



REPORT TO:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	10 DECEMBER 2009
REPORT OF THE:	HEAD OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LOUISE SANDALL
TITLE OF REPORT:	SICKNESS ABSENCE REVIEW
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** It was resolved on 6 August, "That following some further analysis, and initial consultations with staff and Unison the Head of Organisational Development provide a report to a future meeting".

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** It is recommended that members:
- (i) receive the report and suggest any further action; and
 - (ii) consider inviting Selby District Council to discuss their approach to sickness absence.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1** It was agreed at the previous meetings:
- a) That discussions would take place with UNISON based on the presentation from NYCC on increment and attendance policy and;
 - b) That another authority which had seen sustained improvement in absence statistics be approached to discuss their approach to attendance management.

4.0 REPORT

- 4.1** Members will recall that officers are in the process of reviewing the authority's current sickness absence procedures. The following groups have been consulted, Heads of Service, Service Unit Managers, UNISON and staff focus group.
- 4.2** Unison were asked to review the briefing note from NYCC in regards to increments and sickness absence and provide comments (see para 4.3). The key points from the briefing note are:

- a new pay structure which removed spot salaries and provided incremental progression within a pay band for the vast majority of staff;
- a job evaluation scheme;
- the introduction of 'thank you' payments of up to £50 for good service;
- attendance awards for staff with nil absence in the past 12 months;
- a scheme to provide up to 200 cars for frontline relatively low paid staff who needed a car to undertake their duties, for example in the area of home care;
- the removal of essential car user allowance from 2,000 staff and the introduction of a flat mileage rate for all staff;
- the removal of the car leasing scheme for essential users;
- an increase in annual leave entitlement of up to six days dependent on length of service;
- the increase of flexi leave by two days per year;
- the introduction of additional increments for exceptional performance;
- long service awards given at earlier stages;
- a new employee benefits scheme providing access to a large range of discounts;
- the awarding of annual increments within a pay band based upon satisfactory performance which covered conduct, capability, good appraisal and an acceptable level of attendance.

4.3 UNISON comments were provided by Paul Hunt Secretary of UNISON Ryedale Branch on 16 November 2009.

"NYCC Increment & Attendance Policy – Briefing Note

We are opposed to linking incremental progression to sickness absence. It is plainly wrong in our view to penalise employees for being sick.

On the more general point of linking progression to performance, this matter was considered and rejected in the course of the negotiations that took place with management and led to the 2004 joint agreement on implementation of the national single status agreement here at Ryedale DC. We would oppose proposals to renege on that agreement.

We do not support 'thank you' payments for good service and accelerated progression for exceptional performance. Such schemes raise suspicions of favouritism and we believe that operating such rewards packages fairly and objectively is problematic to say the least.

Finally, I don't know what connection there is between essential car user allowance and sickness absence. Car allowances are of course covered by Part 2 of the NJC National Agreement and as such are a key national provision for application by all local authorities to all employees covered by the NJC."

4.4 Ryedale has implemented a job evaluation scheme and a review of the pay structure was undertaken in 2008. There are at least 8 positive actions detailed in para 4.2 above which Ryedale feel that employees could benefit from.

4.5 Ryedale is currently in the stages of reviewing its HR policies and procedures to ensure that they are updated and reflect best practice. Managers toolkits are being added to procedures to provide managers with further guidance.

4.6 Car allowances were reviewed as part of the overall package that NYCC consulted on. Ryedale will be reviewing the scheme which is currently in place as part of the ONE 11 programme.

4.7 Further from this members asked that another District Authority of comparative size that has been performing well in this area for 2 – 3 years to attend the committee to discuss their approach to managing attendance. Selby District has been identified and a member of their Senior Management Team is willing to come and discuss their approach.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Members are invited to review this information to consider whether to recommend any further action that may enable Ryedale District Council to improve its sickness absence level.

Louise Sandall
Head of Organisational Development

Author: Louise Sandall, Head of Organisational Development
Telephone No: 01653 600666 ext: 392
E-Mail Address: Louise.Sandall@ryedale.gov.uk