



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 26th July, 2011

7.00 pm

Town Hall, Watford

Additional information circulated at the meeting

Publication date: 18 July 2011

CONTACT

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Sandra Hancock in Legal and Property Services on 01923 2783XX or by email to legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk (Minicom available on 01923 278499).

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor M Watkin (Chair)

Councillor S Rackett (Vice-Chair)

Councillors N Bell, S Greenslade, K Hastrick, P Jeffree, S Johnson, R Martins and K McLeod

AGENDA

PART A - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

4. UPDATE FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 1 - 4)

This report sets out an update of the actions which arose at the meeting on 23 June 2011.

10. WORK PROGRAMME AND TASK GROUPS (Pages 5 - 14)

Report of the Head of Legal and Property Services

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to agree the scope and membership for the agreed Task Groups.

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Agenda Item 4

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:
Report of: Head of Human Resources
Title: Absence Levels in Watford Borough Council

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the Council's absence levels for 2010/11 and draws a comparison with absence levels in Three Rivers District Council.
- 1.2 The report also explains what action is being undertaken to address sickness absence in 2011/12.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the report.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Susan Adlam (acting Human Resources Manager) on telephone extension: 8312 email: susan.adlam@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Terry Baldwin Head of Human Resources

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 Watford absence levels

Historically, Watford has had high levels of sickness absence with 15 days per employee in 2003/04 and just under 12 days per employee in 2007/08. To remedy this, Watford brought in a sickness absence monitoring system in 2008 using an external supplier (First Care). This system provided for:

- All absence calls to be logged with an Occupational Nurse and a discussion held with the employee regarding the absence
- Emails and texts to be sent to line managers immediately following notification of absence stating reason for absence (where this has been disclosed) and expected return to work date
- Return to work interviews to be completed and logged on the system
- Management information regarding trend analysis, reasons for absence and absence by Service.

The Management Information pack is circulated to managers on a monthly basis and HR support managers with absence management, particularly long term sickness absence.

3.2 The Effect of using First Care

Absence levels in Watford have fallen and the rate of 8.5 days for 2010/11 was a similar level to that for 2009/10. This represents the lowest absence levels Watford has recorded and although it is higher than the target level of 7.6 days, it does represent a downward trend in absence levels.

3.3 Comparison of the breakdown of absence in Watford BC and Three Rivers DC

Three Rivers have consistently been one of the best performing councils in Hertfordshire for sickness absence levels per employee and have achieved an average absence rate of below 7 days per employee. The target of 7.6 days absence per employee was the first time the councils agreed a shared target for absence per employee. Three Rivers have previously recorded lower figures than 7.6 days and therefore it was not a surprise that they came in below this target. As our shared service partner, Three Rivers set a standard for Watford to aim for and to learn from their experience. Both councils have sickness absence management policies and interventions by line managers/HR.

During 2010/ 2011 1996 working days were lost to sickness absence at Three Rivers District Council, representing an average of 6.5 days absence per employee. In Watford Borough Council 4111 working days were lost to sickness absence during the same period, representing an average number of 8.5 days per employee. The table below identifies the levels of sickness within each service. As service names and the composition of occupations within services varies in each council these are grouped to give as close a match as possible. Head counts differ, therefore a comparison of number of days sickness per service is not helpful. The number of sickness days per service is shown as a percentage of the total sickness days in each council.

Note – for Watford Borough Council add total figures for all services above ICT only, the remaining 4 services are shared across both Councils. These breakdown figures are for information only to aid comparison between ‘like’ occupations, across both councils

Three Rivers District	Head count 308		Watford Borough Council	Head count 499	
	Absence Incidents	%age		Absence Incidents	%age
			Corporate Management	15	0.36
Corporate Services	8	0.4	Corporate Services total 267.75	267.75	6.5
CSC	146	7.3	Customer Services	214	5.2
			Management	3	.07
Partnerships	53	2.6	Partnership & Performance	48.75	1.18
			Environmental Services Total 1,508	1,508	36.6
Environmental Health	25	1.25	Environmental Health	84.75	2.08
Environmental Protection	31	1.5	Management	9	0.2
Street Cleaning	199	9.96	Street care	596.50	14.5
Waste	388	19.4	Waste management	806.75	19.6
			Community Services total 794	794	19.3
Housing	101	5.0	Housing	182.25	4.4
Grounds maintenance	25	1.25	Parks and open spaces	157.5	3.8
Leisure	28	1.4			
			Legal, Democratic and property total 377.5	377.5	9.18
Legal	54	2.7	Legal	24	0.58
Democratic	18	0.9	Democratic	40.25	0.97
			Buildings and projects	97.25	2.36
			Property	210	5.1
			Planning & Development total 277.25	277.25	6.7

Three Rivers District	Head count 308	Watford Borough Council	Head count 499	177.75	4.3
	Absence Incidents	%age		Absence Incidents	%age
Development planning	16	0.8	<i>Planning policy</i>	30	0.72
Building control	174	8.7	<i>Transport & infrastructure</i>	55.5	1.35
Tree protection	259	12.9			
Sustainability	36	1.8			
ICT	20	1.0	ICT	320	7.78
HR	12	0.6	HR	99	2.4
Finance	34	1.75	Finance	58	1.41
Revs & Bens	330	16.5	Revs & Bens	394.5	9.59
	1996		4111		

3.4 Analysis

The analysis shows that whilst there are less days absence per employee taken at Three Rivers, there remain some similarities in the absence trends in both councils. Refuse has the highest percentage of absence in both councils and demonstrates absence levels that are the same proportion of the total.

Street cleaning absence levels are considerably higher at Watford Borough Council.

The areas of Building Control and Tree protection at Three Rivers are inflated due to 2 long term sickness cases that are currently being managed with Occupational Health.

Housing holds similar absence levels in each council.

Grounds Maintenance absence percentage is higher at Watford Borough Council and the figures are mainly due to one absence case that has now returned to work.

The level of absence in Property at Watford Borough Council is due to one complex long term absence case that is being managed with Occupational Health

There have been 3 long term absences, and intermittent short term absences in Revenues and Benefits in Shared Services across both councils.

4.0 Conclusion

The absence levels within Watford are reducing on an average per employee basis. The figures for the first quarter of 2011/12 show a level of 1.97 days per employee. If this trend continues for the rest of the year the average absence level would be 7.88 days which is a further decrease and brings us closer to the target level of 7.6 days.

Active management of absence cases by line managers and HR have seen the average absence rate reduce and further work in this area is planned. Long term absence cases are reviewed regularly and specialist medical reports obtained to support decisions regarding phased return to work, alternative employment options (if available) or proceedings under the capability policy.

Short term absence is discussed with employees and return to work interviews implemented in accordance with the First Care system.

Leadership Team review average absence levels across all services on a monthly basis and any areas of concern are noted. The absence trend is also reviewed and discussions

take place should the trend show an increase in absence levels.

HR will meet with First Care to identify what further action may be taken to further reduce the absence levels within Watford.

Scrutiny Review – Final scope

Proposer: Councillor/Officer Councillor Karen Collett	
Topic for scrutiny:	<p>West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust - charges for parking at Watford General Hospital</p> <p>To review the present charging policy to establish</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basis for the current charges. • The range of parking options and charges for patients, members of patients' families and visitors,
Why has this topic been recommended for scrutiny?	<p>Cllr Collett feels that Watford residents are penalised for using the hospital's services.</p>
What are the specific outcomes the proposer wishes to see from the review?	<p>To establish how they compare with other Trusts locally and further afield; whether they are "reasonable"; if there are options are they known and understood by visitors?</p> <p>If appropriate, to make such recommendations to improve the Trust's parking and charging policy</p>
Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?	
It must affect a group or community of people	<p>Patients, their families and their visitors coming to Watford General Hospital.</p>
It must relate to a service, event or issue in which the council has a significant stake	<p>Healthcare and parking in Vicarage Ward</p>

It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months	Conforms.
It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee	Conforms.
Does the topic meet the council's priorities?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the health of the town and enhance its heritage 2. Enhance the town's 'clean & green' environment 3. Enhance the town's sustainability 4. Enhance the town's economic prosperity and potential 5. Supporting individuals and the community 6. Securing an efficient, effective, value for money council 7. Influence and partnership delivery
Are you aware of any limitations of time or other constraints which need to be taken into account?	No
Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?	West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Please complete the 'sign off' section at the end of this document	

<p>The following section to be completed by Democratic Services</p>	
<p>Consultation with relevant Heads of Service <i>(this section to be completed by Democratic Services)</i></p>	<p><i>It is important to ensure that the relevant service can support a review by providing the necessary documents and attending meetings as necessary. The Head of Service's comments should be obtained before the request to hold a review is put to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</i></p>
<p>Has the relevant Head of Service been consulted?</p> <p>Is this a topic which the service department(s) is able to support.</p> <p>When was the last time this service was the subject of a scrutiny review?</p>	<p><i>Yes/no (if no, please give reason)</i></p> <p><i>Include HoS comments here:</i></p> <p>Never</p>

<p>Scope Sign off</p>			
<p>Councillor/Officer</p>	<p>Date</p>	<p>Head of Service</p>	<p>date</p>

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Hospital	Miles from Watford (info)
Spire Hospital, Bushey	2 (✓)
BMI Bishop's Wood, Northwood	4 (✓)
Mount Vernon, Northwood	4 (✓)
Northwood and Pinner Community (at Mount Vernon)	4 (✓)
Royal National Orthopaedic, Stanmore	6 (✓)
Harefield	6
Roxbourne Hospital	7
Ealing	7
Hemel Hempstead	8
BMI Clementine Churchill, Harrow	8
BMI The Garden Hospital, Hendon	8
Northwick Park	9 (✓)
St Albans City	9
Edgware	9
St Mark's, Harrow (at Northwick Park)	9 (✓)
Wembley	9
Colindale	10
BMI The Chiltern Hospital, Great Missenden	12
Barnet General	13
Charing Cross	13
Finchley	14
BMI Weymouth Hospital, London	14
BMI Fitzroy Square Hospital, London	14
BMI The Princess Margaret Hospital, Windsor	15
BMI The Shelburne, High Wycombe	15
Queen Elizabeth II, Welwyn	16 (✓)
Potters Bar Community	16
Royal Free	16
Whittington Hospital	16
Willesden	16
BMI City Medical, London	16
Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth NW8 9NH	17
Wellington	17 (✓)
Central Middlesex	17 (✓)
Luton and Dunstable	18
Western Eye Hospital	18
St Mary's	18
Queen Charlotte Hospital	18
St Pancras	18
Hillingdon	18 (✓)
Spire Hospital, Harpenden	18
St Mary's Day Centre, Luton	18
Princess Grace W1U 5NY	18 (✓)
Princess Louise W10 6DL	18
Harpenden Memorial	18
University College	19

Hospital	Miles from Watford (info)
BMI King's Oak Hospital (within grounds of Chase Farm)	19 (✓)
National Orthopaedic	19
St Ann's	19
North Middlesex	19
Portland Hospital for Women and Children	19 (✓)
Chase Farm	19 (✓)
Great Ormond Street	19 (✓)
BMI The Cavell Hospital	19
BMI The Runnymede Hospital, Chertsey	19
Royal National Ear, Nose and Throat, Bolsover Street	19 (✓)
Royal Marsden	20
Lister Hospital, London	20 (✓)
St Barts	20
Royal Brompton	20
Moorfields Eye Hospital	20
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	20
Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury	20
St Michael's. Enfield	20
Cromwell	21
Ravenscourt Park Hospital	21
Chelsea and Westminster	21
London Bridge	21 (✓)
Guy's and St Thomas's	21
St Thomas	21
Royal	22
Brentford	22
Mile End Hospital	22
Lambeth	22
County Hospital, Hertford	22
Barnes	23
Cheshunt Community	23
Queen Mary's Hospital	24
International Spinal Hospital, Aylesbury	24
Royal Berkshire, Aylesbury	24
Lister, Stevenage	24 (✓)
Hammersmith	25
Harlow, High Wycombe	25
Pinehill Hospital, Hitchin	26

According to the NHS website there are 129 hospitals within 20 miles of Watford.

Hospital	Open	Costs	Payment Type	Spaces Provided	Drop Off area
Watford General	Monday to Sunday :24 hours	3 hours £4.00 5 hours £6.00 Day £12.00 (all tickets expire at midnight on day of purchase)	Pay & display Card	414 car parking 58 disabled spaces	Yes
Spire Hospital, Bushey (2 miles)		FREE		Disabled spaces available	
BMI Bishop's Wood Hospital, Northwood (4 miles)		Limited Free parking in BW hospital Parking also at Mount Vernon Hospital, adjacent			
Mount Vernon, Northwood (4 miles)		Up to 30 mins FREE Up to 12 hrs £3.70 Up to 24 hrs £6.70 Each additional 24 hr period £19.00 Disabled FREE		Disabled spaces available	
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore (6 miles)	Free onsite parking, primarily for blue badge holders				
Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow St Marks Hospital, Harrow (9 miles)		Up to 1 hour £2.00 Up to 2 hours £4.00 Up to 5 hours £5.00 Up to 8 hours £7.50 Up to 24 hrs £10.00 5 & & day passes also available No charge for disabled	1 x Pay on foot 3 x Pay & display	526 car parking 80 disabled spaces	

Hospital	Open	Costs	Payment Type	Spaces Provided	Drop Off area
Queen Elizabeth II, Welwyn (16 miles)	Monday to Sunday: 24 hrs	20 minutes FREE 2 hours £2.90 5 hours £4.60 24 hours £6.80 Week £18.00 Month £20.00 3 months £30.00	Pay & display	227 car parking 19 Disabled spaces Motorcycle spaces (free)	Yes
Central Middlesex (17 miles)		No charges advised on website	Pay & display	Limited no of disabled spaces	
Wellington Hospital (Independent hospital) (17 miles)	Public car parks (NCP and Masterpark)				
Hillingdon Hospital (18 miles)	Limited parking available ~ public transport recommended	Up to 10 mins Free Up to 30 mins £1.10 Up to 1 hour £1.80 Up to 1 hr 30m £2.60 Up to 2 hours £3.00 Up to 10 hrs £3.70 Up to 24 hrs £6.70 Over 24 hrs £19.00 Additional 24 hr period £19.00	Some pay on foot some Pay and display	Disabled free Visitors of long-term inpatients can obtain concessionary parking permits with authorisation from the ward manager of the patient. Costs are: 1 week for £12.00 and 1 month for £25.00.	
Princess Grace Hospital (Independent hospital) (18 miles)	Parking available on street (parking meters) Public car park				

Hospital	Open	Costs	Payment Type	Spaces Provided	Drop Off area
Chase Farm Hospital (19 miles)		Up to 1 hour £2.00 1 -2 hours £3.00 2 – 4 hours £4.00 4 – 6 hours £6.00 6 – 24 hours £10.00		Designated blue badge spaces near entrances – free Visitors to ITU/paediatrics - £20 pm Patients and visitors - £11 weekly ticket	
Great Ormond Street Hospital (19 miles)	Within the congestion charge zone Website advises use of local NCP car parks Disabled badge holders advised able to use residents' parking bays. parking meter bays and pay and display zones				
Portland Hospital for Women and Children (Private hospital) (19 miles)	Website advises use of NCP car parks close to hospital or parking meters				
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Bolsover Street (19 miles)	Within congestion charge zone – different rules apply for blue badge holders No on site parking NCP car parks			3 blue badge bays outside centre	
Lister Hospital, London (Private hospital) (20 miles)	Limited local parking Public car parks				

Hospital	Open	Costs	Payment Type	Spaces Provided	Drop Off area
London Bridge Hospital (21 miles)	Public car parks (Euro Car Park)				
Lister, Stevenage (24 miles)	Monday to Sunday :24 hours	20 minutes FREE 2 hours £2.90 5 hours £4.60 24 hours £6.80 Week £18.00 Month £20.00	Pay & display	332 car parking 39 Disabled spaces Motorcycle spaces	Yes