

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council : 23 February 2011

Subject: Approval for Establishment of a Short-Life Member/Officer Absence Working Group

1. Purpose

1.1 To seek approval from Council for the establishment of a short-life Member/Officer working group on absence.

2. Background

2.1 The Audit and Performance Review Committee regularly receives reports in relation to attendance on a council wide basis. At its meeting of 12 January 2011, it considered a more detailed report from the Director of Educational Services on absence profiles in Educational Services and the Department's approach to addressing sickness absence going forward.

2.2 In response to this and in its general scrutiny role, the Audit and Performance Review Committee agreed that the Chief Executive should seek approval from Council for the establishment of a short-life member/officer Working Group which would (i) consider ways of reducing sickness absence across the Council; (ii) produce a report to Committee and Council in respect of this.

3. Main Issues

3.1 This report provides some key performance information as background to the critical necessity for a corporate and sustained approach to the reduction of absence within the Council.

3.2 West Dunbartonshire Council is required to annually report organisational sickness absence to Audit Scotland. Each Department currently prepares its own statistics and Human Resources collates the information for statutory reporting into 2 categories i.e. Local Government Employees and Teachers in line with Audit Scotland requirements. The Council wide target for 2010/2011 is a reduction in absence to 11.75 which equates to a reduction by 0.5 days per whole time equivalent person.

West Dunbartonshire Council Sickness Absence Statistics 2009 - 2010

The table below summarises targets and achieved results related to previous years. Information is shown as FTE days lost per FTE employee.

	Figure Reported for 2008/2009	Target set for 2009/2010	Achieved 2009-2010	Trend
Local Government Employees	13.61	13	13.26	- 0.35
Teachers	7.05	6.5	7.41	+ 0.36
Council-wide	12.48	12	12.28	- 0.2

3.3 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reports that the national average number of days lost per employee for all public sector employers is 9.7 days (2009). The CIPD has also reported that Scotland generally reports higher levels of sickness absence across all sectors than the rest of the UK with an average of 10.1 days per employee.

3.4 National Performance Indicator on Absence

Although absence has improved marginally on a council wide basis and in particular for Local Government Employees Audit Scotland has recently published performance indicators for all Councils and West Dunbartonshire Council has slipped in the ranking ratings.

Teachers					
2008-09		2009-10			
WDC Days lost per Employee	Audit Scotland Ranking	WDC Days lost per Employee	Audit Scotland Ranking	Scottish Council average days lost	West Dunbartonshire Council variance from average
7.00	17	7.4	18	7.5	+ 0.1

Local Government Employees					
2008-09		2009-10			
WDC Days lost per Employee	Audit Scotland Ranking	WDC Days lost per Employee	Audit Scotland Ranking	Scottish Council average days lost	West Dunbartonshire Council variance from average
13.6	26	13.3	29	11.6	- 1.7

The highest performing Councils for year 2009-10, in the 2 reportable categories reported 5.7 days lost for Local Govt Employees (Dumfries and Galloway) and 5.1 for Teachers (Falkirk).

3.5 Costs

The high cost of absence continues to affect the efficient and effective delivery of Council Services. The costs are not just associated with the evident costs of occupational sick pay, overtime payments and agency fees, but also are believed to contribute to low morale and individual and team performance.

3.6 Epidemiology

The employee population of West Dunbartonshire Council is drawn largely from the local area and equates to approx 80% of our staff. In considering a way forward, the relatively poor health of the wider community has to be seen as a contributing factor in determining our future actions in tackling our high levels of absence.

3.7 Culture

The outcomes of the recent staff survey and budget consultation roadshows, provide clear indications that staff recognise absence as a problem for the Council and additionally that steps must be taken to address inconsistencies in management practice and misuse of the sick pay scheme in order to safeguard the benefit for all at times when it is needed.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** Recommendations from the Working Group will impact on all staff and as such it will be critical to ensure a broad based membership to enable the full utilisation of the skills, knowledge and expertise of Elected Members and Officers from across the Council.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The reduction of absence across the Council will have significant financial benefit which will in turn, contribute to the more efficient and effective delivery of Council services.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** It was not necessary to carry out a risk assessment at this stage.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment is not necessary at this stage but will be required to assess the impact of any recommendations.

8. Conclusions & Officers Recommendations

- 8.1** It is recommended that a short-life Member/Officer Absence Working Group be established to support a robust and joined up focus across the Council in facilitating improved performance in the management of absence.
- 8.2** A draft Terms of Reference is attached as an appendix to this report and Council is asked to approve the content and detail of this document.
- 8.3** A future report will be presented to Council on the recommendations of the Working Group.

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David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 7 February 2011

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Appendices: Appendix A - Terms of Reference

Wards Affected: N/A