

**Corporate and Customer
Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Absence Management Sub-
Group**

Agenda and Reports

For consideration on

**Wednesday, 16th January
2008**

In Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Chorley

At 6.30 pm



PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC QUESTIONS/SPEAKING AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETINGS

- Questions must be submitted to the Democratic Services Section by no later than midday, two working days before the day of the meeting to allow time to prepare appropriate responses and investigate issues if necessary.
- A maximum period of 3 minutes will be allowed for a question from a member of the public on an item on the agenda. A maximum period of 30 minutes to be allocated for public questions if necessary at each meeting of the Panel. This will provide an opportunity for members of the public to raise and ask questions on any issue falling within the remit of the Panel.

7 January 2008

Dear Councillor

**CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL -
ABSENCE MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP - WEDNESDAY, 16TH JANUARY
2008**

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Absence Management Sub-Group to be held in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Chorley on Wednesday, 16th January 2008 commencing at 6.30 pm.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence**

2. **Declarations of Any Interests**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda. If the interest arises **only** as result of your membership of another public body or one to which you have been appointed by the Council then you only need to declare it if you intend to speak.

If the personal interest is a prejudicial interest, you must withdraw from the meeting. Normally you should leave the room before the business starts to be discussed. You do, however, have the same right to speak as a member of the public and may remain in the room to enable you to exercise that right and then leave immediately. In either case you must not seek to improperly influence a decision on the matter.

3. **Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Absence Management Sub-Group held on 3 October 2007 (enclosed).

4. **Public Questions**

Members of the public who have requested the opportunity to ask a question(s) on an item(s) on the agenda will be asked to put their question(s) to the Panel. Each member of the public will be allowed to ask one supplementary question within his/her allocated 3 minutes.

5. **Inquiry Documentation (Pages 5 - 12)**

The Sub-Group are asked to consider the enclosed scoping document, project plan, information checklist and witness checklist.

6. **Collecting and Considering Evidence**

The Sub-Group will consider information requested at the last meeting:

- South Ribble Absence Management Policy (No 6 in the inquiry box file),
- Updated statistics for Chorley Council up to the end of November for absences (5 days) and return to work interviews (87%),
- Comparative information has been requested from other local authorities in the Audit Commission family group and will be presented at the meeting,
- Chorley Council policies: Bereavement Leave and Special Leave, (No 7a and 7b in the inquiry box file),
- Reference form (No 8 in the inquiry box file),
- Discussion regarding other schemes carried out at the Council including, the Council's Occupational Health contract, Chief Executives' Awards and workplace listeners schemes.

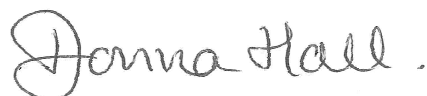
7. **The Way Forward**

The Sub-Group will determine the next steps in the Inquiry.

8. **Dates of Future Meetings**

9. **Any other item(s) that the Chair decides is/are urgent**

Yours sincerely



Donna Hall
Chief Executive

Ruth Hawes
Assistant Democratic Services Officer
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Distribution

1. Agenda and reports to all Members of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Terry Brown, Mrs Doreen Dickinson, Daniel Gee, Pat Haughton, Hasina Khan, June Molyneaux, Geoffrey Russell, Joyce Snape and Mrs Stella Walsh) for attendance.
2. Agenda and reports to Lorraine Charlesworth (Director of Human Resources) and Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer) for attendance.

**This information can be made available to you in larger print
or on audio tape, or translated into your own language.
Please telephone 01257 515118 to access this service.**

આ માહિતીનો અનુવાદ આપની પોતાની ભાષામાં કરી શકાય છે. આ સેવા સરળતાથી મેળવવા
માટે કૃપા કરી, આ નંબર પર ફોન કરો: 01257 515822

ان معلومات کا ترجمہ آپ کی اپنی زبان میں بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ خدمت استعمال کرنے کیلئے براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر ٹیلیفون
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Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Absence Management Sub-Group

Wednesday, 3 October 2007

Present: Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Terry Brown, Hasina Khan, Geoffrey Russell and Mrs Stella Walsh

Also in attendance: Lorraine Charlesworth (Corporate Director of Human Resources) and Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Doreen Dickinson, Danny Gee, Pat Haughton, June Molyneaux and Mrs Joyce Snape.

2. DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by Members relating to the items on the agenda.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public requested to speak at the meeting.

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INQUIRY - A BACKGROUND TO ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

The Sub-Group received a presentation from the Corporate Director of Human Resources giving a background to Absence Management.

Best Value Indicator 12 measured the working days lost due to sickness absence. The electronic system used to report sickness was demonstrated, the information was sent to Human Resources at Chorley and payroll at Blackpool. A copy of the form was sent to the employee and the manger.

The details on the form included the Directorate the person worked in, the first day of sickness, reason for illness, whether the person intended to go to the doctor, the person notifying of the absence and the time and date the notification was received.

Once the notification of sickness is received the form is used to record details on the sickness absence database, used for monitoring purposes and collating sickness absence statistics.

The database enables HR to monitor absence levels throughout the authority and ensure that the Attendance Policy was being followed through identified trigger points.

The procedure for the return to work interview is the same way as the notification. The completion of return to work interviews was monitored and chased up as these interviews had been identified as reducing sickness absence. It was also important to ensure that staff were well enough to come back to work, in particular if there had been an injury.

The number of days lost is calculated to produce the Days Lost Per Employee (BV12). This is rather a complex calculation with the results displayed within a spreadsheet, including figures for long and short-term absence.

Members considered the figures for the last few years by month and noted the improvements in recent years. For 2006/07 Chorley was average in performance on BV 12 across Lancashire. It was anticipated that this would improve this year. Members reviewed the reasons for sickness for one Directorate and noted this level of detailed information assisted in identifying any trends.

Members noted that there were policies for special leave and bereavement leave and that special circumstances were taken into account. These policies were reviewed regularly. The contract for Occupation Health was currently under negotiation and would include stress management and physiotherapy.

It was **AGREED** that potential recommendations be made:

- To increase the target for completed return to work interviews to 100%,
- Employees should speak to their manager specifically when phoning in sick rather than a colleague
- A solution be found to enable managers to put on the "out of office" message on emails when staff have called in sick
- The current Absence Management policy was sufficient.

5. **INQUIRY DOCUMENTATION**

The Sub-Group received the Inquiry documentation and noted the updated Information Checklist.

6. **THE WAY FORWARD**

The Chair reported that he had made contact with South Ribble Borough Council and advised that their Absence Management policy was similar to the one at Chorley. A copy of the Policy had been requested.

Chorley have a break down of employee's age ranges: Between 16 – 30: 17%, 31 – 50: 55%, 51 – 60: 20%, 61 – 65: 8%. This is something that South Ribble are going to start collecting. They have 70 employees who work outside and the same performance indicator is used throughout the Council.

The Chair had contacted a local company with 360 staff with 100 in a contact centre. The average age of employees in the contact centre is 31. At the company employees were not paid for their first day of sickness and whilst the Sub-Group recognised this was a positive way of dealing with sickness it was noted that at the Council payment for the first day of sickness was part of nationally agreed terms and conditions. At the company a bonus was paid for attending every day, this scheme worked well for the company but would not be appropriate for the Council.

Members highlighted the importance of Human Resources Advisors supporting the managers through the whole process as difficult situations could arise with severe illnesses.

It was suggested that a scheme involving workplace listeners could be helpful. This was a scheme where employees could talk to people, other than managers, about any issues. Councillor Terry Brown undertook to find out some information on this and report back to the next meeting.

The Sub-Group agreed that the information received so far went a considerable way to meeting the three objectives set out in the scoping document and that it would be worthwhile waiting a few months, so that the results of the winter weather could be reviewed and the statistics reassessed.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was AGREED that the next meeting be held in late January 2008 on a Wednesday evening if possible.

Chair

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INQUIRY PROJECT OUTLINE

<p>Review Topic: Absence Management</p>	<p>Investigation by: Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To assess whether the current attendance policy is sufficient. 2. To determine whether the attendance policy is being applied consistently. 3. To identify other actions that could improve attendance. 	<p>Desired Outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure the Council is on target to improve the Councils Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI 12 and reach the top quartile. 2. To ensure the Council has appropriate action plans in place to encourage a healthy workforce and workplace. 3. To identify best practice from the public/private sector and recommend actions for Chorley.
<p>Terms of Reference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To examine the Councils Attendance Policy and feedback suggestions for improvement. 2. To identify best practice from the public/private sector and recommend actions for Chorley. 3. To examine the monitoring of the absence statistics and suggest any improvements. 4. To report the findings of the Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. 	
<p>Key Issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the Attendance policy being applied consistently across the Directorates. 2. Compare performance with other Districts within the Family Group. 	<p>Risks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having expectations beyond the capacity to deliver.
<p>Venue(s): Town Hall, Market Street, Chorley</p>	<p>Timescale:</p> <p>Start: July 2007</p> <p>Finish: February 2008</p>

Information Requirements and Sources:

Documents/evidence: *(what/why?)*

1. Attendance Policy.
2. Attendance presentation to Overview and Scrutiny
3. Absence Statistics
4. Report to Overview and Scrutiny (Feb 07)

Witnesses: *(who, why?)*

1. Directors / managers as identified through the Inquiry.
2. Other Local Authority officers as identified through the Inquiry.

Consultation/Research: *(what, why, who?)*

1. Audit Commission family group.
2. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).
3. Health and Safety Executive

Site Visits: *(where, why, when?)*

As identified through the Inquiry.

Officer Support:

Lead Officer:

Lorraine Charlesworth (Director of Human Resources).

Policy and Performance Officer:

Sarah Dobson (Performance Advisor – Corporate and Customer).

Democratic Services Officer:

Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer).

Likely Budget Requirements:

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>£200.00</u>
Total	<u>£200.00</u>

Target Body¹ for Findings/Recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Cabinet.

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<i>SCRUTINY INQUIRY INFORMATION CHECKLIST</i>
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Name of Inquiry: Absence Management

Scrutiny Body: Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Ref.	Information Required	Date
1	Chorley Council Attendance Policy.	3 October 2007
2	Attendance presentation to Overview and Scrutiny	3 October 2007
3	Report to Overview and Scrutiny (Feb 07)	3 October 2007
4	Activities offered as part of "Active at Work "	3 October 2007
5	Absence and Return to Work Interview Statistics to August 2007	3 October 2007
6	South Ribble Absence Management Policy	16 January 2008
7a 7b	Chorley Council policies: Bereavement Leave and Special Leave	16 January 2008
8	Chorley Council Reference form	16 January 2008
	Absence and Return to Work Interview Statistics to August 2007	16 January 2008
	Comparative Information with other Local Authorities (Including South Ribble)	16 January 2008

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**SCRUTINY INQUIRY WITNESS CHECKLIST**

Name of Inquiry: Absence Management

Scrutiny Body: Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Ref.	Witness	Date	Venue
1	South Ribble Council officers	September 2007	South Ribble Council offices
2	Debit Free Direct officers	September 2007	Debit Free Direct offices
3	BNFL officers	November 2007	BNFL offices

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