PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
2 November 2017

ITEM 9

Derby City Council

Report of the Director of Governance and
Monitoring Officer

Sickness Absence update

SUMMARY	

1.1	The Committee requested a continuous and active focus on managing attendance to support the Council in achieving its target of 8.4 days per full time equivalent employee by quarter four.
1.2	This report is a quarterly update on progress as requested.
1.3	A corporate Attendance Management Project Group, led by a Service Director, has been established to provide strategic focus and drive to managing attendance to improve the Councils performance.

RECOMMENDATION

2.1	To note the continued corporate approach to reducing sickness absence across the Council.
2.2	To note the establishment of the Service Director led Attendance Management Project Group. The group incorporates, Occupational Health, Health and Wellbeing, Health and Safety, HR and Organisational Development teams to provide a co-ordinated corporate and strategic approach to managing sickness absence.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1   The Council must continue to take proactive measures to accurately monitor its sickness absence, and take appropriate actions to address any issues that arise from such monitoring. This can only be achieved by ensuring there is a strategic co-ordinated approach with relevant departments which can support managers with attendance management.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1	The Council continues to underperform against a sickness absence target of 8.4 days per full time equivalent by the end of quarter 4 2017/2018.
4.2	Whilst quarter 1 has revealed 3 days lost per FTE this is still above our target of 2.1 days per quarter.

4.3	Sickness absence has received increased focus at Chief Officer Group and at departmental Management Team meetings during the last few months.
4.4	Monthly departmental sickness absence data for Strategic/Service Directors and Heads of Service has continued to be refined and now include a more visual format and key performance information to provide key sickness absence information (anonymised example at Appendix 2).
4.5	Since the introduction of FirstCare absence reporting on the 1st of June 2017, there is now an increased provision of real time sickness absence data available. This continues to support the organisation to identify hotspots and trends throughout departments. Further development of FirstCare reporting and associated management support such as direct links to stress management tools including counselling services have been developed.
4.6	HR have been reviewing the sickness absence data during the summer to provide recommendations which the corporate Attendance Management Project Group will consider.
4.7	Visits to both Leicester and Nottingham City Council HR departments were also undertaken as part of this this work, in an attempt to provide Derby with ideas and solutions that could be adopted within the Council. Whilst Nottingham and Leicester's absence figures are lower than Derby's, the sharing of initiatives, best practice and approach should be very beneficial to the Council.
4.8	HR Advisors continue to monitor departmental absence reports focusing on performance targets. By supporting managers to reduce the top ten absences accounting for the most number of day's absence, there should be a positive impact on departmental performance outcomes.
4.9	HR continues support to managers in managing their attendance and has developed internal development strategies to ensure the consistent application of the Attendance Management Policy. This includes training, and the continuous development of a list of frequently asked questions for both managers and staff.
5.0	Whilst numerous other departmental strategies are being applied to support sickness absence reduction, these are not joined up or strategically led. These include ad-hoc training sessions and initiatives.
5.1	By adopting a co-ordinated strategic approach to share expertise and resources will be far more effective and efficient in achieving a reduction in absence levels. Both Leicester and Nottingham City Council have applied the same approach and have achieved favourable outcomes.
5.2	Chief Officer Group has agreed that a Service Director will lead the Project Group and draw on the relevant resources and expertise from both Occupational Health, HR, Organisational development, Health and Safety and Health and Wellbeing to form a more strategic approach in managing attendance across the organisation.
5.3	Initial meetings of the Project group have already been undertaken and a paper to Chief Officers to include short medium and long term proposals will be presented in early October.

5.4	A Performance Surgery on Attendance Management and the Councils performance is scheduled to take place on the 18th of October.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.0 Do nothing. The Council could continue to manage absence without a co-ordinated approach with different strategies and approaches; however it is essential that the relevant services and expertise is utilised and joined up to to provide the most efficient results.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Liz Moore – Head of HR

For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Claire.benajmin@derby.gov.uk HR Advisor 01332 643666 *Corporate Sickness absence approach 13 April 2017* *Sickness absence update 27 June 2017* *Appendix 1: Implications* *Appendix 2 Anonymised example of a current sickness absence report*

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

1.1   A co-ordinated and integrated Project Group collectively focusing on reducing sickness absence and preventative measures will utilise expertise and available resources to support the reduction of sickness absence. This should have a positive impact on sickness absence costs.

Legal

2.1   None arising directly from this report other than consequential sickness absence related employee claims against the authority e.g., employment tribunal and health and safety claims.

Personnel

3.1   A strategic co-ordinated approach to managing attendance will assist managers to manage attendance more effectively and support employees to attend work regularly.

IT

4.1   Having real time and accurate sickness absence data is key to support the Project's success.

Equalities Impact

5.1   Effective and targeted Attendance Management will promote the exploration of reasonable adjustments to support employees to attend work regularly and identify early interventions to support employees.

Health and Safety

6.1   Stress management is key to ensuring that our obligations under Health and Safety are met to support employees to remain in work.

Environmental Sustainability

7.1   None arising directly from this report.

Property and Asset Management

8.1   None arising directly from this report.

Risk Management and Safeguarding

9.1   There are risks that continued absence levels could result in reduced productivity, employee dis-engagement, increasing financial costs relating to occupational sick payments, agency cover and relief staff costs, health and safety and employment tribunal claims.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

10.1   Effective attendance management will have a positive impact on an employee's health and wellbeing and an overall increase in the performance of Council services.