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**SICKNESS ABSENCE TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Don Bristow,  
Resource Management Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To report the Resources Scrutiny Committee's recommendations in relation to sickness absence levels within the Authority.

**Information and Analysis**

2. As Members will be aware, the Resources Scrutiny Committee have, since 2002, been monitoring, through a Task and Finish Review Group, the levels of sickness absence within the Authority. The most recent piece of work has involved all Members of the Scrutiny Committee interviewing all Directors and relevant Human Resource Officers to obtain information on the effect sickness absence was having on their individual departments both in terms of service delivery and financially and following these meetings the Resources Scrutiny Committee have formulated the following recommendations to Cabinet :-
  - (a) That the work of the Sickness Absence Task and Finish Group be on-going;
  - (b) That this Scrutiny Committee supports and congratulates the on-going work of the Directors and Human Resource Division in reducing sickness absence levels within the Authority;
  - (c) That a further report on the position in relation to sickness absence be submitted to a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee in six months' time, such a report to include the financial implications and the effects on service delivery within individual departments;
  - (d) That this Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of any noticeable increases or decreases in the levels of sickness absence at any particular time;
  - (e) That this Scrutiny Committee supports the proposed article for 'The Flyer';
  - (f) That the Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Human Resource Management be requested to report back to this Scrutiny Committee on the action being taken by the individual portfolio holders to reduce and control sickness absence within their areas;

- (g) That the Officers/members be requested to obtain information from private sector companies within the Borough to ascertain their policies and procedures for dealing with sickness absence and to enable a comparison between them and this Authority to be made; and
- (h) That a breakdown of how the total figure is calculated be provided to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

### **Director's Comments**

- 3. The work undertaken on Sickness Absence by the Resources Scrutiny Committee, both as a full Committee and through the Task and Finish Review Group has been welcomed by the Human Resources team and Directors, who fully support the recommendations of the Committee.
- 4. The report to Cabinet on 30th March, 2004 gave a full commentary on the position regarding sickness absence in Darlington. Since then, the outturn for 2003/04 in terms of the number of days lost per employee (BVPI 12) has been finalised at 11.19 days and the lost time rate at 5.19%. Although the overall lost time rate for sickness absence has increased by 0.25% from the previous year, it is notable that the final quarter for 2003/04 showed a marked decrease of 0.47% on both the previous quarter, and the same quarter in the financial year 2002/03.
- 5. This decrease, at a time in the year when sickness absence is usually at its highest level is reflective of the ongoing work undertaken by Directors and Human Resources in reducing sickness absence levels which has been recognised by the Resource Scrutiny Committee. A high level of sickness absence management will be maintained and it is hoped that the recent decreasing trend will continue throughout 2004/05 resulting in an overall reduction of sickness absence across the Council.

### **Legal Implications**

- 6. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

- 7. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

8. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

## **Decision Deadline**

9. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

## **Recommendation**

10. It is recommended that support be given to the continued work of the Resources Scrutiny Committee in the area of Sickness Absence.

## **Reasons**

11. The recommendation is supported to enable the continued review and challenge of Sickness Absence Management within the Authority.

**Paul Wildsmith**  
**Director of Corporate Services**

## **Background Papers**

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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