

	AGENDA ITEM NO.
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Report Cover Sheet

Name of Meeting:	Employment Committee
Date of Meeting:	18th September 2007
Report Title:	Sickness Absence Monitoring
Summary of report:	This report summarises the key findings from an analysis of sickness absence during the year 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007.
For Further Information Please Contact (report author):	Liz Reed, HR Manager (Acting)
Business Unit:	Corporate Personnel Services
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Policy Framework:	No
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budgetary framework:	No
Wards of the District directly affected by this decision:	None
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan?	No
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No
Background Papers:	None

Consultation Undertaken

Below is a table of the Council's regular consultees. However not all have to be consulted on every matter and if there was no obligation to consult with a specific consultee they will be marked as n/a.

Consultees	Yes/ No	Who
Other Committees	n/a	
Ward Councillors	n/a	
Portfolio Holders	n/a	
Other Councillors	n/a	
Warwick District Council recognised Trades Unions	n/a	
Other Warwick District Council Service Areas	n/a	

Project partners	n/a	
Parish/Town Council	n/a	
Highways Authority	n/a	
Residents	n/a	
Citizens Panel	n/a	
Other consultees	n/a	
Officer Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports must be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance Services and Legal Services.		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director(s)	July 2007	Karen Pearce
Chief Executive		
CMT	8th August 07	
Section 151 Officer		
Legal		
Finance		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the proposed actions.
- 1.2 The Chair of Employment Committee and the HR Manager (Acting) review the content and frequency of the annual HR Management Information reporting requirements.
- 1.3 Audit and Resources Committee have asked the Employment Committee to discuss the possibility of reporting sickness absence on a quarterly basis and report their decision back to them.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Appendix A breaks down by service areas the total number of working days lost due to sickness absence and shows the average number of working days lost per employee both with and without long-term sickness included in the calculations. It also shows a comparison with previous years. Please note: in line with BVPI monitoring requirements, from 2004/05 both the number of staff and number of sickness absence days lost are shown as full time equivalent (FTE).
- 2.2 Appendix B provides details of long-term sickness absence only.
- 2.3 Appendix C shows the reasons for sickness absence and compares this with the results of the West Midlands Local Government Association's survey for 2004/5 (data not published for 05/06 or 06/07).
- 2.4 Appendix D gives a five year comparison of both short and long-term sickness absence and a five year comparison of the number of long-term sickness cases.
- 2.5 Appendix E shows the national average sickness absence for the whole of the public and private sectors and presents the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) absence data for West Midlands District Councils for 2005/2006 (these figures are published one year in arrears).
- 2.6 Appendix F shows the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) trend over time compared with the top quartile.

3. MAIN POINTS FROM THE DATA

- 3.1 The total number of FTE working days lost due to sickness absence from 1st April 2006 until 31st March 2007 was 4,960.7 which is an average of 10.19 days per employee (4.47% of working time) or 5.29 days if long-term sickness (20 days or more) is taken out of the calculation.
- 3.2 The average number of days lost per employee increased by 1 day over the previous year and increased by 0.6 of a day per employee when short-term only sickness absence is examined.
- 3.3 In 2006/2007 there were 47 cases of long-term sickness (9.7% of FTE staff) which accounted for a total of 2,386 days or 48.1% of all the absence for the year. On

average, employees taking long-term sickness were absent for 50.77 days. The number of long-term cases increased by 14 (+42.4%) over the previous year and the number of days lost due to long-term absence increased by 7.5%.

- 3.4 12 (25.5%) of the individuals who took long-term sickness absence during the year have now left the Council's employment.
- 3.5 The reason attributed to 34.9 % of all long-term sickness (19.31% of total sickness absence) was stress, depression, mental health & fatigue. The WMLGA's National Survey recorded that this was the reason for 20.7% of all sickness absence in English and Welsh Local Authorities during 2004/05.
- 3.6 The other major cause of long-term sickness was back, neck and other musculo-skeletal problems (17.7% of all long-term and 14.93% of total absence). According to WMLGA's survey this reason accounted for 22.5% of all sickness absence for 2004/05.
- 3.7 When short-term only absence is examined the main recorded cause was infections (26.95% of all short-term absence).
- 3.8 27.7% of all sickness was attributed to reasons outside our reporting categories or non-specified reasons. Centralisation of personnel administration should in future lead to less absence being recorded as non-specified with systems in place to monitor and chase outstanding self-certification forms.
- 3.9 The CIPD reported that the average number of days lost due to sickness absence in 2005/06 was 9.9 for the whole of the public sector and 6.8 for the whole of the private sector.
- 3.10 The BVPI results for 2005/2006 showed that the West Midlands district council average was 10.04 days or 4.4%.

4. **ACTION**

- 4.1 Sickness absence continues to be a key area of concern for Warwick District Council as a whole and is a priority for Corporate Personnel Services. Levels of non-attendance remain unacceptably high, resulting in both a financial cost and non-financial impact. This position cannot continue.
- 4.2 With the centralisation of the HR service, a priority is to introduce a consistent approach to the management, monitoring and reporting of sickness absence cases. The HR team are currently working on the following actions:-
 - Reviewing and updating of the current policy
 - Writing of absence management procedures and guidelines for both managers and staff
 - The introduction of return to work meetings for all staff after a period of absence, regardless of duration
 - A review of the current trigger points for absence
 - Training for line managers in the management of sickness absence

- Monthly meetings by the HR Manager (Acting) with all Heads of Service on a one-to-one basis to discuss attendance issues and action being taken to manage poor and persistent absenteeism
- Ongoing monitoring of long-term sickness absence with a tighter capability procedure and clear action planning
- Review of the current Occupational Health provision to ensure Warwick District Council is receiving a comprehensive service that supports the management of long-term absence.

4.3 The cost of sickness absence for Warwick District Council in the year April 2006 – March 2007 is: (figure to follow – currently with HR and Finance). This includes a cost of £20,160 for resource cover during the absence of employees on long-term sickness.