SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Executive Director – Commissioning and Governance
To: Council – 24 June 2015

(Author: Mark Stinson - Legal Services Co-ordinator)

Subject: Delegated authority to review the Council’s Sickness Management Policies.

Purpose: To consider granting delegated authority to the Head of the Paid Service to review and implement changes to the Council’s Sickness Management Policies for short and long term sickness.

Recommendations:

1) That delegated authority is granted to the Head of the Paid Service to review the Council’s Sickness Management Policies for short and long term sickness, together with all associated documentation, with immediate effect.

2) That the Head of the Paid Service be authorised to implement any necessary changes to the Sickness Management Policies, and all associated documentation, on completion of the review and following consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for CPBS Client Services (HR).

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The current Sickness Management Policies for short and long term sickness absence have been in place since 2009. The policies are based upon the ‘Bradford Factor’ (so called due to its reported links with research undertaken by the Bradford University School of Management). The Bradford Factor is a weighted scoring system which particularly targets short-term absence. The Council chose to use the Bradford Factor but only incorporated short term sickness absence in the calculation (rather than the more traditional approach of including both long and short term absence).

1.2 It is felt that other approaches to sickness management may prove to be more effective than the Bradford Factor, and research on alternative approaches has therefore been undertaken. In order to ensure that suitable changes are implemented as early as possible, it is proposed that delegated authority be granted to the Head of the Paid Service to review the policies and implement appropriate changes.

2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 The options available to the Council are:

a. Grant delegated authority to the Head of the Paid Service to review, and implement changes to, the Sickness Management Policies (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for CPBS Client Services (HR)).

b. Ask the Head of the Paid Service to review the Sickness Management Policies but to bring any proposed policy changes to Council for determination.
c. Do nothing (in other words, retain the current policies).

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 It is considered that the current policies are not as effective as they could be, and that an alternative approach is likely to be more effective in managing sickness absence. Granting delegated authority to the Head of the Paid Service to undertake this work, and to implement suitable changes (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder), will enable the work to be completed and implemented at the earliest opportunity.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 It is anticipated that the introduction of new policies and associated documentation will result in more effective sickness management and an overall reduction in days lost to sickness absence.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

5.1.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

5.2 Constitution & Legal

5.2.1 The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 make it clear that staffing matters, including certain staffing policies and procedures, are functions that cannot be exercised by the Executive. The Constitution reflects this requirement.

5.3 Contracts

5.3.1 Relevant policies and practices (such as sickness management) form part of the contractual relationship between employer and employee. Any changes to the sickness management policies will (as a result of collective bargaining and assuming union agreement) be incorporated in existing and future employment contracts.

5.4 Corporate Priorities

5.4.1 Adequate staffing levels underpin all of the Council’s corporate priorities, and high levels of sickness absence may undermine those priorities. Of particular relevance is the following corporate priority:

- To provide the right services at the right time and in the right way

5.5 Crime and Disorder

5.5.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

5.6 Equality and Diversity / Human Rights

5.6.1 The Council is bound by equalities legislation, and in particular the public sector equality duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The revised Sickness Management Policies will reflect this duty and will ensure that the Council does not unlawfully discriminate when managing staff sickness.
5.7 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.7.1 The Council takes it role as a good employer very seriously, and any review of the Sickness Management Policies will ensure that appropriate support is offered to employees in order to help maintain or improve health and wellbeing (appropriate use of Occupational Health professionals being an example).

5.8 **Financial**

5.8.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

5.9 **Risk Management**

5.9.1 A key risk is that any Sickness Management Policies prove ineffective, and that days lost to sickness absence are persistently higher than expected.

5.10 **Staffing**

5.10.1 As already detailed in paragraph 5.3 above, any amended Sickness Management Policies will have a direct contractual and operational impact on staff. Successful implementation and operation of revised policies should result in fewer days lost to staff sickness absence.

5.11 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.11.1 Feedback from the Staff Forum, appropriate managers and HR specialists, and unions (Unison and UCATT) will be taken into account during the proposed review.

5.11.2 The Portfolio Holder responsible for CPBS Client (HR) will also be consulted.

5.11.3 It is anticipated that new policies and associated documentation will be implemented over coming months.

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 None

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 CPBS – Compass Point Business Services
HR – Human Resources

Background papers: - Sickness Management Policy dated October 2009 (updated March 2010)

**Lead Contact Officer**
Name and Post: Mark Stinson – Legal Services Co-ordinator
Telephone Number: 01775 764612
Email: mark.stinson@breckland-sholland.gov.uk

**Key Decision:** No

**Exempt Decision:** No

**This report refers to a Discretionary Service**