

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

Agenda and Reports

For consideration on

## Tuesday, 19th February 2008

In Committee Room 1, 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.

Dear Councillor

11 February 2008

**CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL -  
ABSENCE MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP - TUESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY  
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 1, Town Hall, Chorley on Tuesday, 19th February 2008 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**AGENDA**

1. **Welcome to the Executive Member for Resources**
2. **Apologies for absence**
3. **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.

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

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of meeting of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Absence Management Sub-Group held on 16th January 2008 (enclosed).

5. **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.

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

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

7. **Consideration of the draft Final Report**

To consider the draft Final Report of the Sub-Group (to follow).

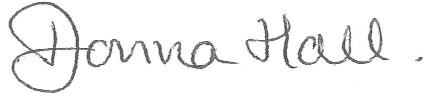
The report will be presented to the meeting of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel to be held on 11 March.

8. **Discussion with the Executive Member for Resources**

The Sub-Group will discuss the draft report and recommendations with the Executive Member for Resources (Councillor Alan Cullens).

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

Yours sincerely



Donna Hall  
Chief Executive

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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 – Absence Management Sub-Group (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.
3. Agenda and reports to Councillor Alan Cullens (Executive Member for Resources) 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 01257 515823

ان معلومات کا ترجمہ آپ کی اپنی زبان میں بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ خدمت استعمال کرنے کیلئے براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر ٹیلیفون

کیجئے:

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

**Wednesday, 16 January 2008**

**Present:** Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Terry Brown, Mrs Doreen Dickinson, Pat Haughton, Hasina Khan, June Molyneaux, Geoffrey Russell, Joyce Snape and Mrs Stella Walsh

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

### **08.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Danny Gee.

### **08.02 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS**

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

### **08.03 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel – Absence Management Sub-Group held on 3 October 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

### **08.04 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

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

### **08.05 INQUIRY DOCUMENTATION**

The Sub-Group considered the enclosed scoping document, project plan, information checklist and witness checklist.

**RESOLVED – That the Inquiry documentation be noted.**

### **08.06 COLLECTING AND CONSIDERING EVIDENCE**

The Sub-Group considered the information requested at the last meeting.

The Corporate Director of Human Resources advised that the Council policies on bereavement leave and special leave had been developed in conjunction with the 'staff matters' group and the unions, before being adopted by the Executive Cabinet. These policies have a positive impact on absence rates as, for example, staff might go off sick if they had been bereaved. Other Local Authorities have special leave and bereavement policies. The Chorley Council policies have been in place since April 2007.

Members considered and noted the South Ribble Borough Council Absence Management Policy. It was felt that in the Chorley policy had more detail and practical advice for managers on how to manage sickness.

The Corporate Director of Human Resources advised that some policy development work was being undertaken with West Lancashire District Council and there were plans to do some joint working with South Ribble Borough Council in the future.

Members were advised that the absences statistics for Chorley Council from April 2007 to the end of December 2007 were 5.5 days and return to work interviews completed were 90%. It was AGREED that figures were requested for the months of November and December alone. Comparative figures for other Lancashire local authorities were reported as 6.98 days for the same period. The annual target for the Council, to be reported in March, was 9.22 days. The Members commented on the excellent figures on absences and completed return to work interviews.

The Corporate Director of Human Resources reported that a colleague from Human Resources and herself had spent a day at BNFL at a convention for workplace listeners. In each department there was an informal buddy, this was a supporting, but not counselling, role. The listeners were well organised and informed and got together on an annual basis to share experiences and receive training. Chorley Council is planning to set up a workplace listener's scheme on a smaller scale.

Members discussed the Chorley Absence Management policy and noted that the policy was now embedded after its implementation in summer 2006. Managers were using the policy to manage sickness and were giving warnings where appropriate. Human Resources monitor reasons for sickness and would get involved where there were issues. As part of the ongoing efficiency inquiry all Directors were asked about the absences within their Directorate and positive responses were received on how the policy was being implemented.

The Sub-Group considered the reference form used when offering employment to a new member of staff. One of the questions related to the absence record of the person.

**RESOLVED – That the information be noted and taken forward for the final report.**

## **08.07 THE WAY FORWARD**

The Members considered the objectives and desired outcomes for the inquiry and AGREED that the information and research undertaken by the Sub-Group met the requirements set down in the inquiry project outline. Overview and Scrutiny members would monitor the recommendations made by the Sub-Group on a quarterly basis.

The Corporate Director of Human Resources reported that from 1 April the Council would have a new Occupational Health contract with Chorley Hospital. The new contract meant that staff would only have to travel to Chorley Hospital. Work was being undertaken with Lancashire County Council on a well being strategy. It was AGREED that new initiatives and feedback on the new Occupational Health contract be reported as part of the monitoring of inquiry recommendations. Members were advised that the Council had recently been assessed for the Health Works Award.

There is a page on the loop advising staff of the initiatives and facilities available, the ticker and e-news and views were used to highlight information. Members discussed how the positive messages about absence management should be communicated to Chorley Council staff. Suggestions were made including team brief and the Chief Executive's Awards. It was noted that there are prizes for individual and team attendances at Chief Executive's Awards. The Sub-Group AGREED to recommend that the profile and communication to staff on health and well-being should be maintained, and if possible increased.

At the next meeting the Sub-Group would consider whether the target for absence should be changed for next year.

**08.08 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 19 February at 6.30pm. Councillor Alan Cullens, Executive Member for Resources, would be invited to this meeting.

Chair

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## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INQUIRY PROJECT OUTLINE**

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

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

**Target Body<sup>1</sup> for Findings/Recommendations**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Cabinet.



SCRUTINY	Absence Management																	
	2007						2008											
TASK	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June		
1. TOPIC SELECTED	■																	
2. SCOPE INQUIRY					■													
3. COLLECT EVIDENCE							■	■	■		■							
4. CONSIDER EVIDENCE								■			■							
5. REPORT											■	■						
6. FEEDBACK & ACTION																■		
7. MONITOR																■		
Key:	■				■												■	
	Meeting of the Sub						Meeting with the Chair and officers						Site visits					

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<b><i>SCRUTINY INQUIRY INFORMATION CHECKLIST</i></b>
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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
9	Absence and Return to Work Interview Statistics to December 2007	16 January 2008
10	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

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>
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
4	Executive Member for Resources (Councillor Alan Cullens)	February 2008	Town Hall, Chorley

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