

Report to Cabinet

13 September 2023

Subject:	Recommendations from Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board in response to Sickness Absence Outturn 2022-23.
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources – Cllr Piper
Director:	Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Suky Suthi-Nagra, Democratic Services Manager Suky_suthinagra@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer be authorised, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, to consider the feasibility of introducing bonuses and/or incentives to improve staff absenteeism.
- 1.2 That, in connection with 1.1, a further report be submitted to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, within 2 months' time, on the decision of Cabinet.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board received the Sickness Absence Outturn 2022/23 at their meeting on 27 July 2023 and considered the feasibility of introducing incentives for staff who displayed consistent attendance at work.



2.2 Having considered sickness levels within the Council, the Board requested that the Cabinet consider the feasibility of offering incentives to reduce staff absenteeism and, in turn, discover if this method was more cost efficient when compared to the costs needed to source agency staff to cover for absent employees.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

3.1 Scrutinising the Sickness Absence Outturn 2022/23 report supports the Council's activities towards the delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives:

	<p>The Council continues to build on existing workforce mental health and wellbeing resources, by proactively responding to emerging challenges and trends, enabling our employees to effectively support their own, and their colleague's, positive mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Council will develop and embed excellent people management practices, by effectively leading, supporting and improving our workforce, fostering a workforce that is engaged and productive.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The sickness absence rate for the last financial year (2022-23) was 10.81 days per employee. This equates to 4.87% working days lost to sickness absence, compared to a national average of 2.6% for the UK overall and 3.6% across the public sector.

4.2 Sickness absence rates were higher for every quarter in 2022-23 compared to the previous year; representing an overall increase of 0.5 days per person compared to 2021-22. The increase was evenly spread across the year.



- 4.3 Rates of absence have increased each year since 2018-19, with the exception of 2019-20 and 2020-21. The reduction in sickness absence for the years including the height of the pandemic were unsurprising and reflected temporary changes to roles and ways of working, as well as restrictions to social mixing and a corresponding reduction in usual seasonal illness patterns.
- 4.4 HR are currently reviewing the council’s sickness absence management (SAM) processes with particular attention being applied to directorate and service-level absence review process; discretion within the SAM policy; and SAM Policy, Guidance and Process (with focus on language, documentation, and the move to self-service with Oracle Fusion). Workshops have been carried out with colleagues within HR and managers across the council who frequently apply the SAM policy, alongside ongoing discussions with our trade union representatives, in the updating of arrangements.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Cabinet is requested to respond to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Management Board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented.

6 Implications

Resources:	In considering and approving the proposals, Cabinet would need to consider the cost associated with exploring the feasibility of introducing incentives to attempt to improve staff absenteeism.
Legal and Governance:	In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Cabinet is requested to respond to the recommendations of the scrutiny board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented.
Risk:	There are no risk implications associated with this report.



Equality:	No Equality Impact Assessment is required in relation to this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	No health and wellbeing implications associated with this report.
Social Value	Ensuring that staff are present enables a consistent approach to enable residents and services users to receive the best possible outcomes.
Climate Change	No Climate Change implications associated with this report.
Corporate Parenting	No Corporate Parenting implications associated with this report.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

Sickness Absence Outturn 2022/23

