

meeting County Council

date 15 April 2010

agenda item number **7a ix.**

Report of the Cabinet Member for Personnel and Performance.

1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Members on various issues relating to the Personnel portfolio.

2. Implementation of the Pay Strategy

- 2.1 The majority of back pay settlements have now been made to staff. The signing event which took place on 4 March 2010, dealt with almost 400 payments and that means as reported previously most of the outstanding payments will be completed in the current financial year.
- 2.2 There are still be a relatively small number of residual payments outstanding which relate to employees where the score information is incomplete or those that left the Authority before October 2007 but the majority of those offers will be sent by the end of March 2010.
- 2.3 The process of job evaluation for school support staff is now moving ahead rapidly. The process of matching against profiles being undertaken by schools is well underway and returns are now coming back to enable the Job Evaluation Team to undertake formal evaluations of school support staff jobs. There is an on going programme of work on the roll out of profiles and matching and it is planned that this should in the main be completed by the end of July 2010. This will enable the evaluation process to be completed by the end of December 2010 and for scores to be published to staff in schools in January 2011. It is still intended for full implementation to be completed by July 2011.
- 2.4 Further work is currently on going with the trade unions to consider the issues of back pay and equal pay liability. As the process of evaluation gets underway it will be possible to review the overall estimated costs of implementation and to identify more precise costs later in the year. It is however anticipated that the actual costs of implementation will not exceed the original estimated potential costs of £18m, for which a shared funding arrangement has been agreed with the Schools Forum.

3. Proposed changes to employment policies and terms and conditions of employment

- 3.1 Following the decision by Personnel Committee to agree the package of changes, the revised redundancy and premature retirement policy has been applied to all cases effective from 1 February 2010. Formal notice has been given to staff previously in receipt of Essential Car User allowances and these will cease at the end of the notice period on 31 August 2010. Letters of formal notification of the other changes agreed by Personnel Committee have been sent to all affected staff.
- 3.3 Two of the recognised Trades Unions have balloted members on industrial action in relation to the proposed changes. Only one union has received a mandate from its members to take industrial action short of strike action. The action will consist of refusal to use vehicles for work, working to rule and withdrawal of good will. Managerial arrangements are being made to manage any potential risks to service users and staff and ensure that effective service delivery will continue.

4. Attendance Management and Wellbeing

- 4.1. Absence figures for the quarter the quarter 1st October to 31st December 2009 show a slight increase overall in the number of days lost per employee per year from 9.56 days to 9.61 days.
- 4.2 The only department in which absence has risen during this period is within Children's and Young People's Services; in other departments there has been a slight decrease.
- 4.3 Children's and Young People's Services has stepped up its ongoing programme of activity in relation to stress surveys, enhanced counselling provision and absence case review which should impact positively on this longer term.
- 4.4 Reason reporting indicates an increase in cases of seasonal flu and colds across the County Council. The large scale organisational change now in progress did not significantly impact on reported levels of stress related absence during this period.
- 4.5 As part of corporate business planning, stretch targets for year on year improvement in absence levels will be set with targets of incremental improvement towards the County Council average of 8.17 days per employee per year.
- 4.6 The changes to the Attendance Management Procedure, including those relating to reduced trigger levels, have been implemented following Personnel Committee on 29th January 2010 and are effective from 1st January 2010. Early indications are that this will increase the number of trigger interviews to be undertaken by managers by around 50%.

- 4.7 The “Nurse Line” pilot is now being implemented in the ICT services division of the Corporate Services department. Ongoing evaluation of the impact of the pilot on absence levels in this service area will be presented at a later date. Proposals are being developed to extend the pilot to a front line service area for purposes of comparison.
- 4.8 From 6th April 2010 a new scheme of “Fit For Work” notes will replace the sick note and the employee’s GP will specify whether an individual is fit to resume work and suggest appropriate adaptations to working hours or duties or other workplace adaptations to assist this. This should impact positively on manager’s ability to make simple, practical adjustments to assist an early return to work for absent employees.
- 4.9 As part of a wider refocusing of the HR service, from April 2010 the capacity of the whole service will be maximised to support a more strategic approach to the management of absence. This will include integration of the Attendance Management team within the mainstream HR.
- 4.10 A more holistic approach to wellbeing initiatives will be adopted including preventative occupational health and safety initiatives. This will encompass the corporate priority of reducing cases of absence due to stress, linking the information available from stress audits with preventative measures and targeted responses in hot spot areas as part of an overall wellbeing action plan.

Cllr Andy Stewart
Cabinet Member for Personnel and Performance