

SCRUTINY BOARD (CENTRAL AND CORPORATE FUNCTIONS)

INQUIRY INTO SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 10th June 2008, Scrutiny Board (Central and Corporate Functions) resolved to undertake an Inquiry into sickness absence management within the Authority.
- 1.2 The Board is aware of the detailed and comprehensive work previously undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Board (Resources) and the subsequent recommendations made by Members. Whilst technical data will be of use, the Board wishes to minimise repetition of previous discussions and certainly does not wish to simply cover the same ground as previous inquiries. Therefore, the aim of this inquiry is to take a more radical approach to seeking solutions to the challenges of sickness absence management within the Authority. This will include actively identifying recognised good practise and seeking out innovative and creative approaches.
- 1.3 The Board acknowledges that there has been significant work done to establish a framework for managers at all levels to deal with absence. This inquiry is not seeking to investigate the framework, but rather how the tools are being applied. With this in mind, the Board intends to engage with a wide cross section of officers within the Authority, private sector practitioners and recognised national leaders, as well as undertaking visits to other organisations where there has been success in managing absence.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

Scene Setting

- Receive update on previous recommendations
- Identify what has been successful
- Identify the remaining challenges
- Receive the latest data on absence
- Establish in what ways sickness absence impacts on the financial well being of the Authority and its service delivery

Best Practice

- Identify current recognised best practice in the public and private sectors

- Identify the latest innovative practice – tools that have not yet been considered and any new schemes emerging

Narrowing the Gap

- Investigate the role of the Authority in supporting employees with disability and supporting the reduction of worklessness and how this impacts of absence management

Managers as Agents

- Investigate the role of managers in applying the tools for managing absence
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the 'Enabling Managers' scheme

3.0 Comments of the relevant Director and Executive Member

- 3.1 In line with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule 12.4 the views of the relevant Director and Executive Member have been sought and have been incorporated where appropriate into these Terms of Reference. Full details are available on request to the Scrutiny Support Unit.

4.0 Timetable for the inquiry

- 4.1 The Inquiry will take place over three sessions, plus site visits with a view to issuing a final report on 2nd March 2009.
- 4.2 The length of the Inquiry is subject to change.

5.0 Submission of evidence

5.1 Session one – (7th July 2008)

To agree terms of reference

5.2 Session two - (8th September 2008)

Scene Setting

- Receive update on previous recommendations
- Identify what has been successful
- Identify the remaining challenges
- Receive the latest data on absence
- Establish in what ways sickness absence impacts on the financial well being of the Authority and its service delivery

5.3 Session three - (3rd November 2008) Best Practise

- Identify current recognised best practice in the public and private sectors
- Identify the latest innovative practice – tools that have not yet been considered and any new schemes emerging

Narrowing the Gap

- Investigate the role of the Authority in supporting employees with disability and supporting the reduction of worklessness and how this impacts of absence management

5.4 **Session four - (5th January 2009)**

Managers as Agents

- Investigate the role of managers in applying the tools for managing absence
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the 'Enabling Managers' scheme

5.5 **Session five – (2nd March 2009)**

- To agree final report

6.0 Witnesses

6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:

- Chris Ingham HR Manager
- Richard Moss-Blundell Head of HR, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Andrew Mason Chief Environment Officer
- Executive Member
- Steve Sumner National Health and Safety Policy Adviser, Local Government Employers
- Professor Dame Carol Black
- Confederation of British Industry Representative
- Cross section of Service Managers and employees (to be confirmed)
- Trade Union representative
- Private Sector Company
- Medical/occupational Health Representative.

7.0 Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements

7.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.

- 7.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for how the implementation of recommendations will be monitored.

8.0 Measures of success

- 8.1 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.