

Report of the Chief Executive

MINIMISING THE EFFECTS OF COVID 19 ON STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING1. Purpose of report

To advise Committee of actions being taken to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff during the Covid 19

2. Detail

The coronavirus pandemic has caused exceptionally challenging and worrying times for everyone. The percentage of adults in Great Britain that said their well-being was being affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was 53% between 28 October and 1 November 2020, according to ONS data. The effects of social distancing, lockdown, as well as concerns about contracting the illness, and sadly in some cases, bereavement, are putting a strain on our mental health and wellbeing; and will continue to have lasting effects long after lockdown is over.

We do not yet know exactly what the mental health impacts of COVID-19 will be. There are many factors to consider. In terms of the workforce, information from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) confirms that some employees will be fearful about contracting the virus, others will be anxious about family and friends. There will also be fears about job security, returning to the workplace (including using public transport for commuting) and financial concerns. Some employees are working longer or more irregular hours and many are combining work with family responsibilities, leading to a poor work-life balance. For some, there are also potential mental health implications of furlough leave or the job support scheme. Employees have also reported to the CIPD feelings of reduced motivation, loss of purpose, anxiety and isolation.

At Broxtowe Borough Council, a number of changes have had to be made to the way staff undertake their duties, not least of which is the homeworking which is now the norm for many officers. It is recognised that these changes can also contribute to concerns. Substantial efforts have been made, therefore, by management, the Human Resources Team, and the Communications Team, to ensure that measures are in place to help staff cope with the impacts of Covid-19 as well as changes in working practices, and address any concerns they may have. A summary of these measures is given in appendix 1. Insights are being gained all the time – latterly from the equality working group whose input is also included in appendix 2

Anecdotal feedback would suggest that the measures are working and are providing a sound basis for the protection of mental health and wellbeing among our workforce.

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked to NOTE the actions being taken to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff during the Covid -19 pandemic.

Background papers: Nil