

Report To: Council

Date of Meeting: 8th April 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Barbara Smith

Report Author: Julie Worrall, HR Business Partner

Title: Attendance at Work Procedure

1. What is the report about?

Over the last 12 months HR supported by Jamie Groves (Head of Service for Communications, Marketing and Leisure) have undertaken a significant review of Absence Management across the organisation.

This review has included considering the relevance and application of the current policy, the understanding managers have regarding managing absence, the roles undertaken within the current process by managers, employees, HR and Occupational Health (OH). This has included reviewing best practice from other public and private sector organisations who manage absence successfully – this has been determined by either a reduction in days lost related to absence within the workplace or maintenance of lower average days lost related to absence within the workplace for a sustainable period.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To introduce the new Attendance at Work procedure that will allow the organisation to manage absence in a more proactive way, aiming to reduce the average days lost per employee across the organisation and therefore increasing productivity and service delivery for our customers and that the cost of absence is reduced.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Full Council agrees to adopt the Attendance at Work Procedure.

4. Report details.

Throughout the project's life feedback has been gathered from managers concerning the size, accessibility and interpretation of the current procedure. The main areas that have been highlighted where understanding and practice vary significantly are:

- Calculation, interpretation and use of the Bradford Factor Formula
- Understanding and use of the Health Management Panel
- Referral to and role of OH.

The new procedure focuses on addressing these concerns and presenting a clear and structured process for managers to follow and employees to understand. The main changes are:

- Introduction of Trigger levels – 4 main triggers that should an employee meet they will be entered into an absence capability process.
- More autonomy of decision making for the services by the removal of the Health Management Panel (this is currently a panel that meets monthly, therefore there are time lags in decision being supported or questioned). It is proposed that instead there will be an inbuilt audit process where cases are escalated within the Services Management Team, and if a Head of Service has been involved in the case prior to the escalation then a peer is asked to review the process undertaken.
- The introduction of 3 clear absence capability stages that allow for attendance targets to be set and monitored for a defined period.
- There is a review of the provision of OH with a new structure and definition of the roles under consultation with SLT. The purpose of the provision is to support attendance at work and assist services in understanding absence causes, trends and how to prevent or reduce absence from occurring.

A copy of the policy is attached in Appendix A.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The agreement and implementation of the revised procedure will allow the Council to manage its workforce in order to achieve the corporate priorities, by improving attendance at work therefore increasing productivity, service and reducing costs.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There will be no additional costs with the procedure and implementation. There is an expectation that the new procedure will produce a reduction on the cost of absence and therefore allow services to create efficiency savings and increase service delivery.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

A copy of the EIA is attached in Appendix B for information.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Throughout the project and development of the new procedure there have been discussions and updated with the HR Lead Member, Councillor Barbara Smith and also Councillor Bobby Feeley has participated in discussions through absence reviews within her service areas of Adult Services and Children and Family Services.

The changes to the policy have been distributed for consultation with the Council's

Senior Leadership Team and recognised Trade Unions. The policy will be presented to LJCC on the 2nd April 2014 with a recommendation that it is presented to Full Council for adoption.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Ensuring that the Council has low levels of sickness absence will support the need to become more efficient given the long term financial pressures the Council is facing. There are no significant cost implications resulting from the proposed changes to the Attendance at Work procedure. The Chief Finance Officer and Head of HR have been updated and consulted on the development of the new procedure.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The proposed changes have addressed the risk of inconsistent application of the procedure by the provision of guidance on how managers determine outcomes of discussions. In addition there will be specific training sessions and support provided by HR and Jamie Groves and his management team in the early implementation of the procedure to ensure managers have a full understanding of their role.

11. Power to make the Decision

Power to make the decision is s112 Local Government Act 1972.