

Agenda Item No: 8

**Report
No:175/15**

Report Title: Sickness Report

Report To: Employment Committee Date: 7 December 2015

Cabinet Member:

Ward(s) Affected: All

Report By: Helen Knight & Becky Cooke

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Purpose of Report:

To update the Employment Committee regarding the Council's sickness figures.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To note the report.
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Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 The Committee have asked for a regular item to be presented regarding the absence statistics within the Council.

Information

- 2 The figures for Quarter 2 of 2015/16 (1 July to 30 September 2015) are presented as background papers to this report. The average number of days' absence per employee for Q2 was 2.98. Points to note are:
 - 2.1 The data for Q2 is the last which will be presented with the 'old' service area headings. Q3 (from 1 October to 31 December 2015) will be the first available on the new structure of the HR and Payroll system and will represent the Council's current structure. It is worth being aware that it will not easily be possible to make a direct comparison to Q2 figures as some staff will have been moved from one service area to another. However as we continue to present data on an going basis from hereon in, each quarter we will have more information to reflect back on and identify trends

- 2.2 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) undertake an annual absence management survey each year, and results from their 2015 survey show that the national average absence figure has increased slightly from their 2014 results from 6.6 days to 6.9 days per employee per year. Average absence has increased most in the public services sector to 8.8 days per employee per annum (where it is now 50% higher than in the private sector). On average manual workers have 1.5 more days' absence per year than non-manual workers. Just a quarter of organisations achieved their 2014 target to reduce employee absence.
- 2.3 Sickness absence for Q2 at LDC has increased from Q1 and has also increased from the same quarter last year. This can in part be attributed to a number of long term absence cases, particularly in the areas of Housing and Waste Services. Overall, long term sickness represented 67% of the total absence figure in Q2. In Waste Services specifically, 75% of absence in Q2 relates to long term cases, and all of which are being managed through the Sickness Procedure. By removing Waste Services absence, the overall LDC figure for Q2 reduces to 2.18 which is a figure that is more in line with neighbouring authorities who don't have an in house waste service, and also with national public sector absence rates.
- 2.4 During Q2 there were 19 separate instances of long term absence (over 3 weeks) some of which started in the previous quarter, with 13 still being off - 4 of the 19 have now left the organisation and 1 has commenced maternity leave.

9 cases (47.36%) were in Waste Services. Since these figures were produced this has reduced to 3 due to employees returning to work, leaving or retiring.

The remaining 10 were across a variety of areas.

Reasons for absence were varied:

- 4 – musculoskeletal (not back)
- 2 – cancer
- 4 – stress (3 of whom cite work related stress)
- Remaining – various.

56.02% of total days lost in Q2 to long term absence were from Waste Services.

- 2.5 During Q2 there were 90 separate instances of short term absence. 46 of these instances (51%) were in Waste Services with the rest being

spread out across the organisation. 41.89% of total days lost in Q2 to short term absence were from Waste Services.

2.6 During Q2 51.28 % of total days/overall absence for short and long term absences came from Waste Services.

2.7 There were some notable increases in particular service areas during Q2 (from Q1) and these are largely due to long term absences which have either now ended or are being managed with support from HR as follows:

Property, Regeneration & Enterprise: Long term absence of employee who has resigned since the Q2 figures were produced

Housing: A long term absence has now resulted in Ill Health Retirement for one employee, another employee is long term absent and is expected to remain so until the New Year as they are receiving treatment for Cancer.

Internal Services: A long term absence for one employee was for a pregnancy related reason and ceased when her maternity leave started

Waste and Recycling: Several of the long term absences noted during Q2 have now returned to work with just a couple of employees still absent and progressing through the stages of the Sickness procedure

Planning and Environmental Health: Had a significant reduction during Q2 as a long term absence resulted in Ill Health Retirement.

2.8 The sickness policy is currently being reviewed. Feedback has suggested it needs to have clearer guidelines around managing absence, particularly long term cases. The review will also consider bringing the trigger levels into line with other authorities. HR will liaise with Unison about these revisions, and the final draft version will be brought to Employment Committee for discussion.

2.9 Finally, CMT are working with their heads of service to ensure that the momentum of sickness absence management is not lost, particularly in Waste Services which accounts overall for over 50% of our lost days.

3 Financial Appraisal

3.1 The financial implications of this report are the number of working days lost to sickness.

4 Legal Implications

4.1 The Legal Services Department have not been asked for comments.

5 Sustainability Implications

- 5.1 I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report/budget monitoring report/development control report

6 Equality Screening

- 6.1 Equality analysis is not required as this is an information only report with no key decisions attached.

7 Background Papers

- 7.1 Excel spreadsheet showing the Council's sickness figures for Quarter 2 (1 July to 30 September 2015)
- 7.2 Excel Spreadsheet showing reasons for absence (by service area) during Quarter 2