

SUBJECT: INTERNAL AUDIT: ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY,
THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority are subject to internal audits by representatives from Sunderland City Council.
- 1.2 An internal audit of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority's Attendance Management systems has recently been carried out.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of the regular audit process undertaken, the Authority was notified by Internal Audit Services' in early April 2008 of an audit of Attendance Management systems.
- 2.2 The objectives of the audit were to review, appraise, and report to management upon whether:
- An adequate and effective attendance management policy is in place which is reviewed at appropriate intervals.
 - The attendance management policy has been appropriately communicated to all staff.
 - Appropriate arrangements are in place to manage sickness absence.
 - Management information is timely, clear and accurate.
- 2.3 The scope of the audit included analysis of:
- Policies and procedures;
 - Communication and training;
 - Sickness absence monitoring arrangements;
 - Management information; and
 - Reporting arrangements.
- 2.4 Controls were identified which were expected to be in place, to minimise exposure to the identified risks to an acceptable level. The application and operation of the systems were then assessed to assess whether the expected controls, or other compensating controls, were in place.

3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 3.1 The audit did not reveal any matters that were considered to be of notable risk and identified that the systems in place in the majority of areas are good and incorporate appropriate controls that are being complied with.

- 3.2 The following specific areas of good practice were noted:
- There is a comprehensive attendance management policy in place. The attendance management policy and associated procedures are available to all Authority staff via the Intranet and include version control.
 - Detailed management information is produced detailing the performance against attendance management targets and the actions being undertaken to improve the attendance rates. It was also pleasing to note that attendance management information is detailed within the Authority's strategic plan and are embedded into the planning process.
 - The Authority has appropriate support mechanisms in place in relation to long term sickness. Employees are provided with support when experiencing attendance management issues including assistance from Occupational Health and through alternative duties scheme.
- 3.3 The audit has highlighted a small number of minor areas whereby controls could be strengthened, which were:
- The capability procedure which has been produced should be approved by the Human Resources Committee and following this, disseminated to all staff.
 - The attendance management policy should be updated to further detail the objectives of the policy and furthermore, to include reference to the quarterly reports to management and the annual report to the Human Resources Committee.
 - The attendance management policy should be updated to detail the allocation of responsibility for the above reporting arrangements.

4 CONCLUSION / OPINION STATEMENT

- 4.1 The results of the Internal Audit process found the Authority's Attendance Management systems and arrangements to be good. They further identified those effective controls in place that are consistently applied.
- 4.2 An action plan has been formulated to satisfy the considerations outlined in 3.3 above.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control; the realisation of efficiencies; the most appropriate use of limited resources; and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits. The risk to the authority has been assessed as low utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place. The complete risk assessment is available on request from the Chief Fire Officer.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no Health and Safety implications in respect of this report.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of this report;
- b) Endorse the progress made to date;
- c) Consider whether or not to make further reviews / recommendations in respect of absence management.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Strategic Plan 2006-2010
- Internal Audit Report: Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority Attendance Management Arrangements 2008/2009