

Item No. 61	Classification: Open	Date: 16.4.03	MEETING NAME Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Report title:		Motion Submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.9 – Sickness Absence	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Chief Executive (Borough Solicitor & Secretary)	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the motion as set out in paragraph 2 below.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. At the Council Assembly meeting on 26th March 2003 a motion was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.9 (1) by Councillor Kenny Mizzi and seconded by Councillor Lewis Robinson. The motion was subsequently amended and referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration:-
3. 'In light of the Council's poor record in managing sickness absence, Council Assembly notes; that sickness absence has been monitored regularly by the Executive in the quarterly performance management reports; that in consequence of the Executive's concern at the rate of sickness absence revealed in the quarterly reports a specific report was called for and delivered recommending a range of further management actions; that at the Executive meeting of March 8th a further examination into the rate of long-term sickness was requested by the Executive.

Council Assembly agrees that the good health of staff and regular attendance as contracted are prime objectives and welcomes the management action to promote these objectives, but also calls for a report on managing sickness absence to be submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Scrutiny Sub-Committee.'

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.9 (3) and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 3(3.1)(c), the above motion was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who shall consider if the issue is appropriate for one of its Sub-Committees to review and thereafter report upon the outcome of their deliberations upon the motion to the next meeting of Council Assembly.
5. The constitution allocates particular responsibility for functions to Council Assembly, for approving the budget and policy framework, and to the Executive, for developing and implementing the budget and policy framework and overseeing the running of Council services on a day-to-day basis.

6. Any key issues, policy or funding implications are included in the advice from the Chief Executive.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

COMMENTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

7. The Management of sickness absence has been a key internal corporate priority for over 18 months. Progress is regularly reported to Executive as part of the quarterly performance management reports; in December there was a specific report on the progress of the improvement plan.
8. The Council currently is projecting a small improvement in non-schools sickness rate. Whilst we are still awaiting comparative data (via Association of London Government) from other London Boroughs, the indications are that the Council's position is below average, but are at a similar level to other equivalent Local Authorities (inner London and Metropolitan Councils). Schools are not obliged to provide this data and Southwark, like many other Authorities, has difficulty collecting it. The Director of Education and Atkins have a project underway to bridge this data gap. With Schools data the Council is likely to improve it's position to above average. 2002/3 data with comparisons should be available from June 2003.
9. The Council has in place leading edge policy and procedure on the management of sickness absence. This is supported by a performance management scheme for staff, which emphasises the importance of attendance.
10. In summary, over the last 18 months the following has taken place:
 - Establishment of Corporate strategy and dept plans (2002/3 audit of plans to be carried out at end of March)
 - Communication of the Council's priority and approach to staff
 - Renewed Occupational Health contract (from 1/4/2003) with increased capacity to respond to referrals
 - Council-wide health fairs held supplemented by departmental fairs some focused on stress
 - Quick Best Value review to establish any policy / procedure shortcomings and blockages over management application, including investigation of other Local Authority practice.
 - Renewed mandatory manager training on sickness management and risk assessment.
11. In the last 3 months special corporate and departmental human relations focus has been placed on the management of long-term cases. This has included a joint conference, with Occupational Health, on the 30 "worst" cases. Some early success has been experienced; most have been resolved (return to work, redeployment or termination) and the remainder have a clear short-term action plan. Because of the cumulative nature of the statistics, this will not be apparent until next financial year. It is worth noting that a number of dismissals have occurred over the past few months, relating to high sickness absence, with 5 cases awaiting appeal at the Disciplinary Appeals Committee.

12 Key additional activities for the next year are:

- ❖ Continue to focus on the individual cases of high sickness; produce practice notes for continuous learning
- ❖ Complete the mandatory manager training, emphasising the need for rigorous deployment of Council policy / procedures
- ❖ Renew departmental sickness plans, monitor departmental activity to pick up trends and ensure early warning of slippage
- ❖ Introduce further preventive initiatives and health promotion
- ❖ Publicise actions and results to all staff in promotion of an attendance culture.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Motions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 3.9 (1).	Town Hall, Peckham Road, London. SE5 8UB	Lesley John Constitutional Support Unit 020 7525 7228

APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Ian Millichap, Constitutional Support Manager (Executive)	
Report Author	Lesley John, Constitutional Support Unit	
Version	Final copy	
Dated	8 th April 2003	
Key Decision?		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Chief Officer	Yes	Yes
Executive Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services		