REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	5th January 2016
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, Community & Resources
PORTFOLIO:	Resources
SUBJECT:	Staff sickness absence
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide information to the Board on the number of working days lost due to sickness absence in the first half of 2015/16.

1.2 To report on comparative data from previous financial years, and to outline the overall out-turn figure for sickness absence for the last financial year – 2014/15.

1.3 It should be noted that the previous directorate structure is in use for reporting throughout 2015/16. All data excludes schools.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) The content of the report be noted

ii) Managers be reminded of the need to proactively apply the Council's sickness policies and seek the support and guidance of the HR service where necessary.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 **Sickness absence data: Cumulative for Q1 and Q2 2015/16.**

Directorate	Total headcount	Total FTE	Total days lost to sickness absence
Policy & Resources	767	670.77	3931
Communities	1161	807.82	6855
Children & Enterprise	600	468.48	3229
TOTALS	2528	1947	14015

3.2   At the end of quarter 2, 2015/16, the average number of days per employee lost to sickness absence stands at 4.23 days. This represents a 22% reduction on the same period in 2014/15, which is a positive trend.

3.3   **Sickness absence data: Financial Year comparators (Average number of days per employee).**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4 Cumulative total
2013/14	2.63	5.14	7.99	11.24
2014/15	2.78	5.45	7.67	10.44
2015/16	2.33	4.23	-	-

3.4   The table at 3.3 above provides comparative figures for the previous two financial years, demonstrating that a downward trend is currently evident. The final outturn figure for 2015/16 was 7% lower than the previous financial year at 10.44 days.

3.5   **Sickness absence data: Length of absence periods.**

Directorate	1 day	2-7 days	8-14 days	15+ days	Total absence periods	Total days lost
Policy & Resources	223	108	27	79	437	3931
Communities	235	187	61	135	618	6855
Children & Enterprise	55	107	21	54	237	3229

3.6   The table at 3.5 above sets out the number of absences falling within each timescale range. Long-term absence is included in calculations and managers continue to address issues related to long-term sickness absence within the scope of the Council's absence management policies.

3.7   **Sickness absence data: Absence reasons.**

3.8   The table at 3.9 below provides detail on the predominant reasons for absence due to illness. The Council has taken measures to aim to reduce certain types of absence in the current year, one being the offer of a flu vaccination for staff, and the second a comprehensive programme of stress risk assessments. It is too early to see the impact of these measures yet, however comparisons will be included in future reports.

3.9

Absence Reason	Total number of days lost: Q1 & Q2 2015/16
Other musculo-skeletal problems	1980
Personal Stress	1660
Depression	1290
Stomach, liver, kidney & digestion; to include gastroenteritis	1133
Back and neck problems	907
Infections, to include colds and flu	876
Neurological: to include headaches and migraine	776

3.10 **Management of absence in the workplace**

3.11 Absence is managed in the workplace by managers, with support from the HR service. During the summer of 2015, the HR service became part of a new Policy, People, Performance and Efficiency Division. In bringing these functions together, there is an intention that the impact of absence on the performance of the Council will be better understood, and the policies and frameworks required to manage issues created by staff being absent will be developed more effectively. Progress will be featured in future reports to this board.

3.12 In addition to internal resources, the Council uses external resource at certain stages in the absence management process, namely an Occupational Health (OH) Provider. The Council is currently reviewing this provision and is exploring the market place in conjunction with the Procurement Division to ensure that OH provision is as effective as it can be, and offers value for money into the short to medium term.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 As monitoring of sickness absence continues, it is anticipated that associated policies will continue to be reviewed, in consultation with trade unions, to ensure that absence is managed effectively and fairly.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Any staff absence carries a cost to the Council. In the current financial climate, it is imperative that absence, and the resulting cost is minimised as far as possible. As policies are reviewed, this must

be a major consideration.

6.0   IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1   Staff absence has an effect on productivity and service delivery. It is therefore important that it is managed effectively in order that all corporate priorities can be met.

7.0   RISK ANALYSIS

7.1   Failure to effectively manage absence at an individual, or higher level, can have negative impacts on the wellbeing of individual members of staff, wider teams, and the organisation as a whole.

7.2   There is also a risk that if trends in absence are not identified and managed properly, the Council is placed under unnecessary pressure at a time when resources are severely limited.

8.0   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1   All current policies used in the absence management process have been subject to Equality Impact Assessment. Any new polices will be assessed as they are developed.