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(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Employment Committee
Subject:	Quarterly Sickness Absence Report
Date of meeting:	9 March 2022
Report by:	Assistant Director of Human Resources
Wards affected:	N/A

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Employment Committee about the levels of sickness absence across the council and the actions being taken to manage absence and promote employee wellbeing.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Members are recommended to:

- Note the change in absence levels across the organisation.
- Note the wellbeing activities undertaken to support attendance and in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. Background

3.1. Members will be aware that the council continues operating many services differently because of the coronavirus pandemic. Many staff have adopted a hybrid approach to their work and are working from home where possible.

3.2. The following section of the report will note this quarter's sickness absence figures compared to last quarter:

- The level of sickness absence for this quarter has increased from 9.03 to 10.11 average days per person per year.
- Long term absence has increased from 6.04 to 6.20 average days per person per year.

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- Short term absence has increased from 1.70 to 2.16 average days per person per year.
 - 3 directorates have seen a decrease in absence levels this quarter.
 - 7 directorates have seen an increase in absence levels this quarter
 - The highest reason for sickness absence remains to be due to psychological (stress, anxiety and depression), Coronavirus is now ranked 2nd and Musculoskeletal (Lower Limb) is ranked 3rd.
 - Musculoskeletal absences are divided into three categories; if these were collated they would become the second highest ranked reason for absence (as was the case last quarter).
- 3.3. Absence levels by directorates for the period from February 2021 to January 2022 are attached in Appendix 1. A summary of reason for sickness absence for the last year is attached in Appendix 2.

4. Wellbeing

- 4.1 This quarter we received the findings of the second Wellbeing Pulse Survey. The survey was carried out at the end of another difficult year through which employees continued to deliver essential business as usual services and respond to the challenges of the pandemic both at home and work.
- 4.2 It is perhaps not surprising that the results showed employees are feeling slightly less satisfied compared with earlier in the year, in particular with how supported they feel and their workload. We are now looking at the feedback in detail, and directors have been asked to develop action plans to help us address the issues that were highlighted, and ensure we support staff as effectively as possible.
- 4.3 During this quarter we have also continued to provide details of the staff flu vaccination programme (which ends February 2022), updated the mental health pages and Stress risk assessment on the intranet, as well promoting a number of wellbeing campaigns and training opportunities available to staff and managers.
- 4.4 For the 2021/2022 flu vaccination programme, we provided details on how staff could apply for an e-voucher to use at participating pharmacies, to date 547 employees have requested an e-voucher using the councils online booking form.
- 4.5 Working in partnership with the unions and the Healthy and Safety team, the Councils Stress flowcharts and Risk Assessment for staff and managers have been updated. This has resulted in a more streamlined process and allows for a

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more detailed assessment to take place to try and resolve any stress related issues.

- 4.6 The campaigns and wellbeing updates that have been promoted to staff this quarter have included details on managing wellbeing over the festive period, January's update focused on Blue Monday and invited employees to get together virtually to discuss their health and wellbeing. The update also promoted the support available via the Employee Assistance Programme, as well as including details of the Lunchtime learning session on Autism and Neurodiversity awareness.
- 4.7 The Learning and Development team have continued to provide training to managers on Managing Wellbeing in a Hybrid Team and Leading a Hybrid Team. These sessions have received lots of positive feedback and will continue to monitor their impact as they run throughout the year.
- 4.8 During this quarter we have made several changes to the Wellbeing intranet pages. This has included creating new pages focusing on money and debt advice available to staff, the new site provides details and information on support with debt, making money go further, keeping your bills and everyday costs down and checking which benefits you may be entitled to.
- 4.9 To help staff navigate the information and support available to help manage their mental health, the intranet pages have been updated and include a number of new pages such as looking after our mind, supporting someone with their mental health, loneliness and crisis and suicide prevention. Work is also in progress to update further pages and build upon the tools and resources available to managers to support the wellbeing of their staff.

5. Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1. To continue to improve employee attendance levels. To do this through monitoring sickness absence, understanding and engaging with the workforce to understand the reasons for improved attendance levels, continuing to improve employee wellbeing, which in turn will increase productivity, improve engagement and build a more resilient workforce.

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Signed by:

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Sickness Absence

Appendix 2: Summary of reasons for absence

Natasha Edmunds

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Signed by Director of Corporate Services

Appendices:**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location