

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 March 2012

Executive Report to the Committee's Managing Attendance Report.

Reason for this Report

1. To present the Executive response to the Committee's task & finish Inquiry entitled Managing Attendance.

Background

2. As part of its work programme for 2010/11 the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to revisit sickness absence in the Council.

3. The terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group were agreed as:

To review existing sickness absence levels in light of measures taken since 2005; and examine the potential for improving the Council's management of attendance by:

- (i) reviewing existing challenges in managing attendance*
- (ii) clarifying the role of leadership and performance management in sickness absence*
- (iii) identifying successful new policies and practices, for the Council's future consideration in tackling sickness absence*

4. Members of the Group were Councillors Walker (Chair), Chaundy, Burley and Jonathan Lloyd, WLGA (co-optee).

Issues

5. The task and finish group reported back to the Committee in October 2011, and the agreed final report was considered by the Executive in January 2012. The response attached at **Appendix A** was agreed by the Executive at its February meeting.
6. The task group reported on sickness performance, policy, responsibility, improvement, prevention and schools, arriving at 19 recommendations from 41 key findings.
7. Attached at **Appendix B** is a recommendation tracker to facilitate easy reference and future monitoring of actions taken. In short the Executive have accepted 13 recommendations, partially accepted 5 recommendations and rejected 1 recommendation.
8. A full copy of the report was circulated with papers for the October 2011 meeting, or can alternatively be found on the Council website at www.cardiff.gov.uk/scrutiny, from the left hand menu click on the Committees link , reports online, managing attendance.
9. Councillor Mark Stephens, Executive Member, Finance & Service Delivery and Philip Lenz, Corporate Chief Officer (Shared) and Chris Jones, Chief Officer, Education will be in attendance to answer any questions Members may have.

Legal Implications

10. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to the

Executive/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decision taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirements imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (he) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

11. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Executive/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to consider the Executive response and whether it wishes to make any comments or recommendations for consideration on next years work programme.

MIKE DAVIES

Head of Scrutiny, Performance & Improvement

5th March 2012

EXECUTIVE BUSINESS MEETING: 16 FEBRUARY 2012

**EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE POLICY
REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ENTITLED "MANAGING ATTENDANCE"**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE CHIEF OFFICER (SHARED
SERVICES)**

AGENDA ITEM: 7

PORTFOLIO: FINANCE & SERVICE DELIVERY

Reason for this Report

1. To respond to the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee's recommendations outlined in the report entitled "Managing Attendance" which was received by the Executive in January 2012.

Background

2. At the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 8 September 2010 it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would undertake an inquiry to review the Council Approach to managing attendance. This report provides background information about the inquiry and outlines the next steps in the process.

3. The agreed terms of reference for the inquiry were:

To review existing sickness absence levels in light of measures taken since 2005; and examine the potential for improving the Council's management of attendance by:

- Reviewing existing challenges in managing attendance
- Clarifying the role of leadership and performance management in sickness absence
- Identifying successful new policies and practices, for the Council's future consideration in tackling sickness absence

4. The Committee's report identified 41 key findings and made 19 recommendations.

Issues

5. The Executive's proposed response to the 19 recommendations is

detailed in Appendix 1.

Reasons for Recommendation

6. To respond the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

Legal Implications

7. The management of sickness absence must have due regard to employment law implications generally and particularly in respect of disability discrimination and unfair dismissal legislation. It is considered that the proposed Executive response is consistent with the legislation.
8. A Sickness Absence Policy(ies) is vitally necessary to ensure legal compliance combined with the effective management of absence. However it must also be remembered that each case of sickness absence will have its own particular set of circumstances. There will be a legitimate expectation that a policy will be adhered to in most cases but under the law a policy can never be regarded as absolute in its application.

Financial Implications

8. The proposals set out in the response to the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee will be met from within existing resources. Where further reviews are undertaken as part of the recommendations then any additional resource implications identified will need to be considered in line with the Council's budget process. The financial impact of future reductions in sickness levels will also need to be considered where these are achieved.

Human Resource Implications

9. The recommendations within this report significantly impact on staff across the Council and any changes necessary will require consultation with both staff and Trade Unions.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is recommended to agree the response to the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee as set out by in Appendix 1 to this report.

PHILIP LENZ

Corporate Chief Officer
10 February 2012

The following appendix is attached:

Appendix 1 – Executive Response to the Report of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee Entitled “Managing Attendance”

**EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE POLICY REVIEW AND
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ENTITLED “MANAGING
ATTENDANCE”**

The Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Executive consider the following:

R1 Managing attendance has become a key priority for the Council with improvement driven forward by its most senior political and managerial leaders. The Committee propose that further development can be made and recommends that the Council should update the next published Corporate Plan 2011-2014 by setting more challenging targets for a reduction in sickness absence per FTE to 9.7 days in 12/13; 9 days in 13/14 and 8.5 days in 14/15.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted.

This proposed reduction is challenging and can only be achieved through changes in sickness absence policy but it is recognised that there needs to be a challenging target to work towards. However, the sickness absence review will not become operational until later in the year and a more realistic target for 2012/13 of 10 days would be more appropriate (compared to the current Corporate Plan target of 10.19 days). The targets for 13/14 and 14/15 are agreed.

R2 It is essential that stretching attendance targets are set for all service areas. Waste Management and Adult Services impact significantly on the Council's sickness absence outturn and priority should be given to making a high level impact on these service areas. In reviewing attendance performance with senior management the Chief Executive should agree and confirm challenging targets to reduce absence levels for each service area.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

The management of attendance and the need to reduce levels of absence are included as an objective in all managers' Personal Performance and

Development Reviews. Specific Service Area targets will be agreed as part of the objective setting process for 2012/13 which will reflect the wider corporate target. The ongoing work in Waste and Adults to reduce absence will need to continue.

R3

The Committee recommends that the Council's Sickness Absence Policy is revised to reduce the number of stages from four to three. The following approach is recommended, acknowledging that parts of the recommended approach are already reflected in the current policy whilst others are new recommendations.

Informal Absence Management – Return to Work

Following any period of sickness the employee will be interviewed by the line manager on their return to work, so that any underpinning reasons for ill-health may be explored. Any health, work, personal or social reasons identified to be recorded on DigiGov. Referral to Occupational Health or a workplace assessment will be considered at this stage. The employee to be reminded that any sickness absence is a cause for concern, advised that future sickness absence will be monitored and a further period of absence within a six month period will instigate the formal sickness absence procedure.

Formal Absence Management Policy

Stage 1 Formal Verbal Advisory Notice

In a rolling period of 6 months following either,

two periods of sickness absence.

OR

sickness absence of 6 working days.

The employee to be required to attend a meeting to explain and discuss the reasons for the absences. Actions arising from this formal meeting to be

recorded on DigiGov and remain on the employee's personal file for 12 months.

Stage 2 Formal Written Advisory Notice

In a rolling period of 12 months, having been interviewed and formally advised previously that absence is a cause for concern, following either:

four periods of sickness absence.

OR

accumulative sickness absence totalling 10 working days.

The employee to be required to attend a meeting to explain and discuss the reasons for the absences. The Operational Manager/Head of Service will write to the employee inviting him or her to a meeting and setting out the concerns about the employee's level of attendance. The interview should include a Human Resources Officer. Actions arising from the formal meeting to be confirmed, in writing, to the employee in the form of a Formal Written Advisory Notice that will stay on his/her personal file for 12 months. The Formal Notice to set out the likely consequence of dismissal if the employee's attendance does not improve during a set review period. This Formal Written Notice will be recorded on DigiGov, remain in place for 18 months and a copy placed in the employee's personal file.

Stage 3 Dismissal

Following a formal written notice the employee can be dismissed if, in a rolling period of 18 months, following stages 1 and 2 there are

two further periods of sickness absence.

OR

More than 6 further working days of absence.

Response: This Recommendation is partially accepted in as much as it is accepted that the policy should be reviewed, however that review process will need to determine what changes are applicable

As regards Informal Absence Management – Return to work, this is already a process which is in the current policy and details are currently recorded and this will move into DigiGov in Spring 2012. Until such time as the sickness process in DigiGOV is fully operational, reports will be sent to managers on a monthly basis of all Return to Work Interviews which have not been completed and this will be escalated to the relevant Chief officer if Return to Work interviews remain outstanding.

The policy will be reviewed in the Spring of 2012 as part of the normal cycle and the triggers will form part of the review which will need consultation with both the Executive and Trade Unions. It is proposed that whilst the triggers will be reviewed there are also actions carried out to ensure that the current trigger points are being adhered to and action being taken by managers at the appropriate time. Any changes to triggers will need to take account of the Equality Act 2010 and our obligations to those staff with a disability and the need to make reasonable adjustments.

R4 It is important in introducing any revised sickness absence policy to seek the agreement of the Executive and Trade Unions in its implementation. If this cannot be achieved the senior management should be prepared to proceed without agreement.

Response: This Recommendation is partially accepted

The Constitution is clear in stating that the Executive set the employment policies for the Council. As part of this process normal consultation procedures would be followed including consultation with Employee Equality Networks and Trade Unions. This would clearly fulfil the partnership approach we have to consultation within the Council. However, it must be noted that the Executive has the authority to put in place appropriate policies to deliver Corporate Plan outcomes following the formal consultation processes.

**R5 Where managers consider the sickness absence policy is failing to have an impact or being abused, they should be able to seek authority from the Chief Executive to apply flexibility to take action to ensure targets are met.
Procedures already introduced by some frontline services should be applicable to all individuals employed**

by the Council where other measures have failed. Such action might include:

- a. Withdrawal of occupational sick pay;**
- b. Withdrawal of self certification;**
- c. Implementation of no pay for the first 3 days of sickness absence;**
- d. Withdrawing eligibility for overtime where staff return from absence;**
- e. Requiring medical certificates before a 7 day period of absence has been completed;**
- f. Introducing a checklist of questions for use by managers when employees call in to report their absence.**

Authorisation of variation of the policy should rest with the Chief Executive.

Response: This Recommendation is partially accepted

There is the facility in the current policy for some of the items above such as the waiver of self-certification and the replacement of this with the requirement for the employee to secure a Fitness for Work certificate (formerly known as a medical certificate). However GPs are becoming increasingly critical of this process as they do not believe that it is the most efficient use of their time. Withdrawal of Occupational Sick Pay entirely or for the first 1 to 3 days will require consultation with the Trade Unions as this would be a wholesale change to employees terms and conditions of employment as it is a move away from the nationally agreed arrangements.

In summary, D, E and F are accepted. A, B and C are not accepted.

R6 The Executive Member Finance & Service Delivery should make clear their support for the revised attendance management policy, and work closely with the Chief Executive in ensuring committed application of the policies and professional management of absence. Clear leadership from the top is essential to successful improvement. The Executive Business Meeting should receive 6 monthly reports on service area attendance performance. Regular 6 monthly monitoring meetings between Executive portfolio Members and service area chief officers are recommended.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

In order to facilitate clearer leadership, it is suggested that the monitoring meetings take place with the Executive Member for the specific portfolio/service area. Corporate sickness levels are already included as part of the quarterly Performance Information monitoring to the Executive.

R7 The Committee considers that all managers should take full responsibility for implementation of all aspects of the sickness absence policy. Managers will be expected to diligently monitor staff absence, provide support, and record on DigiGov. Continuing management failure in fulfilling this responsibility would become a disciplinary matter.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

The management of sickness forms part of the performance objectives for all managers. Training, coaching and support are provided both in policy interpretation and skills such as 'handling difficult conversations'. A review will take place of the content of all absence related courses in line with these recommendations and a decision taken as to whether or not the course should be mandatory for all staff taking up the role of a manager.

R8 It is recommended that HR People Services develop a training programme which embraces all managers who supervise others. This programme should contain modules covering the key findings 16, 17 and 18. Such training should be mandatory and ideally start before implementation of the policy.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

The full range of training programme for managers will be reviewed and gaps in current programme identified. Any new training to deal with the gaps to be initiated in line with the response to recommendation 7.

R9 The HR People service area should reassess the resources required to professionally monitor the new attendance policy. This will include the effective use of DigiGov capabilities, identification of attendance hotspots; occupational health resourcing and staffing and timely interventions to

ensure full and consistent support and application of the policy.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

There has been an increase in professional Occupational Health resources including the increase of the mental health post to full time, a temporary increase in counselling services has been actioned (to help respond to single status issues). There is an exploration of additional longer term counselling arrangements with the Fire Service and an established physiotherapy resource which is likely to be extended. A review of resources in HR People Services is to be undertaken (including planned developments in Occupational Health) in line with the rollout of the sickness module on DigiGOV to ensure that managers have access to appropriate support.

R10 The Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services should possess the authority to intervene in areas where he considers implementation of the sickness absence policy is failing and report findings to the Corporate Management Board.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

The Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services reports trends and data to Corporate Management Board. As part of the taskforce approach detailed below in the response to recommendation 11, any failings in the process are being escalated to Chief Officers which will ultimately be escalated to Corporate Management Board if appropriate action is not taken.

R11 The HR People service area is recommended to proactively co-ordinate temporary redeployment and devise a practical process for the redeployment of those staff temporarily unable to return to work in their current position.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

A task group has been set up led by an Operational Manger in HR People Services to ensure there is a concentrated effort to implement these recommendations and this will include the devising and implementation of a practical process of temporary re-deployment for staff temporarily unable to return to full duties in their current position.

R12 and 13

As part of a review of the sickness absence policy and procedure the Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services should conduct a major impact assessment of the way that Occupational Health services are currently used. The Corporate Chief Officer will report on the findings of this impact assessment to the Corporate Management Board, making recommendations on the effective and consistent use of Occupational Health, whether all suitable cases are being referred, and future costs and resources.

As part of his review of Occupational Health, the Corporate Chief Officer should also come forward with recommendations which include measures to:

- Make managers accountable for cases they refer to Occupational Health;**
- Remind staff about Occupational Health appointments;**
- Fast track medical referrals to the private sector, including MRI scans where warranted;**
- Promote earlier access to Occupational Health;**
- Increase staff awareness of the Occupational Health service;**
- Ensure attendance of Occupational Health specialists at Senior Management meetings to discuss sickness absence;**
- Explore the potential benefits of employees having the right of self referral to Occupational Health; and**
- Deal with cases of failure to attend Occupational Health appointments, which is a contractual obligation, and apply appropriate sanctions including charging.**

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

The Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services will take this forward. This will include a review of process, resource, administration and communication. A trial is already in place to pre-call people prior to appointments in order to reduce non-attendance. The importance of the need for prompt referrals in line with policy timescales is a specific issue that will be reiterated.

R14 A number of Occupational Health referrals are mental health related but few treatments are offered. Further assessment of the potential benefits offered by CBT and other treatments should be made and if validated, made widely available to Occupational Health.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

This will be part of the review carried out as part of recommendation 12 and 13. The Mental Health Service now operates 5 days a week for the Council which is an increase from the original 2.5 days per week arrangement. Referrals to the Mental Health Service are triaged by Occupational Health to determine the best source of assistance. Linkages with Employee Counselling Service are also being strengthened.

R15 Those with responsibility for making recruitment decisions should make appropriate use of data available on DigiGov regarding attendance, thereby factoring attendance records into decision making in accordance with section 60 of the Equalities Act 2010.

Response: This Recommendation is not accepted

Section 60 of the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for an employer to ask any job applicant about their health or disability until the applicant has been offered the job. Once the offer is made, the question can be asked, but how this information is used may contravene a relevant disability provision within the Act.

The relevant Statutory Code of Guidance issued under the Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that questions relating to sickness absence (ie attendance) are within the above provisions.

R16 Following the introduction of a new attendance policy with reference to the findings of this inquiry, at the end of a year it is recommended that UWIC be engaged to conduct a diagnosis of the

Council's needs in the area of well being or "encouraging a healthier and more engaged workforce" for consideration by the Executive and Corporate Management Board.

Response: This Recommendation is partially accepted.

It is agreed that a review should take place, however nearer the time the appropriate organisation to conduct the review will be engaged following the appropriate procurement process. A number of organisations carry out these types of review including Lles Cymru Wellbeing Wales.

R17 and R18

Current procedures act as a disincentive for head teachers and governing bodies to effectively address long term absence. It is therefore recommended that a school's eligibility for continuing membership of the Mutual Fund should be dependent on:

- The adoption and consistent application of the Council's sickness absence policy.**
- Full reporting of all absences.**
- Routine completion of return to work interviews.**
- Adoption of the Council's DigiGov system when available.**

To incentivise schools to effectively address short term sickness absence it is recommended that the Mutual Fund should only be accessed for absences greater than 20 days.

Response: This Recommendation is partially accepted

The eligibility for membership of the Mutual Fund is being reviewed and the recommendations identified above will feed into that review. The decision regarding eligibility is made by the Mutual Fund Board following a review by officers.

R19 The Chief Schools & Lifelong Learning Officer should set up a process to identify the extent to which schools accept and apply attendance management policies. This will include

the recording of absences, conducting of return to work interviews, reporting of absence data to governors and how long term absences are addressed. This process will identify schools which fail to make full and effective use of Council policies and the Chief Schools & Lifelong Learning Officer should review their continuing membership of the fund.

Response: This Recommendation is accepted

The data around sickness absence data is being reviewed by the Chief Education Officer and the recommendation above will be taken into account as part of this. The issue of continuing membership of the Mutual Fund will be assessed as part of the action taken with regards to recommendations 17 and 18.

RECOMMENDATION TRACKING SHEET – OVERVIEW

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Managing Attendance

Report submitted to Executive Business Office: 7 November 2011

Report considered by Executive: 19 January 2012

Response submitted to Scrutiny Committee: 14 March 2012

		Accepted	Action taken	Rejected	Unclear/ Other
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION				
<p>R1 Managing attendance has become a key priority for the Council with improvement driven forward by its most senior political and managerial leaders. The Committee propose that further development can be made and recommends that the Council should update the next published Corporate Plan 2011-2014 by setting more challenging targets for a reduction in sickness absence per FTE to 9.7 days in 12/13; 9 days in 13/14 and 8.5 days in 14/15.</p>	<p>This proposed reduction is challenging and can only be achieved through changes in sickness absence policy but it is recognised that there needs to be a challenging target to work towards. However, the sickness absence review will not become operational until later in the year and a more realistic target for 2012/13 of 10 days would be more appropriate (compared to the current Corporate Plan target of 10.19 days). The targets for 13/14 and 14/15 are agreed.</p>	✓			
<p>R2.It is essential that stretching attendance targets are set for all service areas. Waste Management and Adult Services impact significantly on the Council’s sickness absence outturn and priority should be given to making a</p>	<p>The management of attendance and the need to reduce levels of absence are included as an objective in all managers’ Personal Performance and Development Reviews. Specific Service Area targets will be agreed as part of the objective setting process for 2012/13 which</p>	✓			

<p>high level impact on these service areas. In reviewing attendance performance with senior management the Chief Executive should agree and confirm challenging targets to reduce absence levels for each service area.</p>	<p>will reflect the wider corporate target. The ongoing work in Waste and Adults to reduce absence will need to continue.</p>				
<p>R3 The Committee recommends that the Council's Sickness Absence Policy is revised to reduce the number of stages from four to three. The following approach is recommended, acknowledging that parts of the recommended approach are already reflected in the current policy whilst others are new recommendations.</p>	<p>This Recommendation is partially accepted in as much as it is accepted that the policy should be reviewed, however that review process will need to determine what changes are applicable.</p> <p>As regards Informal Absence Management – Return to work, this is already a process which is in the current policy and details are currently recorded and this will move into DigiGov in Spring 2012. Until such time as the sickness process in DigiGOV is fully operational, reports will be sent to managers on a monthly basis of all Return to Work Interviews which have not been completed and this will be escalated to the relevant Chief officer if Return to Work interviews remain outstanding.</p> <p>The policy will be reviewed in the Spring of 2012 as part of the normal cycle and the triggers will form part of the review which will need consultation with both the Executive and Trade Unions. It is proposed that whilst the triggers will be reviewed there are also actions carried out to ensure that the current trigger points are being adhered to and action being taken by managers at the appropriate time. Any changes to triggers will need to take account of the Equality Act 2010 and our obligations to those staff with a disability and the need to make reasonable adjustments.</p>				✓
<p>R4. It is important in introducing any revised sickness absence policy to seek the agreement</p>	<p>The Constitution is clear in stating that the Executive set the employment policies for the Council. As part of this</p>				✓

<p>of the Executive and Trade Unions in its implementation. If this cannot be achieved the senior management should be prepared to proceed without agreement.</p>	<p>process normal consultation procedures would be followed including consultation with Employee Equality Networks and Trade Unions. This would clearly fulfil the partnership approach we have to consultation within the Council. However, it must be noted that the Executive has the authority to put in place appropriate policies to deliver Corporate Plan outcomes following the formal consultation processes.</p>				
<p>R5 Where managers consider the sickness absence policy is failing to have an impact or being abused, they should be able to seek authority from the Chief Executive to apply flexibility to take action to ensure targets are met. Procedures already introduced by some frontline services should be applicable to all individuals employed by the Council where other measures have failed. Such action might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Withdrawal of occupational sick pay; b. Withdrawal of self certification; c. Implementation of no pay for the first 3 days of sickness absence; d. Withdrawing eligibility for overtime where staff return from absence; e. Requiring medical certificates before a 7 day period of absence has been completed; f. Introducing a checklist of questions for use by managers when employees call in to report their absence. <p>Authorisation of variation of the policy should rest with the Chief Executive.</p>	<p>There is the facility in the current policy for some of the items above such as the waiver of self-certification and the replacement of this with the requirement for the employee to secure a Fitness for Work certificate (formerly known as a medical certificate). However GPs are becoming increasingly critical of this process as they do not believe that it is the most efficient use of their time. Withdrawal of Occupational Sick Pay entirely or for the first 1 to 3 days will require consultation with the Trade Unions as this would be a wholesale change to employees terms and conditions of employment as it is a move away from the nationally agreed arrangements. In summary, D, E and F are accepted. A, B and C are not accepted.</p>				✓

<p>R6.The Executive Member Finance & Service Delivery should make clear their support for the revised attendance management policy, and work closely with the Chief Executive in ensuring committed application of the policies and professional management of absence. Clear leadership from the top is essential to successful improvement. The Executive Business Meeting should receive 6 monthly reports on service area attendance performance. Regular 6 monthly monitoring meetings between Executive portfolio Members and service area chief officers are recommended.</p>	<p>In order to facilitate clearer leadership, it is suggested that the monitoring meetings take place with the Executive Member for the specific portfolio/service area. Corporate sickness levels are already included as part of the quarterly Performance Information monitoring to the Executive.</p>	<p>✓</p>			
<p>R7.The Committee considers that all managers should take full responsibility for implementation of all aspects of the sickness absence policy. Managers will be expected to diligently monitor staff absence, provide support, and record on DigiGov. Continuing management failure in fulfilling this responsibility would become a disciplinary matter.</p>	<p>The management of sickness forms part of the Performance objectives for all managers. Training, coaching and support are provided both in policy interpretation and skills such as 'handling difficult conversations'. A review will take place of the content of all absence related courses in line with these recommendations and a decision taken as to whether or not the course should be mandatory for all staff taking up the role of a manager..</p>	<p>✓</p>			
<p>R8. It is recommended that HR People Services develop a training programme which embraces all managers who supervise others. This programme should contain modules covering the</p>	<p>The full range of training programme for managers will be reviewed and gaps in current programme identified. Any new training to deal with the gaps to be initiated in line with the response to recommendation 7.</p>	<p>✓</p>			

<p>key findings 16, 17 and 18. Such training should be mandatory and ideally start before implementation of the policy.</p>					
<p>R9 The HR People service area should reassess the resources required to professionally monitor the new attendance policy. This will include the effective use of DigiGov capabilities, identification of attendance hotspots; occupational health resourcing and staffing and timely interventions to ensure full and consistent support and application of the policy.</p>	<p>There has been an increase in professional Occupational Health resources including the increase of the mental health post to full time, a temporary increase in counselling services has been actioned (to help respond to single status issues). There is an exploration of additional longer term counselling arrangements with the Fire Service and an established physiotherapy resource which is likely to be extended. A review of resources in HR People Services is to be undertaken (including planned developments in Occupational Health) in line with the rollout of the sickness module on DigiGOV to ensure that managers have access to appropriate support.</p>	<p>✓</p>			
<p>R10 The Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services should possess the authority to intervene in areas where he considers implementation of the sickness absence policy is failing and report findings to the Corporate Management Board.</p>	<p>The Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services reports trends and data to Corporate Management Board. As part of the taskforce approach detailed below in the response to recommendation 11, any failings in the process are being escalated to Chief Officers which will ultimately be escalated to Corporate Management Board if appropriate action is not taken.</p>	<p>✓</p>			
<p>R11 The HR People service area is recommended to proactively coordinate temporary redeployment and devise a practical process for the redeployment of those staff temporarily unable to return to work in</p>	<p>A task group has been set up led by an Operational Manger in HR People Services to ensure there is a concentrated effort to implement these Recommendations and this will include the devising and implementation of a practical process of temporary re-</p>	<p>✓</p>			

<p>their current position.</p>	<p>deployment for staff temporarily unable to return to full duties in their current position.</p>				
<p>R12 As part of a review of the sickness absence policy and procedure the Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services should conduct a major impact assessment of the way that Occupational Health services are currently used. The Corporate Chief Officer will report on the findings of this impact assessment to the Corporate Management Board, making recommendations on the effective and consistent use of Occupational Health, whether all suitable cases are being referred, and future costs and resources.</p>	<p>The Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services will take this forward. This will include a review of process, resource, administration and communication.</p>	<p>✓</p>			
<p>R13 As part of his review of Occupational Health, the Corporate Chief Officer should also come forward with recommendations which include measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make managers accountable for cases they refer to Occupational Health; • Remind staff about Occupational Health appointments; • Fast track medical referrals to the private sector, including MRI scans where warranted; • Promote earlier access to Occupational Health; • Increase staff awareness of the Occupational Health service; • Ensure attendance of Occupational Health specialists at Senior Management meetings to discuss sickness absence; • Explore the potential benefits of employees having the right of self 	<p>The Corporate Chief Officer Shared Services will take this forward. This will include a review of process, resource, administration and communication. A trial is already in place to pre-call people prior to appointments in order to reduce non-attendance. The importance of the need for prompt referrals in line with policy timescales is a specific issue that will be reiterated.</p>	<p>✓</p>			

<p>referral to Occupational Health; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with cases of failure to attend Occupational Health appointments, which is a contractual obligation, and apply appropriate sanctions including charging. 					
<p>R14 A number of Occupational Health referrals are mental health related but few treatments are offered. Further assessment of the potential benefits offered by CBT and other treatments should be made and if validated, made widely available to Occupational Health.</p>	<p>This will be part of the review carried out as part of recommendations 12 and 13. The Mental Health Service now operates 5 days a week for the Council which is an increase from the original 2.5 days per week arrangement. Referrals to the Mental Health Service are triaged by Occupational Health to determine the best source of assistance. Linkages with Employee Counselling Service are also being strengthened.</p>	✓			
<p>R15 Those with responsibility for making recruitment decisions should make appropriate use of data available on DigiGov regarding attendance, thereby factoring attendance records into decision making in accordance with section 60 of the Equalities Act 2010.</p>	<p>Section 60 of the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for an employer to ask any job applicant about their health or disability until the applicant has been offered the job. Once the offer is made, the question can be asked, but how this information is used may contravene a relevant disability provision within the Act. The relevant Statutory Code of Guidance issued under the Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that questions relating to sickness absence (ie attendance) are within the above provisions.</p>		✓		
<p>R16 Following the introduction of a new attendance policy with reference to the findings of this inquiry, at the end of a year it is recommended that UWIC be engaged to conduct a diagnosis of the Council's needs in the area of well being or "encouraging a healthier and</p>	<p>It is agreed that a review should take place, however nearer the time the appropriate organisation to conduct the review will be engaged following the appropriate procurement process. A number of organisations carry out these types of review including Lles Cymru Wellbeing Wales.</p>				✓

<p>more engaged workforce” for consideration by the Executive and Corporate Management Board.</p>					
<p>R17 Current procedures act as a disincentive for head teachers and governing bodies to effectively address long term absence. It is therefore recommended that a school’s eligibility for continuing membership of the Mutual Fund should be dependent on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adoption and consistent application of the Council’s sickness absence policy. • Full reporting of all absences. • Routine completion of return to work interviews. • Adoption of the Council’s DigiGov system when available. 	<p>The eligibility for membership of the Mutual Fund is being reviewed and the recommendations identified will feed into that review. The decision regarding eligibility is made by the Mutual Fund Board following a review by officers.</p>				✓
<p>R18 To incentivise schools to effectively address short term sickness absence it is recommended that the Mutual Fund should only be accessed for absences greater than 20 days.</p>					✓
<p>R19 The Chief Schools & Lifelong Learning Officer should set up a process to identify the extent to which schools accept and apply attendance management policies. This will include the recording of absences, conducting of return to work interviews, reporting of absence data to governors and how long term absences are addressed. This process will identify schools which fail to make full and effective use of Council policies and the Chief Schools & Lifelong Learning Officer should review their continuing membership of the fund.</p>	<p>The data around sickness absence data is being reviewed by the Chief Education Officer and the recommendation above will be taken into account as part of this. The issue of continuing membership of the Mutual Fund will be assessed as part of the action taken with regards to recommendations 17 and 18.</p>	✓			

