

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the University of Victoria crest. The crest is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a castle tower, the top-right shows a stag's head with antlers, the bottom-left shows a three-masted sailing ship on waves, and the bottom-right shows an eagle with wings spread. Above the shield is a crown with four floral motifs. Below the shield is a banner with the motto 'ANNE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 5

Employee Wellbeing Strategy

Falkirk Council

Title: Employee Wellbeing Strategy
Meeting: Executive
Date: 29th October 2019
Submitted By: Director of Corporate & Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides an update on the wellbeing survey feedback received from employees. It also presents an employee wellbeing strategy for Falkirk Council until 2022.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Executive is asked to:

- (1) Note that the Council will continue to retain the Gold Healthy Working Lives award**
- (2) Agree the proposed actions outlined in the report and summarised in Appendix 1, which form the Council's workforce Wellbeing Strategy**
- (3) Note that a Wellbeing Group will be established to oversee the implementation of the Strategy and other associated actions which support the improvement of workforce wellbeing, as well as implementation of the Healthy Working Lives award**

3. Background

3.1 Our workforce is at the heart of the successful delivery of the Council's five year Business Plan and our transformation programme. The vision for our workforce set out in the Workforce Strategy of: One Council, One Workforce; with a workforce who are 'happy, healthy and here' still remains valid. The wellbeing of our workforce is crucial to this.

3.2 The Council is currently undertaking a range of initiatives through its Business Plan which should have a positive impact on workforce wellbeing including: the Green Transport Plan, Strategic Property Review, development of new Council Headquarters, the Anytime Anywhere project and Smart Work, Smart Travel. This report outlines proposals which should be considered in the wider context of the Council's aim to improve workforce wellbeing.

3.3 To ensure our workforce are working as one, and are happy, healthy and here at their work, the Council has committed to the Healthy Working Lives award process, being a Gold award holder for a number of years. Healthy Working Lives provide us with a framework of activities which are aimed at improving the wellbeing of our workforce. Activities are related to general wellbeing, mental wellbeing, specific areas of health such as fitness to drive, or more general promotional work on health improvement. The Council has just recently been re-accredited for a further period of 12 months.

3.4 In addition to the Healthy Working Lives framework and to assist in developing the actions we need to take, an employee wellbeing survey was implemented between December 18 and January 19. This is part of our healthy working lives action plan (this is done every 3 years). The survey covers a number of topics including:

- Workplace Health & Safety
- Physical Activity
- Mental Health
- Smoking
- Health Eating
- Workplace Violence & Harassment

3.5 844 responses representing 12% of our workforce were received from across the Council. The main findings from the survey are summarised below.

- 70% of respondents reported that work related stress was a serious or moderate risk to their health. Only 31% of respondents felt supported by Council policies in relation to mental health.
- High work volumes were cited as a major source of pressure on employees. Respondents linked this to the reduction in workforce numbers.
- 81% of respondents do not meet the current recommended physical activity levels.
- Access to changing and showering facilities were identified as something the Council could do to help employees increase their levels of physical activity. The demands for these facilities increased the more physically active respondents were.
- 89% of respondents have either never smoked or are ex-smokers. 9% of respondents identify being exposed to second hand smoke at work.
- 70% of respondents do not eat the recommended five or more portions of fruit & vegetables a day.
- 31% of respondents felt that providing food preparation areas or kitchens within Council premises would help them eat more healthily.
- Respondents working within Children's Services are more likely to witness or experience occupational violence than other parts of the Council. This includes both verbal and physical violence.
- Respondents identified mental health, stress, diet & fitness as the areas they would like the Council to provide more information and support on.

3.6 It is also important to consider wellbeing in the round. For example, sickness absence is a good measure of wellbeing. But the actual reasons for sickness absence, whilst directly related to health issues, can sometimes have other

causes. Many other factors can impact on attendance at work. These include indirect health issues as a result of stressors in an individual's day to day life. For example, financial issues, family issues, caring responsibilities, perception of fair treatment at work, etc. In developing a strategy to support employee wellbeing, all such factors must be taken into account.

- 3.7 It is important to recognise that Falkirk Council is similar to most other public sector organisations with regards to its levels of wellbeing. As detailed above, some of this is measured through sickness absence. For example, in the last 12 months, 16,728 days of work were lost due to mental wellbeing issues; of this, employees reported that 4,815 of these days were work related. This is equivalent to 18.5 FTE each being absent for a full year.
- 3.8 The most recent national statistics (2017/18) show that Falkirk Council lost 11.24 days per non-teaching employee due to sickness absence, by comparison to the national average of 11.41. The figures for the teaching workforce are traditionally lower with 4.49 days lost per teaching employee in Falkirk by comparison to the national average of 5.93 (2017/18 figures). More recent local information confirms the average days lost for 2018/19 is 10.42 for non-teaching employees and 4.68 for teaching. The national figures for this period have still to be published.
- 3.9 Whilst the Council is below the national average (based on information available), absence is still at an unacceptably higher level than we would wish and there is clearly more work to be done in supporting our workforce.
- 3.10 It is not of a surprise that many of the issues linked to absence are widely reported as societal issues across Scotland. It is important that the Council responds to these issues positively, providing support to employees in key areas they have identified. It is also important to recognise that attendance at work does not always reflect good wellbeing. Employees attending work may equally benefit from actions being taken to improve wellbeing.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Council's proposed wellbeing strategy will respond to the feedback from the employee wellbeing survey. It also takes into account the wider aspects of wellbeing which go beyond direct health related activities. All such actions are aimed at promoting a working environment which is healthy; employees enjoy working in it, and it encourages attendance. The actions must also dovetail with the overarching health improvement activities of the Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership. Given that c70% of our employees live in the Falkirk area, any actions the Council takes to support wellbeing across its workforce should also have a positive impact on our local communities through our employees who live in the area and their families. The following sets out the proposed wellbeing strategy.

Promote Physical Activity Across Our Workforce

- 4.2 Feedback would suggest that more can be done to promote and encourage positive physical activity across our workforce. To do this, work is being undertaken to meet the requirements of the Scottish Government's pilot Exemplar Physical Activity Employer award, in conjunction with Community Planning Partnership (CPP) organisations. This will require the Council, amongst a range of other actions, to develop a plan of actions to promote physical activity, ensure employees understand how active they should be, use signage to encourage physical activity, implement at least 1 active workplace challenge every 6 months, offer physical activity benefit schemes (e.g., gym membership, bike loan scheme, etc., most of which is already currently on offer to employees), operate standing meetings, etc. Work is on-going in partnership with CPP employers to develop a range of actions which will support this work.
- 4.3 To ensure this is effective and to respond to employee feedback, there will also be a requirement for the Council to:
- Develop and implement criteria for employee access to showering, changing and bike storage facilities in any new build Council buildings or major refurbishments
 - Ensure the Strategic Property Review considers existing showering, changing and bike storage facilities or the potential for installing them in its decision making process
 - Appoint two physical activity champions – one from management and one representing employees
 - Better promote the voluntary benefits package on offer to employees, as this contains a wide range of health and fitness support options
- 4.4 This work will inevitably require resources from across the Council to ensure that it is a success. Such work on promoting physical activity across our workforce should help employees become more active. It should also assist with a range of other health and wellbeing issues which may be prevalent in the area. For example, improving physical activity (together with some of the actions below), can have positive impacts on health issues such as diabetes, cancer and general mental wellbeing, to mention but a few. These are all issues which have significant costs to both our HSCP as well as the NHS. Given the size of the Council's workforce, and the knock on impact this can have on the families of our workforce, resource investment in this has a clear business case.

Encourage Improved Healthy Eating Across Our Workforce

- 4.5 Improved healthy eating goes hand-in-hand with improved physical activity. Research shows that benefits in wellbeing are possible through such interventions, particularly when both are done together.
- 4.6 We know from the survey results that a large percentage of our workforce are not eating as healthily as they could (see para 3.8). There are a number of

actions that can be taken to assist with this based on the feedback from employees.

- Ensure the meal plans in our canteens and vending machines which employees can purchase are healthy and varied. Work will require to be done to re-assess the menus that can be offered in our canteen/other areas where food can be purchased, to ensure the food is good quality and healthy.
- As part of our strategic property review, consideration must be given to providing food preparation areas which encourage employees to bring their own healthy eating options to work. This should be considered for any new build Council buildings and any major refurbishments.
- Healthy eating can be promoted to ensure employees understand what represents good dietary products and the implications of not eating healthily.

4.7 Similar to physical activity, healthy eating plays an essential role in assisting with key health issues such as diabetes, cancer and other obesity linked illness. It is therefore important that such actions are part of any wellbeing strategy.

Supporting Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace

4.8 Mental wellbeing in the workplace is important to the successful delivery of our services. Mental wellbeing generally, is often cited as one of the highest reasons for employees being absent from work. When employees are having such issues, even if they attend work, they are not always fully focused on their job, with stressors impacting on performance. It is essential that we support employees in such situations.

4.9 There are many reasons for mental wellbeing impacting on employees. Factors can include personal issues such as pressures at home, family pressures, financial difficulties, carer responsibilities, etc. It is important that the Council's workforce package supports these issues. There are also potential workplace issues (see paragraph 3.4 noting absence linked to this). The wellbeing survey highlighted issues over stress within the workplace. A number of comments related this to workload and identified that the reduction in work force numbers is a key factor in increasing work pressures, with an expectation to deliver the same level of service.

4.10 The Council already has a number of initiatives in place to support mental wellbeing. For example, a range of support is available for those with caring responsibilities, or for those who would benefit from flexible working options to help manage pressures at home. There are a range of mechanisms to support stress in the work place, including use of a stress risk assessment toolkit, to help identify the reasons for the stress and wellbeing issues, and assisting the employee and their manager to implement a plan of action. There is also support from our Occupational Health service.

- 4.11 Employees are however highlighting through the wellbeing survey that they would like the Council to focus on and improve management practices and the support available.
- 4.11.1 To improve our managers' knowledge and skills in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, 20 x Mentally Healthy Workplaces for Managers training courses will be implemented. The aim is to deliver these 20 sessions between 2019/20 and 2022/23. An external training provider will be appointed to deliver this training. Supplementary training can be accessed through Healthy Working Lives. There are however, significant limitations on the number of staff that can access the training through this alternative approach. This training will be mandatory for all 1st to 6th tier managers within the Council.
- 4.11.2 Work will be done with See Me Scotland to undertake a mental health check across the Council, and commit to implementing the outcomes. The Council will also participate in the 'See Me in Work' programme which aims to decrease the stigma associated with mental health in the workplace.
- 4.11.3 A pool of 100 active mental health first aiders will be trained and developed across the organisation. The Council will also develop specific guidance around roles & responsibilities for mental health first aiders within the Council.
- 4.11.4 The provision of financial wellbeing support for our employees will also be assessed and consideration will be given to additional areas of support that can be provided.
- 4.11.5 The Employee Counselling service will be reinstated to provide support to employees. This will include a 24/7 helpline service along with face to face counselling support sessions.
- 4.11.6 Guidance for managers on actions they can take to ensure they respect the needs and wellbeing of employees and support them whilst at work will also be developed.

Introduce Smoke Free Grounds

- 4.12 Smoking is a key contributor to whether an individual is fit and healthy. The Council already has a Smoke Free policy for its buildings. 10% of employees have however, reported being exposed to second hand smoke at their work. This is something the Council can act on to reduce this exposure.
- 4.13 A separate consultation with employees was conducted in February 2018. 74% of the 732 responders felt that Falkirk Council buildings should become smoke free. Only 7% of our workforce who responded indicated that a smoke free Council would have a negative effect on their day. A number of other Councils and NHS buildings have also taken actions to address this. Actions

involve the inclusion of the grounds of buildings within the smoke free areas of the premises.

- 4.14 To support the feedback from employees, actions will be taken to implement smoke free grounds across all Council buildings. This will include making the grounds of any Council premises smoke free zones, as well as within any vehicles parked in the grounds. For employees, it will be for managers to monitor this and take appropriate action where there are issues. There will require to be appropriate signage, removal of smoking shelters, and communications with employees.
- 4.15 For premises where the public have access, the signage will also be available at points of the building used by the public. There will be a six month self-regulation period following the introduction of the Smoke Free grounds, after which a review will be taken regarding further enforcement activities.
- 4.16 Such actions are very important to the wellbeing of our workforce. Exposure to second hand smoke is reported by Cancer Research to have risks associated with illnesses such as lung cancer, heart disease, stroke and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Minimising exposure wherever this is possible is therefore a positive step the Council can take to support employee wellbeing. It is recognised however, that smoking is addictive and will be very difficult for employees to curtail during working hours. Additional actions will be taken to support employees as outlined below.
- Work will be done with the NHS to signpost employees to smoking cessation services to ensure those who wish to quit smoking, are given support to do so.
 - An application for membership of the Scottish Tobacco Free Alliance will be made, to ensure the Council has access to relevant support materials and advice for employees.
- 4.17 Discussions will also be held with Falkirk Community Trust, the Health & Social Care Partnership, and any other partners who may be affected by this change to promote the extension of these arrangements to their buildings and spaces. In addition, consideration will be given to a consultation exercise on smoke free environments for public parks and open spaces, with the aim of promoting smoke free areas to the benefit of our communities.

Governance Arrangements

- 4.18 Given the importance of this agenda to the future wellbeing of our workforce, a Wellbeing Group will be established to oversee the implementation of the strategy and any other actions associated with our Healthy Working Lives

award. The Group will include the two physical activity champions, a senior officer wellbeing champion (the Chief Executive, with the Head of HR & Business Transformation as his depute, for both this role and the senior officer physical activity champion), a representative from each Service, a representative from the HSCP, Trade Union representatives and employee representatives. Given the link to the business of Falkirk Community Trust, links will also be made with FCT.

- 4.19 Part of the role of the Group will include the communications to employees on the various initiatives that are being undertaken. The aim will be to link the work being done on the various strands of the strategy, to the wider health and wellbeing priorities of the Falkirk HSCP to ensure consistent messaging about key priority areas, although focusing on the strands of the strategy. For example, initiatives being undertaken on physical activity, healthy eating and smoking can all be linked to health priorities such as tackling diabetes, reducing obesity, reducing heart disease, etc. It is important that such links are made to ensure the full potential of the workplace actions are realised with employees potentially sharing their learning with members of their families too.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Employees were consulted through the Council's Employee Wellbeing Survey. A number of actions have already been discussed with the Trade Unions and a copy of this report has been issued to them prior to consideration by Members. CMT has also discussed and agreed the content of this report.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1 Delivering 20 Mentally Healthy Workplaces for Managers training sessions will cost circa £8 000 in trainer costs and will enable up to 320 managers (6th tier and above) to receive the training. It is estimated that there are approximately 670 1st – 6th tier managers across the Council (including Education employees).
- 6.2 The Council currently has capacity to deliver the Mental Health First Aider course at no direct cost to the Council due to an employee currently possessing the train the trainer qualification. This is the preferred delivery method to ensure best value for the Council, and options are being investigated to further increase this capacity. If the Council no longer had the internal resource to do this, staff could be sent to a training provider for £92 per person. Alternately, a training provider could be brought in to deliver a course at a cost of circa £800. Each course can train up to 16 people.

- 6.3 The provision of food preparation areas, changing & showering facilities and bike storage at Council buildings should be considered within the context of the Strategic Property Review. It is also suggested that the Council requires any further new build properties or major refurbishment projects to adequately budget for the delivery of these assets.
- 6.4 Funding for the re-introduction of the counselling service will require to be met from within existing Service budgets.
- 6.5 Implementing smoke free grounds would require removal of smoking shelters and the erection of signage. Disposal of shelters is estimated at £432 per shelter. Cost estimates for signage are currently circa £20,000. This is based upon an average of 1 large sign and 2 small signs per Council premises. Costs to erect signage is highly variable and have not been costed as the requirements will depend on the requirements of the premises.
- 6.6 There is currently no dedicated budget to support this work. The cost of this will require to be met from within existing Service budgets.

Resources

- 6.7 The Council's Wellbeing programme is currently delivered by the Health, Safety & Wellbeing team (3 FTE for the Council, the Council employee areas of the HSCP and FCT). The work of this team includes statutory health and safety activities and actions, which will require to take priority. Whilst every effort will be made to deliver to the proposed timescales contained within this report, the support of other officers will be required.

Legal

- 6.8 No legal implications arise from this report.

Risk

- 6.9 Some of the messages within the actions of the proposed strategy may be difficult for some employees. For example, the introduction of smoke free grounds. It will be important to ensure appropriate communications and support, if such actions are to be implemented successfully. If however, the strategy is not implemented, there is a risk that the wellbeing of our workforce deteriorates, which in turn impacts on service delivery, attendance and morale across our workforce. No other risk implications arise from this report.

Equalities

- 6.10 An equality & poverty impact assessment was not required as part of this report.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

6.11 A sustainability/environmental impact assessment was not required as part of this report.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The wellbeing of our workforce is important to the future success of the Council. A number of actions are being proposed as part of a wellbeing strategy to both support employee wellbeing and to respond to employee feedback on the actions the Council can take.

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Date: 18th September 2019

Appendices

Action Plan

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- None

Appendix 1 – Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan

Action	By Who	By When
Promoting Physical Activity Across Our Workforce		
Appoint two physical activity champions – one from management, one representing employees	Human Resources	31/12/2019
Better promote the voluntary benefits package and in particular, the health and fitness support options	Human Resources	31/12/2019
Develop & implement criteria for ensuring employee access to appropriate showering and changing facilities as part of any major refurbishment work or new build of Council employee accommodation	Development Services	31/03/2020
Consider employee access to appropriate secure bike storage facilities as part of the Strategic Property Review	Development Services/Finance	31/03/2020
Develop & implement criteria for ensuring employee access to secure bike storage facilities as part of any major refurbishment work or new build of Council employee accommodation	Development Services	31/03/2020
Consider employee access to appropriate showering and changing facilities as part of the Strategic Property Review	Development Services/Finance	31/03/2020
Achieve the requirements of the Exemplar Physical Activity Employer Award	All Services	31/03/2023
Encourage Improved Healthy Eating Across Our Workforce		
Ensure meal plans in our canteens and vending machines for employees is healthy and varied with good quality food	Children's Services (Catering team)	30/06/2020 (or as soon as contracts permit)
Consider employee access to appropriate food preparation areas as part of the Strategic Property Review	Development Services/Finance	31/03/2020
Develop & implement criteria for ensuring employee access to appropriate food preparation facilities as part of any major refurbishment work or new build of Council employee accommodation	Development Services	31/03/2020
Promote healthy eating across our workforce	Human Resources	Ongoing
Support Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace		
Ensure the impact on Service delivery due to reductions in headcount is adequately considered in medium term business plans and in reviews of structures/job descriptions and workloads	All Services	Ongoing

Action	By Who	By When
Conduct the See Me in Work Mental Health Check and commit to action plan	All Services	31/03/2020
Assess the provision of financial wellbeing support for employees and consider additional options	Human Resources	31/03/2020
Reinstate the Employee Counselling Service for employees	Human Resources	31/03/2020
Develop guidance for managers on actions they can take to support the wellbeing of employees in different situations	Human Resources	30/06/2020
Offer Mental Health First Aid training to existing first aiders and achieve 100 trained and active mental health first aiders	All Services	31/03/2022
Deliver 20 sessions Mentally Health Workplaces for Managers training	Human Resources	31/03/2023
50% of all 1 st to 6 th tier manager to receive Mentally Health Workplaces for Managers training	All Services	31/03/2023
Introduce Smoke Free Grounds		
Provide employees and Members with access to smoking cessation services	Human Resources	Ongoing
Apply for membership of the Scottish Tobacco Free Alliance	Human Resources	31/12/2019
Implement appropriate communications to support the introduction of smoke free grounds		Ongoing
Implement signage to advise of smoke free grounds	Human Resources	30/06/2020
Implement smoke free grounds across all Council premises		01/07/2020
General		
Deliver a wellbeing action plan covering the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Mental Health Activity • 2 Activities and 3 Information Campaigns on Health, Safety and Wellbeing • 1 Smoking Information Campaign • 1 Drug & Alcohol Awareness Information Campaign • 1 Information Campaign and 2 Events on Healthy Eating • 1 Information Campaign and 2 Events on Physical Activity 	Human Resources	Annually
Continue to deliver an action plan which will ensure the Council retains the Gold Healthy Working Lives award	Human Resources	Ongoing
Establish a Wellbeing Group	Human Resources	31/12/2019