

## Cabinet

16 December 2015

### Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Attendance Management Working Group Review



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## Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

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### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Cabinet the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee Attendance Management Working Group review report.

### Background

- 2 At the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014, during consideration of the Quarter 3 Performance Management report, reference was made to performance in respect of sickness absence targets not being met within Durham County Council. At this time questions were raised regarding the sickness absence management policy, the process of recording and managing sickness absence, the role of line managers in reducing sickness levels and the training available to staff. There was also interest in the link between appraisal completion and absence levels.
- 3 The Committee resolved that once the Committee's work on the Medium Term Financial Plan and budget was concluded, a working group would be set up to examine the sickness absence policy.
- 4 At the Corporate Issues OSC meeting on 20 April 2015, agreement was given to the establishment of a Working Group to examine attendance management issues including sickness absence. The Committee agreed that the working group would:-
  - receive an overview of the current policies and procedures including the role of occupational health;
  - Examine statistics relating to attendance management across the Council to gain an insight into trends and opportunities for improvement;
  - consider examples of best practice and research in respect of sickness absence management, and
  - receive information on staff, manager and Trade Union opinions and experiences of the sickness policy and management.
- 5 Evidence was gathered over a series of 5 meetings culminating in a presentation to the group on 28 September 2015 which highlighted key

findings from the review and at Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 November 2015 agreed the review report and the following recommendations:-

### **Recommendation 1**

The Working Group recommends the adoption of the draft Attendance Management Policy subject to those comments identified within paragraph 11 of this review report being considered for inclusion therein.

### **Recommendation 2**

The Working Group recommends that the Council continues to target long-term sickness absence as the key cause of below target sickness absence performance.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Working Group recommends that upon approval of the draft Attendance Management Policy, compulsory training be given to all DCC managers on the application of the new policy and associated procedures, making the links to such training as stress awareness, manual handling, workstation assessment and annual appraisal awareness; that this is incorporated into the Durham Managers' Programme and that the percentage of managers trained be reported to Scrutiny at appropriate intervals.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Working Group recommends that the current automated "reminder triggers" within the My View system be amended to send a reminder to managers after 20 calendar days that a Sickness Absence interview needs to be undertaken in the event that this has not already occurred and the escalation to senior manager e-mail after a further 7 days.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Working Group recommends that a review of the current OHS referral process be undertaken to include establishing a target for referral into the OHS service of 30 calendar days; an analysis of the impact upon OHS of implementing this target and an immediate referral into OHS for those employees whose absence has been due to mental wellbeing.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Working Group recommends that staff, managers and Trade Unions be engaged in the examination of suggested changes to the Attendance Management policy arising from this review in respect of My View Sickness Absence Interview reminders and the development of OHS referral targets.

### **Recommendation 7**

The Working Group recommends that a more comprehensive Council-wide staff survey be undertaken to inform organisational development, which would gather staff opinions on such issues as Health and wellbeing; attendance

management; appraisals; council policy; training and development and organisational culture with Councillors having direct input into the content of the questions via scrutiny.

### **Recommendation 8**

The Working Group recommends that that the Council review its current provision for the promotion of “Better Health at Work” and examine the potential to develop a more proactive and targeted approach to health and wellbeing promotion amongst its workforce.

### **Recommendation 9**

The Working Group recommends that following implementation of the Attendance Management Policy and in the event that attendance management performance has not shown improvement following sustained monitoring, a review of all trigger points within the policy be undertaken.

It is further recommended that a systematic review of the report and progress made against recommendations should be undertaken after consideration of this report by Cabinet, within six months.

- 6 A copy of the review report is attached at Appendix 2 for members’ information.

### **Service Grouping Response**

- 7 Resources Service grouping welcome the analysis and conclusions contained within the report, and will closely monitor the impact of these once implemented, with reporting back through the established channels.
- 8 ACE Service Grouping welcomes the conclusions of the report. In relation to staff engagement (recommendation 7), we are happy to share the overall approach to the staff survey with scrutiny.

### **Recommendation**

- 9 Cabinet is asked to note the report and recommendations and formulate a response within the six month period identified in the report for the systematic review of recommendations.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance – N/A**

**Staffing –** Recommendations within the review report are aimed at improving attendance management, the overall wellbeing of the Council's workforce as well as providing appropriate support, training and guidance to managers and staff in respect of the Attendance Management policy and its implementation

**Risk – N/A**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty –** The review report takes into consideration Equality and Diversity, an Equality Impact Assessment having been undertaken.

**Accommodation – N/A**

**Crime and Disorder – N/A**

**Human Rights – N/A**

**Consultation –** The report recommends that staff, Trade Unions and manager's be engaged in consideration of the review report and recommendations as part of the implementation of the revised Attendance Management policy.

**Procurement – N/A**

**Disability Issues – N/A**

**Legal Implications – N/A**