

# report



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 17 December 2009

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 99% of the back pay offer letters to current employees or those who have left since October 2007 have been issued. A signing event took place on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2009 in order to issue cheques to the majority of the individuals whose payments are outstanding.
- 2.2 Only a very small number of payments remain to be concluded. These are primarily for those employees where the job score information is incomplete or for those who left the employment of the County Council before October 2007. Letters to the former group who are entitled to back pay will be issued in the New Year as a matter of priority as the information becomes available. It is intended that the majority of letters will be issued to the those who have left before Christmas.
- 2.3 The process of job evaluation for school support staff has now started to roll out commencing with school administrative staff. This will involve schools completing a matching process of jobs against role profile information produced by joint working groups with the recognised trades unions and school representatives. There will be an on going roll out over the coming months for other staff groups. It is intended that all evaluations will be completed by early 2011 for full implementation by July 2011.
- 2.4 During the Autumn Term there has been a series of meetings with the Schools Forum to discuss possible options for the funding of back pay

and possible equal pay liability arising from the school support staff job evaluation process. Agreement has been reached with the Forum that any costs arising will be met on a shared basis part from the overall school budget allocation and part by funding from the County Council. The intention is to fund this by initially borrowing against the total pool of school balances, with a repayment over an agreed number of years. Early estimates of the costs indicate a potential liability in excess of £15m.

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

- 3.1 Formal consultation and negotiation with the recognised Trades Unions has been taking place for over six weeks on a package of measures including proposals for changes to the policy on compensation for early retirement and redundancy, other employment policies and changes to terms and conditions of employment. This package is estimated to achieve savings of approximately £2.9m and bring the overall employment package into line with other local authorities. The proposed removal of essential car user allowance and changes to travel allowance would deliver immediate cash savings in the order of £1.5 m and proposed changes to annual leave would save approximately £1.3 m.
- 3.2 The Trades Unions have indicated that they will be seeking to register a failure to agree over the proposed changes and will be seeking independent external support in resolving the issues. The Council remains committed to trying to reach agreement. A separate report on this matter is being considered by Personnel Committee.

### **4. Attendance Management**

- 4.1 The latest absence figures show a reduction to 9.56 days lost per employee per year. These figures are calculated on the basis of a rolling twelve month period from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.
- 4.2 Reports on levels of absence and trends; reasons for absence and the breakdown of long term and short tem absence are attached as Appendices. This information will be circulated to Corporate Directors and Service Directors on a quarterly basis in order that action plans can be developed at a corporate and departmental level to address the common themes and issues identified.
- 4.3 Work is currently ongoing to finalise reports for circulation to managers which identify levels and reasons for absence down to individual divisional level. This will enable more preventative and targeted action to be taken by local managers in relation to specific areas of service.

- 4.4 Service Directors continue to receive regular reports on the percentage of trigger interviews completed so that they can take appropriate follow up action and Service Heads are also informed of the performance in their areas. These reports will now be supported by the additional management information referred to above.
- 4.5 The highest reason for absence overall is time off due to an operation and post operative recovery. In order to respond to this, work has been undertaken to speed up referrals to the Occupational Health Service in order to assess the measures required to support staff to return to work at an earlier stage. Phased returns are being implemented more consistently across the board to further support this. Physiotherapy support is made available to staff as appropriate to speed their recovery. Opportunities for redeployment are also being developed for those staff who are unable to undertake their substantive roles on a temporary or permanent basis.
- 4.6 A priority area for action highlighted by the HR service, managers, Trades Union representatives and elected members relates to absence due to stress/depression. This is the second highest reason for absence across the Council. A steering group is being convened to look at this issue holistically across the Authority and develop a plan of specific activity. This will link up information available from the stress audits; evidence available as part of the absence management process and preventative measures identified as part of the wellbeing action plan including training, support, early identification and strategies for management of stress.
- 4.7 Cold/Flu/Sore throats appear in four of the five department's top three reasons for absence. The Council is currently collating information on Swine Flu separately in order that its impact on sickness absence can be assessed. If the number of days recorded as lost for this reason (including schools) were removed from the absence data this would reduce the overall average number of days lost per employee across the Authority to 9.28 days.
- 4.8 The balance between long term and short term absence varies by department and links to some degree to the underlying reason for the absence. Overall, the number of long terms absence cases has decreased by 11.8% overall since the intervention of the Attendance Management team. The number of cases where an employee has been absent for 12 months has decreased by approximately 70% indicating that earlier intervention and more robust case management are effective tools in reducing absence.
- 4.9 Proposals for revised trigger levels have been discussed with Trades Union colleagues with a view to reducing the level at which action in relation to absence is initiated. This has been identified as a key area of activity in order to reduce absence figures to meet the current target

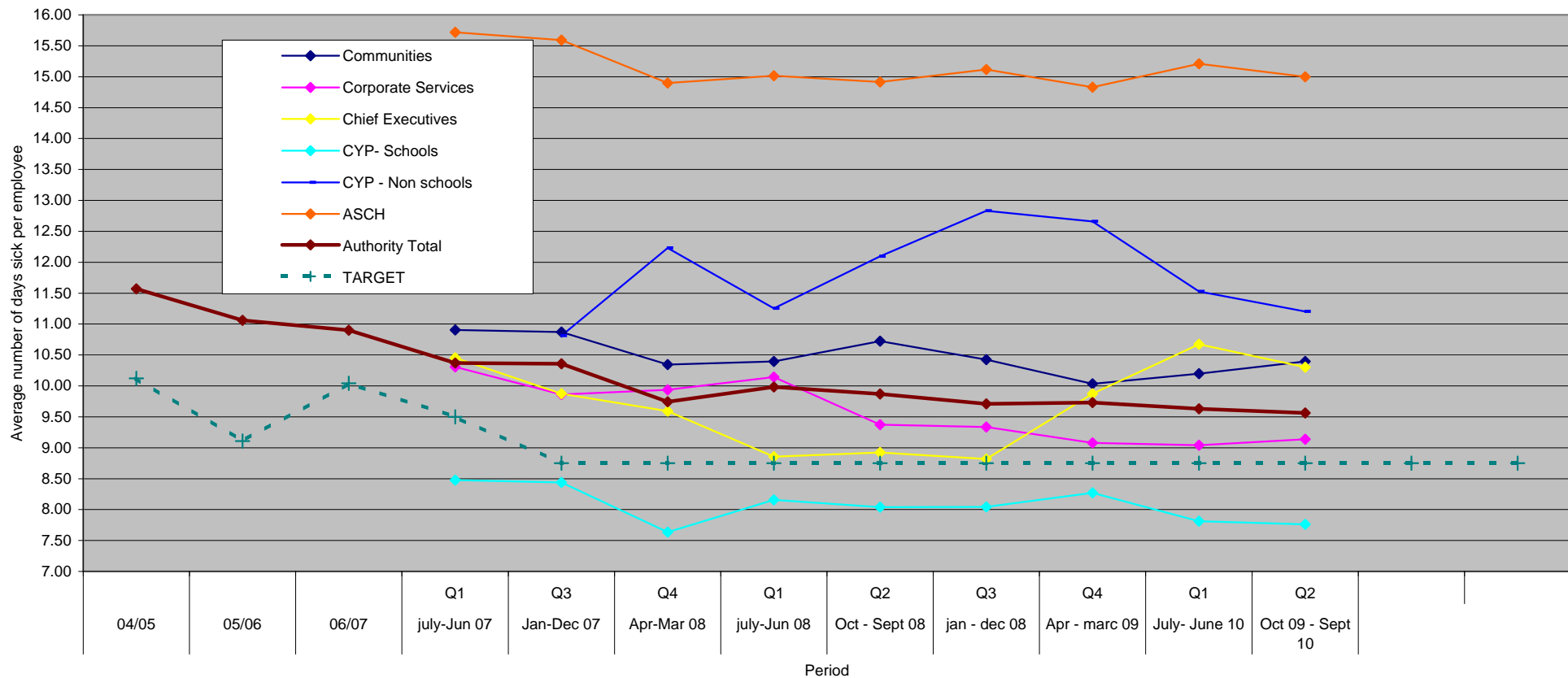
of 8.75 days lost per employee. It is intended to reduce the trigger levels at which action is initiated to 10 days in any rolling 12 month period for long term sickness and to 3 occurrences of absence in any 6 month period for short term absence. This change will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

- 4.10 Discussions have also taken place with Trades Union colleagues in relation to changes to the appeal process in relation to final warnings issued under the absence policy. It is intended that these will now be dealt with by senior managers and not elected members. The recognised Trades Unions are not in agreement with either the proposed changes to the trigger levels or appeal process. A range of other changes to the policy have been agreed with Trades Union colleagues with the aim of clarifying the policy and making it easier for managers to apply.
- 4.11 Work is continuing to ensure that accurate and timely sickness absence reporting is undertaken in order to comply with Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) regulations, ensure accuracy of records and allow monitoring against corporate and departmental absence targets. A pilot is being developed for implementation in the new year in which employees will initially contact a qualified nurse to report absence rather than their line manager. This would ensure that employees have direct access to appropriately qualified medical professionals for advice and support in the first instance. An update on the impact of this approach will be presented at a later date.

**Cllr Andy Stewart**  
**Cabinet Member for Personnel and Performance**

Dept	Average Number of Days Sick Per Employee											
	04/05	05/06	06/07	july-Jun 07	Jan-Dec 07	Apr-Mar 08	july-Jun 08	Oct - Sept 08	jan - dec 08	Apr - marc 09	July- June 10	Oct 09 - Sept 10
				Q1	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Communities				10.90	10.87	10.34	10.39	10.72	10.42	10.03	10.20	10.39
Corporate Services				10.31	9.86	9.94	10.14	9.37	9.33	9.08	9.04	9.14
Chief Executives				10.45	9.88	9.59	8.86	8.92	8.82	9.88	10.67	10.30
CYP- Schools				8.47	8.44	7.64	8.16	8.04	8.04	8.27	7.81	7.76
CYP - Non schools					10.81	12.23	11.26	12.09	12.83	12.66	11.53	11.20
ASCH				15.72	15.59	14.90	15.02	14.91	15.12	14.83	15.21	15.00
<b>Authority Total</b>	<b>11.57</b>	<b>11.06</b>	<b>10.90</b>	<b>10.37</b>	<b>10.36</b>	<b>9.75</b>	<b>9.98</b>	<b>9.87</b>	<b>9.71</b>	<b>9.73</b>	<b>9.63</b>	<b>9.56</b>

Average number of days sick per employee for the Authority by Department



# Nottinghamshire County Council

	Avg FTE	Days lost	BVPI	BACK PROBLEM	OTHER MUSC PROBLEM	STRESS / DEPRESSION	COLD / FLU / SORE THROAT	HEADACHE / MIGRAINE	OPERATION / POST OP	CHEST / RESPIRATORY	PREGNANCY RELATED	STOMACH / DIGESTION	HEART / BLOOD PRESSURE	INFECTION	SKIN DISORDER	OTHER	NOT SUPPLIED	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	
ASCH	2594.50	39496.70	15.22	5.78%	12.11%	17.73%	11.49%	2.25%	20.38%	3.51%	1.42%	8.11%	1.55%	2.53%	0.64%	9.88%	1.84%	37.48%	61.72%	99.20%
Communities	2800.07	28482.50	10.17	6.55%	11.24%	18.30%	10.47%	2.67%	17.43%	3.08%	0.38%	8.22%	2.84%	2.57%	0.56%	14.16%	1.53%	40.32%	59.68%	100.00%
Corporate Services	1000.39	9048.66	9.05	5.72%	8.75%	20.12%	21.18%	3.03%	11.79%	3.84%	1.49%	9.23%	4.39%	2.48%	0.61%	5.76%	1.62%	51.78%	48.22%	100.00%
Chief Execs	204.69	2184.92	10.67	8.02%	2.76%	18.82%	20.02%	3.15%	12.64%	3.62%	6.75%	12.18%	1.37%	2.79%	0.21%	7.39%	0.27%	49.76%	50.24%	100.00%
CYP - Non schools	1403.33	16697.54	11.90	5.56%	9.49%	24.92%	11.94%	1.68%	14.51%	3.12%	1.53%	7.74%	1.03%	2.20%	0.19%	13.68%	2.40%	36.22%	63.78%	100.00%
CYP Schools	11345.20	90421.58	7.97	5.16%	7.58%	13.94%	14.01%	2.65%	16.96%	2.52%	1.69%	10.60%	1.76%	2.42%	0.13%	10.56%	10.01%	50.17%	49.83%	100.00%
<b>TOTALS FOR NCC</b>	<b>19348.17</b>	<b>186331.89</b>	<b>9.63</b>	<b>5.60%</b>	<b>9.27%</b>	<b>16.75%</b>	<b>13.17%</b>	<b>2.51%</b>	<b>17.23%</b>	<b>2.95%</b>	<b>1.47%</b>	<b>9.29%</b>	<b>1.94%</b>	<b>2.46%</b>	<b>0.33%</b>	<b>10.97%</b>	<b>5.78%</b>	<b>44.80%</b>	<b>55.03%</b>	<b>99.83%</b>

