellbeing strategy and note the associated delivery plan and priorities.

Wards affected: All

Financial implications for the revenue and capital budgets:

There are no financial consequences arising from the proposals within this report.

Contact Officers:

Name: Lynne Ridsdale
Position: Director of HR & OD
Telephone: 0161 600 8380
E-mail: l.ridsdale@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Sam McVaigh
Position: Head of Workforce Strategy
Telephone: 0161 234 3976
E-mail: s.mcvaigh@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Report to Personnel Committee October 2012: *Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy*
- Report to Resources & Governance Scrutiny Committee, HR Sub-Group June 2018: *Managing Attendance Update*

1.0 Background and Overview

- 1.1 The Council first developed a Strategy for employee health and wellbeing in 2012. This Strategy was agreed in the context of growing sickness absence levels and an emerging recognition that, in order to address this issue, there was a need for a dual focus on supporting the effective management of sickness absence when it occurs and on promoting wellbeing in the workplace to mitigate the conditions which ultimately lead to absence. The Strategy recognised formally that physical and mental wellbeing needed to be given equal consideration and put in place a strong strategic framework to improve wellbeing and ultimately, reduce sickness absence.
- 1.2 Sickness absence in the Council has indeed fallen over the intervening period and there has clearly been a strengthened focus on wellbeing, both physical and mental. However, our absence levels remain significantly higher than comparator averages and the demands on the workforce have continued to grow in the context of reducing resources and, in particular, the reduction in staffing levels of over 40% since 2011.
- 1.3 The organisation's understanding of the importance of employee wellbeing as a central element of Our People Strategy has significantly evolved over the intervening years. Whilst positive wellbeing will, of course, contribute to reduced sickness absence, both internal evidence (including BHeard) and external best practice demonstrate a much more crucial strategic link between a 'well' workforce and organisational delivery. Through enabling our workforce to 'be their best selves' the organisation will, in turn, contribute to a culture which truly reflects the behaviours of Our Manchester: where employees are proud and passionate about their work, own their deliverables and can confidently and safely innovate.
- 1.4 As well as this link from wellbeing to delivery it is important to highlight three further strategic linkages from our wellbeing strategy:
 - Over 50% of the Council's workforce are Manchester residents and many more interact with our communities day-to-day. Through embedding in our workforce an awareness of the City's intelligence led priorities to improve resident health and wellbeing, as set out in the Manchester Population Health Plan, and by targeted engagement to address these priorities within our workforce we will support this key city-wide priority
 - Better Lives is a key principle of Our Manchester. By demonstrating to the workforce that the Council is serious about promoting better lives for staff this will, in turn, help create a culture which promotes this principle externally
 - The Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board has recognised the importance of good quality work to improved wellbeing and commissioned a review into the employee wellbeing activities of its members with a clear aim of supporting organisations to be leaders by example in this area. Our Strategy supports this aim and responds to the specific findings of this

review. Furthermore the measurement framework established through this review will help us in assessing progress.

2.0 Being Our Best Selves: Our Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the City Council

2.1 A new employee health and wellbeing strategy for the City Council is appended below. The Strategy has been developed informed by a cross-section of employees, the Trades Unions, managers and leaders across the Council and with the input of experts in the field of workforce wellbeing. It is cognisant of the specific context of the Council and presents an ambitious and cross-cutting definition of wellbeing as a key enabler to the delivery of the overall Our People Strategy.

2.2 The Strategy recognise that, through supporting employees to 'be their best selves', we will improve attendance, engagement and, ultimately, productivity, supporting delivery of the Council's overarching priorities. This is achieved through:

- The alignment of progressive HR and health and safety policy frameworks.
- Proactive occupational health interventions including the Employee Assistance Programme and targeted work on mental health in particular
- Quality leadership and management practice, to manage people as individuals using strengths-based tools such as the About You framework.
- Supporting workplace practice such as Our Ways of Working which brings together the HR, Estates and ICT offer to allow staff to work flexibly wherever practicable to maximise their productivity and reduce costs.

2.3 This delivery programme is brought together into two core themes within the strategy:

- Mentally and physically healthy people and
- High quality working life.

2.4 As set out within the Strategy it is crucial that the employee wellbeing agenda is owned and driven by the workforce as a whole and, in particular managers and leaders. The Strategy includes a draft delivery plan for the next three years. This will continue to evolve, informed by feedback, including through the annual BHeard Survey, be driven by an internal Employee Health and Wellbeing Steering Group including representatives from each of the Council's Directorates and ultimately owned by the Strategic Management Team.

2.5 As noted above, there is a clear link between employee wellbeing and improving workforce attendance. However, the Strategy includes a fuller suite of measures which will enable progress to be tracked. In addition, further work will, take place over the coming months to more clearly demonstrate the alignment between wellbeing, workforce performance and overall organisational productivity.

3.0 Comments from Director of HROD

- 3.1 Being Our Best Selves: Our Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the City Council is a crucial document in setting out our vision for the future organisation and practical activity to make this a reality. It presents a clear, coherent and modern definition of wellbeing consistent with the latest thinking in the field.

4.0 Comments from Trade Unions

- 4.1 To follow

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 A draft employee health and wellbeing strategy for the Council is appended for Members' approval and delivery over the coming three years. This Strategy represents a core component of the Council's Our people Strategy.