

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 3 June 2024 at 8.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)

H Hellier (Vice-Chair)

I Ashraf, E Barrott, N Hilton, G S Jhans, K Khan, R A Lanzer, D Ramsay and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillors T Bidwell and T Rana

Officers Present:

Siraj Choudhury Head of Governance, People & Performance

Ian Duke Chief Executive

Heather Girling Democratic Services Officer

Joe Mottershead HR Consultant

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor O Adeniyi

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor H Hellier	Staff Health, Morale and Sickness Updates (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – NHS Public Governor
Councillor R A Lanzer	Staff Health, Morale and Sickness Updates (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Staff Health, Morale and Sickness Updates (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – WSCC Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
Councillor H Hellier	Appointments and Membership of Scrutiny Panels (HASC) (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – NHS Public Governor

Councillor R A Lanzer	Appointments and Membership of Scrutiny Panels (HASC) (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Appointments and Membership of Scrutiny Panels (HASC) (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – WSCC Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 11 March 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Staff Health, Morale, and Sickness Updates

Commission Members considered report [LDS/219](#) of the Head of Governance, People & Performance. Under the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the OSC had previously requested a report on staff sickness levels and general wellbeing. Following this, it was subsequently recommended that the OSC receive an annual update on staff welfare, sickness and morale.

During the discussion, with the Cabinet Member for Resources, Head of Governance, People & Performance and HR Consultant, the following points were expressed:

- Clarification sought and obtained on the cost of absence for the authority, which was confirmed as £658,793.34 for the last financial year compared to the previous year (22-23) of £532,008.09. It was noted that some of the figures were impacted by long term absences and there was support that the new HR system would assist in monitoring and collating data for various trends, services and initiatives. The new absence management procedure would also assist in promoting change.
- Clarification was sought on whether the absences were monitored by protected characteristics and provision could then be tailored for individuals.
- Acknowledged that exact attendance numbers at the Wellbeing sessions were not strictly monitored given the voluntary nature of the sessions. However, it was noted that attendance at the depot was higher than at the town hall and this was attributed to the hybrid working arrangements.
- Confirmation provided on the recent counselling figures. In the last financial year, there were 31 referrals received (13 requested further extensions) and this was in comparison with the previous year (22-23) where there were 34 referrals (10 requested extensions). Whilst there had been a decline in the use of the counselling service it was recognised this was a minor decrease.
- Recognition that the stress/depression and mental health was still in the top three reasons for absence but unfortunately this was a national trend and not unique to the council. It was recognised that non-work-related stress impacted alongside work-related stress and the Wellbeing initiatives were to promote the mental health resources that exist within the council.
- Details were provided on the other initiatives and financial workshops offered and the Wellbeing workshops.

- Clarification sought and obtained with regards to the lone worker devices (SOS Fobs) which had recently been rolled out and the categories of risk analysis.
- Concern expressed on the general rise in abusive behaviour from customers since the pandemic and the number of more serious incidents in the town hall reception area involving abusive and violent behaviours towards staff. Confirmation provided that the interventions in place have provided assurance and the measures were currently working. It was recognised that staff received regular training and protocols were in place.
- Support for previous years' figures detailed in table format for top three reasons for sickness, along with cost of absence and days lost in future reports where possible.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and progress, with the views expressed being acknowledged and documented by the officers.

5. Appointments and Membership of Scrutiny Panels

RESOLVED:

That the Commission noted and approved the following memberships and appointments:

Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel –

Councillors Bushnell, Charatan, Jaggard, Lanzer, Russell and Yianni, with Councillor Russell as Chair.

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) –

It was moved by Councillor Russell, seconded by Councillor Ashraf that Councillor K Khan be the Council's representative for HASC. There were no other nominations. Councillor K Khan was appointed as the representative for the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

6. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

- 1 Housing Associations Scrutiny Panel Final Report
- 2 Financial Outturn 2023-2024 (Quarter 4)
- 3 Treasury Management Outturn 2023-2024
- 4 Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions Programme – Part B

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.56 pm.

M L Ayling (Chair)