

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

Report of the Chief Executive to the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 18 June 2009

SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline Breckland's sickness absence management policy and procedure and its impact on sickness levels for review by the committee.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Review the sickness absence management policy and procedure and its impact on sickness levels at Breckland Council.

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Council's sickness absence management policy and procedure was reviewed and amended in line with best practice in quarter 1/2 of 2008. Training sessions entitled 'Promoting Positive Attendance' were then rolled out across the organisation to all line managers, and all staff were invited to attend workshops and were given laminated 'sickness absence process' cards. In addition, regular sickness absence management training sessions are also held for new managers, details of which are available on the staff intranet.

3.1.2 A copy of the sickness absence management policy and procedure is attached to this report in Appendix 1 for review by the committee. The key elements of the procedure include:

- Return to work interviews to be held with employees after every period of sickness absence, regardless of the length of the absence or overall absence record. Managers are required to meet with the employee, carry out a return to work interview and complete a return to work interview form. A copy of the form is provided to the employee and HR.
- Employees must notify their manager that they will be absent by 9.45am. This is consistent with the employment contracts.
- Where an individual's absence level meets one of the following **trigger points**, the manager will review the absence levels with the employee.
 - Three or more instances of sickness absence in any rolling 3 month period.
 - Any other recurring recognisable patterns, such as frequent absenteeism on a Friday or Monday.
 - All long term absences of one calendar month or more.
- The procedure outlines an informal and a formal approach to managing sickness absence once trigger points have been reached.

3.1.3 The average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness absence in 2007/08 per employee FTE was **9.68**. In 2008/09 this figure had reduced to **8.82**, showing a

decrease of almost one day per employee per year.

- 3.1.4 Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) data for 2007/08 shows that the Council's average rate compares favourably with UK statistics, the UK average for all Councils being **9.4** days per employee, and for Districts the average being **9.5** days per employee.

3.3 Issues

- 3.3.1 Long term sickness at Breckland Council comprises approximately **2.7** working days / shifts lost from the total average figure of **8.82** per employee, which is equal to **31%** of the total figure. In response to this, HR are working with line managers to manage all individual instances of long term sickness through Occupational Health and where necessary through the capability or disciplinary process.

- 3.3.2 The top three reasons for sickness absence are:

1. Coughs / cold / flu
2. Anxiety / stress (work and/or personal)
3. Back problems

One of the HR objectives for 2009/10 is to implement a well-being scheme to encourage healthier lifestyles. The first stage of which will be training managers through 'Tackling Stress in the Workplace' training sessions.

3.4 Options

- 3.4.1 This report does not include options or recommendations.

3.5 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 3.5.1 n/a

4. **Risk and Financial Implications**

4.1 Risk

- 4.1.1 n/a

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 n/a

6. **Other Implications**

- a) Equalities: n/a
- b) Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998: None
- c) Section 40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006: None
- d) Human Resources: None
- e) Human Rights: None
- f) Other: [e.g. Children's Act 2004] None

7. **Alignment to Council Priorities**

- 7.1 7.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council priorities:
- Your Council, Your Services – Improve the quality and consistency of

services

- Entrepreneurial Council – Ensure the Council manages its resources well

8. **Ward/Community Affected**

8.1 N/A

Background Papers

None

Lead Contact Officer:

Name/Post: Maxine O'Mahony

Telephone: 01362 656209

Email: Maxine.omahony@breckland.gov.uk

Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

This is not a key decision.

Appendices attached to this report:

Sickness Absence Management policy and procedure