

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Economy and Business Improvement Overview & Scrutiny - 23 January 2012**

### **Absence Management**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1 To provide an update to members on Cheltenham Borough Council's approach to managing and monitoring sickness absence

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

- 2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council is committed to delivering effectively and efficiently all its services. Quality customer service can only be achieved through committed employees who form its most valuable resource. High attendance levels are therefore vital in enabling the Council to meet its objectives. It is extremely important that employee attendance is managed properly, as poor levels of attendance can lead to loss of service delivery, reduced effectiveness, increased costs and increased pressures on colleagues to cover workloads. The Human Resources Advisors and the Corporate Health and Safety Advisors are working with line managers on a number of work streams to improve the health and wellbeing of employees and improve attendance rates. Appendix A outlines the work streams and the progress to date.

#### **3. Summary of evidence/information**

- 3.1 The Council has a corporate target to reduce sickness absence to 7.5 days per full time equivalent employee (FTE) for the financial year 2011/2012. An agreed quarterly reporting schedule is in place to collect results by divisions. An annual corporate total is also reported against this target. The table below details the total number of days lost for Cheltenham Borough Council in the first two quarters of this year and the comparable quarters from 2010-11.

<b>CBC</b>	<b>Jun-11</b>	<b>Sep11</b>	<b>Half Year 2011-12 Total</b>
<b>FTE Employees</b>	523	514	
<b>FTE Days Lost</b>	960	921	<b>1881</b>
<b>Average Days Lost per Employee</b>	<b>1.83</b> (2.11 same quarter in 2010)	<b>1.79</b> (2.48 same quarter in 2010)	<b>3.62</b> (4.59 half year 2010)

Please note quarter 3 (Dec 2011) data will be available at the end of January 2012.

**3.2** The target for 2010/2011 was 8 days. The Operations Division reported an average of 15.68 days per employee. The table below details the total number of days lost for the Operations Division in the first two quarters of this year and the comparable quarters from 2010-11.

Operations Division	Jun 11	Sep 11	Half Year 2011-12 Total
<b>Average Days Lost per Employee</b>	<b>0.80</b> (4.10 same quarter in 2010)	<b>0.84</b> (3.82 same quarter in 2010)	<b>1.64</b> (7.92 half year in 2010)

**3.3** Analysis of the 2010/11 sickness absence in the Operations Division showed a number of employees on long term absence. The employees were predominantly in the Waste and Recycling (W&R) and Cleansing teams.

**3.4** Within the W&R team, four employees accounted for nearly 750 out of 1300 days lost due to sickness during the period 2010-11. Of the four, two employees are no longer employed, one has returned to work following an operation on a pre-existing back condition and one has returned to work following treatment for cancer and is now in remission.

**3.5** Within the Cleansing team, five employees accounted for nearly 430 out of 625 days lost due to sickness during the period 2010-11. Of the five, three are no longer employed and the other two have seen their attendance improve as a result of their absence level being managed through the Council's Sickness Absence policy and procedure.

**3.6** These 9 employees had a significant impact on the overall absence statistics for Operations Division.

**3.7** A request by South West Councils for information on ill health for in-house Waste & Recycling only elicited information from one other council (Weymouth & Portland Borough Council) whose rate was 21.8 days per employee.

**3.8** In comparison to other LA's across the Country, a study being undertaken by the Health & Safety Laboratory shows that of the 19 participants, Cheltenham is approximately mid position. – see diagram below.

**3.9** The first set of data from the study highlights the percentage of employees who have taken at least one absence on the year.

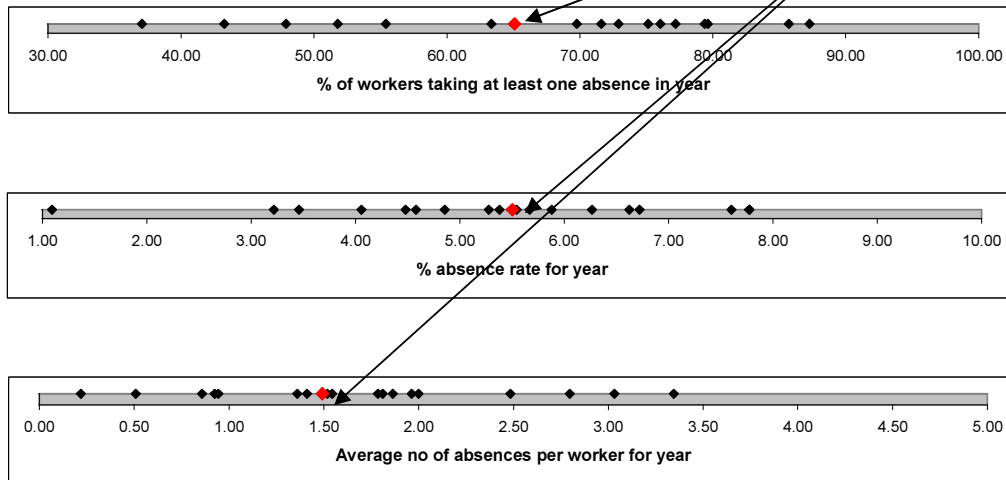
**3.10** The second set highlights the percentage of employees who are absent at any one time.

**3.11** The third set highlights the average number of occasions an employee is absent per year.

## HSL Results for 2010/11

### BENCHMARKING

Comparison of your sickness absence statistics (highlighted in red) to other participators in the survey (highlighted in black)



## 4. Conclusions

- 5.1 It is inevitable that employees do become ill and need to be absent from work. However, the Council rightly aims to have a high level of attendance and to deal with sickness absence fairly, consistently, and appropriately. With significant change and tough public spending cuts expected over the coming years, there is little room for complacency on this issue.

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### Background Papers

<b>Contact Officer</b>	Julie Mccarthy, HR Operations Manager, 01242 264355, <a href="mailto:julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk">julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountability</b>	Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Colin Hay
<b>Scrutiny Function</b>	EBI O&S.