

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Finance & Staffing Portfolio Holder 25 August 2009

**AUTHOR/S:** Chief Executive/ HR Officer

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### MANAGEMENT OF SICKNESS ABSENCE APRIL – JUNE 09

#### Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide information for the Portfolio Holder on the Management of Sickness Absence for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009.
2. This is not a key decision but forms part of the regular monitoring reports.

#### Executive Summary

3. The actions taken by EMT and the HR team are having an effect on sickness absence, but everyone recognises this focus must continue to ensure managers continue to support staff, minimise the level of sickness absence and maximise performance.
4. The Portfolio Holder is recommended to note the contents of the report.

#### Background

##### 5. Sickness PI

The sickness PI for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009 was 1.73 days per full time equivalent (FTE), giving an estimated end of year figure of 6.92 days per FTE.

#### Trend information for BVPI 12 – days sickness per FTE

Year	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
BVPI 12 figure	10.75	11.15	10.15	12.69	6.92

6. This figure is a vast improvement on the figure for the same period in 2008/09. However, the first cases of H1N1 (Swine) flu occurred at the end of the period and cases are expected to have a significant effect on sickness absence figures over the next few months.

#### Considerations

7. On 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009 EMT received a report which reviewed the Management of Sickness Absence Policy. The report concluded that
  - major revision of the current policy is not needed to reflect best practice;
  - revision is needed to reflect changes in practice caused by the changes in pension legislation concerning ill health retirement;

- the review of the literature and action by other authorities suggests support to managers in dealing with all aspects of absence is key;
  - the management of sickness absence is moving to be part of a much wider agenda concerning wellbeing;
  - the Council has committed to becoming a “Mindful Employer” or “Fit 4 Business” over the next 3 years as part of the LSP, indicating that absence is a corporate issue and needs input from a wide cross section of expertise within the Council;
  - The Council needs to consider the resources required to meet this commitment.
8. Sickness absence processes were audited by Internal Audit at the end of June 2009. Recommendations have been made concerning more robust recording by managers of return to work interviews and follow up meetings where employees have hit particularly short term triggers. The documentation to support managers is being further reviewed.
9. Further training for managers has been identified as important. A small group of managers is assisting the HR team to draw up a specification for what is required.
10. One of the Executive Directors and the HR Manager met with a small focus group of employees to talk about attitudes to sickness and one of the key findings was that staff need more communication about the levels of sickness absences. This has been taken on board using mechanisms such as the Corporate Briefings.
11. The HR Officer is preparing a Wellbeing Strategy, which will bring together in one document the many things which are being done to support staff wellbeing.
12. Following the changes made by Cambridgeshire County Council concerning ill health retirement cases, one case has reached a conclusion within 4 weeks of submission of the paperwork to the Independent Doctor. This is a significant improvement on previous timescales and progress will continue to be monitored.

### Options

13. There are no options as the report is for information only.

### Implications

14. Financial	Under the Green Book the maximum amount of contractual sick pay after 5 years local government service is 6 months at full pay, 6 months half pay.
Legal	The Council has an obligation to make reasonable adjustments to allow a disabled employee to continue working or to join the organisation. Sickness records are a protected category under the Data Protection Act provisions in relation to employee records.
Staffing	Sickness absence means duties need to be covered or reallocated to ensure continuity of service delivery
Risk Management	There are minimal levels of risk
Equal Opportunities	There is currently minimal monitoring from an equal opportunity perspective on sickness absence

### Consultations

15. Consultations are as detailed in the report.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

16.	<b>Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.</b>
	Reducing the number of days lost to sickness absence will have an impact on improving service delivery for residents.
	<b>Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.</b>
	As a main partner of the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Improving Health Partnership (a theme group of the South Cambridgeshire LSP) the Council has committed itself to lead by example.
	<b>Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.</b>
	<b>Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.</b>
	<b>Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.</b>

### **Recommendations**

17. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder notes the content of the report.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Performance Indicators

EMT report – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009 – Review of Managing Sickness Absence Policy

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