

Report of the Chief Executive

Attendance Management

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide Members of the Management Scrutiny Committee with the further information requested at its meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009 in relation to the organisations performance on sickness absence for 2008/09.

**2. Sickness Statistics**

2.1 At the meeting in July the performance for the council on sickness absence for the year ending 2008/9 was reported as an average of 11.31 days per employee; this was compared to 11.9 days at the end of 2007/8.

2.2 Further information was requested at the meeting in particular the cause of the largest increase in sickness absence between 2007/8 and 2008/9, comparisons with the private sector, sickness in categories of short, medium and long term and any evidence of correlation of absence with school holidays.

**3.0 Absence data by reason for absence**

3.1 The information requested in relation to causes of absence was focussed on a comparison between 2007/8 and 2008/9. The table below shows the twelve categories of classification of reason for absence. The reason for absence is that reported by the employees at the time they report themselves absent.

Reason for absence	2007/8 %	2008/9 %
Back and Neck problems	11.1	11.5
Other Musculo Skeletal Problems	12.0	15.0
Chest and Respiratory	4.4	5.3
Eye, Ear, Nose and Mouth	4.5	4.4
Genito-urinary	3.5	4.6
Heart, blood pressure and circulation	5.4	4.1
Infections	8.9	10.3
Neurological	3.0	2.9
Pregnancy related	0.9	1.1
Stomach, Liver, Kidney and digestion	11.2	13.0
Mental ill-health including stress	24.1	23.0
Other	11.0	4.8

- 3.2 Members will see from the above table that in overall terms the reasons for absence have remained fairly stable in as much as musculo skeletal and mental ill-health remain constant as the two largest reasons for absence.
- 3.3 The slight variations in figures from one year to another may be accounted for by the reduction in the number of absences categorised as other from 11% in 2007/8 to 4.8% in 2008/9. Further work is underway to reduce this figure further.

#### **4.0 Comparison with the Private Sector**

- 4.1 The latest information available that provides a comparison across sectors is from research published in August of this year by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. In this research they report a private sector average of 6.4 days, public sector average of 9.7 days and health service average of 10.7 days.
- 4.2 In considering these figures it is important to note that these are figures reported by the sectors themselves and not necessarily using the same definition as a starting point.
- 4.3 The definition used by the council to report sickness absence is one that was established initially for local government as a suite of Best Value Performance indicators. It is no longer established as one of these national indicators however the decision was taken to continue to report absence in this way to ensure that we could track our performance relative to previous years. The definition used in this calculation is as follows:-

*The number of working days/shifts, (which an employee is scheduled to work), lost due to sickness absence per full time equivalent employee (FTE), recorded to the nearest half day.*

- 4.4 Members can be advised that the above definition includes any employees not in receipt of pay.

#### **5.0 Categorisation of sickness absence by short, medium and long term**

- 5.1 In considering the overall figures for the council Members requested information in relation to the breakdown of the above statistics by length of absence. The information detailed in the paragraph below shows absence categorised by short, medium and long term by month for the whole organisation for the period April 2008 to March 2009.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Short Term Sickness %</b>	<b>Medium Term Sickness %</b>	<b>Long Term Sickness %</b>
Apr-08	14.63%	18.98%	66.39%
May-08	15.67%	23.20%	61.12%
Jun-08	16.37%	19.45%	64.18%
Jul-08	11.02%	19.41%	69.56%
Aug-08	10.72%	15.52%	73.75%
Sep-08	15.92%	19.07%	65.00%
Oct-08	19.98%	21.27%	58.75%
Nov-08	26.30%	19.51%	54.20%
Dec-08	24.76%	18.57%	56.66%
Jan-09	20.65%	23.58%	55.78%
Feb-09	19.12%	18.25%	62.60%
Mar-09	16.26%	17.91%	65.83%

5.2 In considering the above information short term absence is 0 to 5 days, medium term is 6 - 20 days and long term is more than 20 days. Members will note from this information that the greatest percentage of absence is accounted for by long-term absence.

## **6.0 Correlation of absence with school holiday periods**

6.1 Members asked for consideration to be given to whether there was any correlation between school holidays periods and absence. In considering the data for sickness absence within school holidays for non school based employees for the last financial year it shows that there is a very slight increase in comparison with the average figure for the whole year, however it is not significant enough to demonstrate any trend.

## **7.0 Conclusions and Recommendation**

7.1 Members are asked to note the additional information provided.