

# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

### **Impact of Covid on Staff in the Housing and Communities Directorate**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Cllr F Smith.**

**Report Author: Suzie Rea (People Business Partner)**

#### **1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

This report is to summarise the impact of Covid 19 on staff within the Housing Directorate at Somerset West and Taunton Council since lockdown restrictions were announced, specifically around productivity and sickness absence.

#### **2. Recommendations**

Members of the Tenants' Strategic Group are asked to note and comment on the report content.

#### **3. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

Not applicable.

#### **4. Background and Full details of the Report**

Please see report below.

#### **5. Links to Corporate Strategy**

The report supports the Somerset West and Taunton strategic themes “a transparent and customer focused council” and “homes and communities”.

#### **6. Finance / Resource Implications**

Not applicable.

**7. Legal Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**8. Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)**

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the report.

**9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**10. Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**11. Social Value Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**12. Partnership Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**13. Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**14. Asset Management Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**15. Data Protection Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**16. Consultation Implications (if any)**

Not applicable.

**17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)**

Not applicable, report for note and comment of Tenants' Strategic Group.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – No**

**Reporting Frequency: Ad-hoc - Yes**

**Contact Officers**

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## Tenant Strategic Group – May 2021

### Impact of Covid on Staff in the Housing and Communities Directorate

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#### **Introduction**

This report is to summarise the impact of Covid 19 on staff within the Housing Directorate at Somerset West and Taunton Council since lockdown restrictions were announced, specifically around productivity and sickness absence.

#### **Background**

Somerset West and Taunton Council closed its places of work on 23 March 2020 and with immediate effect all office based staff moved to remote working. All staff were given access to a laptop or PC and Microsoft Teams was rolled out within the first six weeks and became the primary platform for meetings, calls and general contact. Since then most office-based staff have continued to be based primarily at home, with exceptions made for those unable to do so due to personal reasons (eg mental health issues or lack of space for a safe work space).

#### **Trades Staff**

The Repairs and Maintenance Team have continued to work throughout, prioritising emergency repairs and ensuring void properties continue to be turned around for relet. This was despite a significant reduction in staff capacity during the first lockdown, with a number of staff shielding or caring for young children or vulnerable family members.

#### **Productivity**

Although no specific measures of productivity have been conducted, responses from recent council-wide staff surveys show that overall, staff were working more hours (partly due to lack of commuting time) and were more productive. The majority continue to feel satisfied working from home with most now having a dedicated workspace.

## **Sickness Absence Levels**

Average number of days sickness per employee for the whole Council:

April 2019 to March 2020: **11.6 days per person**

April 2020 – March 2021: **5.8 days per person**

Average number of days sickness per employee for the Housing Directorate:

April 2020 – March 2021: **5.6 days per person**

Days lost due to Covid 19: **306** days in total including vaccine side effects – this is 9.16% of all sickness for the year at a cost of £35,704.

Days lost due to Covid 19 in the Housing Directorate – **0.6** days per person

This shows significant decrease in the number of days lost to sickness compared to the previous year. The days lost to Covid-related sickness are comparable to those lost due to coughs/colds/flu in previous years so overall have not impacted the cost of sickness significantly.

The figures are in line with national data measuring sickness levels across all sectors, where the lowest levels of sickness since 1995 were recorded in 2020, 14% of which were attributed to Covid19.

## **Next Steps**

- Continue to monitor sickness absence levels and reasons
- Continue to offer our package of wellbeing support and resources to staff
- Ensure risk assessments and DSE assessments are carried out on home working spaces and offer additional equipment and resources to ensure that staff continue to be able to carry out their work at home
- Continue to monitor our risk assessments for staff working in people's homes to ensure that staff and residents are kept safe during the Covid pandemic