

ANGUS COUNCIL

SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 27 JANUARY 2015

SICKNESS ABSENCE JULY– SEPTEMBER 2014

REPORT BY SHARON FAULKNER, HEAD OF HR, IT & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT

This report advises of the level of sickness absence within the council for the period 1 July–30 September 2014.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The committee considers the terms of this report.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

This report contributes to the achievement of the following priority contained within the Council Plan:

Transformational Change

- review our workforce to ensure it is led and managed effectively, is the right size and shape, is motivated and has the skills, knowledge and tools needed.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 As part of the council's performance management arrangements information on sickness absence levels for directorates and for the council as a whole are reported to this committee on a quarterly basis. This report gives details for the second quarter of 2014/15, 1 July–30 September 2014.

3.2 The figures given in the section below are on a 'whole' council basis. However, [Appendix 1](#), gives a breakdown of figures by directorate. This is the fourth time that it has been possible to give this breakdown on the basis of the council structure which was adopted on 1 April 2013. As a consequence it is not possible in this report, to give a 'year on year', 'like for like' comparison. However comparisons on the basis of the total number of teaching and non-teaching employees are given. The next quarterly report will contain the first 'year on year', 'like for like' comparisons by directorate.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The figures in brackets relate to the same period last financial year.

Percentage of days lost against available working days

	2014/15	2013/14
Local Government Employees	5.09%	(4.50%)
Teachers	2.61%	(2.15%)
Total	4.63%	(4.08%)

A breakdown of these figures to each directorate is shown at [Appendix 1](#).

Number of working days lost

	2014/15	2013/14
Local Government Employees	8755.5	(8353.5)
Teachers	1015	(861)
Total	9770.5	(9214.5)

Average days lost per employee

	2014/15	2013/14
Local Government Employees	2.27	(2.15)
Teachers	0.88	(0.73)
Total	1.95	(1.82)

4.2 Comment

For all council employees, there was a disappointing +13.5% increase in the percentage of working days lost, when compared with the corresponding quarter in 2013/14. This is an abrupt reversal of reducing sickness absence levels per quarter over the last 15 months.

The highest comparative increase was recorded for Teachers at +21.4%. Members should note in 4.1 above that the percentage of working days lost for Teachers, at 2.61%, is 51% of the figure for non-teaching employees, at 5.09%.

An analysis of the teachers' absence figure showed that periods of long-term absence, in the category 20+ days, had increased from 299 sick days (for 10 employees) in the second quarter of 2013/14 to 552 sick days (for 17 employees) this quarter, an increase in sick days of +84.6 %.

There is no obvious reason for this increase other than the fact that the absences were all related to either, recognised long term illnesses/health issues, i.e. cancer, surgical operations and recovery, hip replacement, etc., or stress related absences affecting 7 of the 17 employees. Steps are being taken to effectively manage these situations, especially the stress related reasons, to enable a return to the historically lower level of sickness for teaching employees.

As regards non-teaching employees, comparison with the same quarter in 2013/14 revealed a +13.1% increase in the percentage of working days lost. Analysis of the periods of absence showed that short-term absence was less or equivalent to last years' quarterly information but long-term absence was substantially higher, at +27%. Again, the reasons for absence were largely the same as for Teachers above.

Arguably, this is a more disappointing indicator, given the higher employee count and steps are being taken to actively manage this situation and enable a return to the more favourable levels recorded throughout the whole of 2013/4 and the first quarter of 2014/15. Although disappointing, the second quarter absence level is still 9% lower than that recorded for the same quarter in 2012/2013, at 5.55%.

4.3 Breakdown of absence figures

Absences of one day accounted for 5% of total days lost, absences of two to five days, 16%, absences of six to 20 days, 20% and absences of more than 20 days, 59%.

A directorate comparison of the respective periods of absence is shown in [Appendix 2](#).

Of the incidences of absence, 35% were one day absences, 40% two to five days, 14% six to 20 days and 11% more than 20 days.

4.4 Cost of Sickness Absence

In the second quarter, July-September 2014, the direct cost of employees' sickness absence – ie the cost of sick pay, was £714,825.50.

This figure comprises payments of statutory sick pay (SSP) at £133,897.82 and occupational sick pay (OSP) at £580,927.68.

The cost of direct sick pay was 2.38% of total salary costs.

4.5 *Reasons for Sickness Absence*

In the second quarter July-September 2014, the top five reasons for sickness absence were stress related, stomach issues, lower limb problems, back problems, and respiratory/ circulatory/ heart issues. Fuller information on reasons for absence is given at Appendix 3. Reasons for absence are currently under review as detailed in the annual report for sickness absence in 2014/15.

4.6 *Ill Health Retirals*

During the period three employees were retired on the grounds of ill health.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the terms of this report.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The Chief Executive, Strategic Director – Resources, Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance and Head of Legal and Democratic Services have been consulted on the terms of this report.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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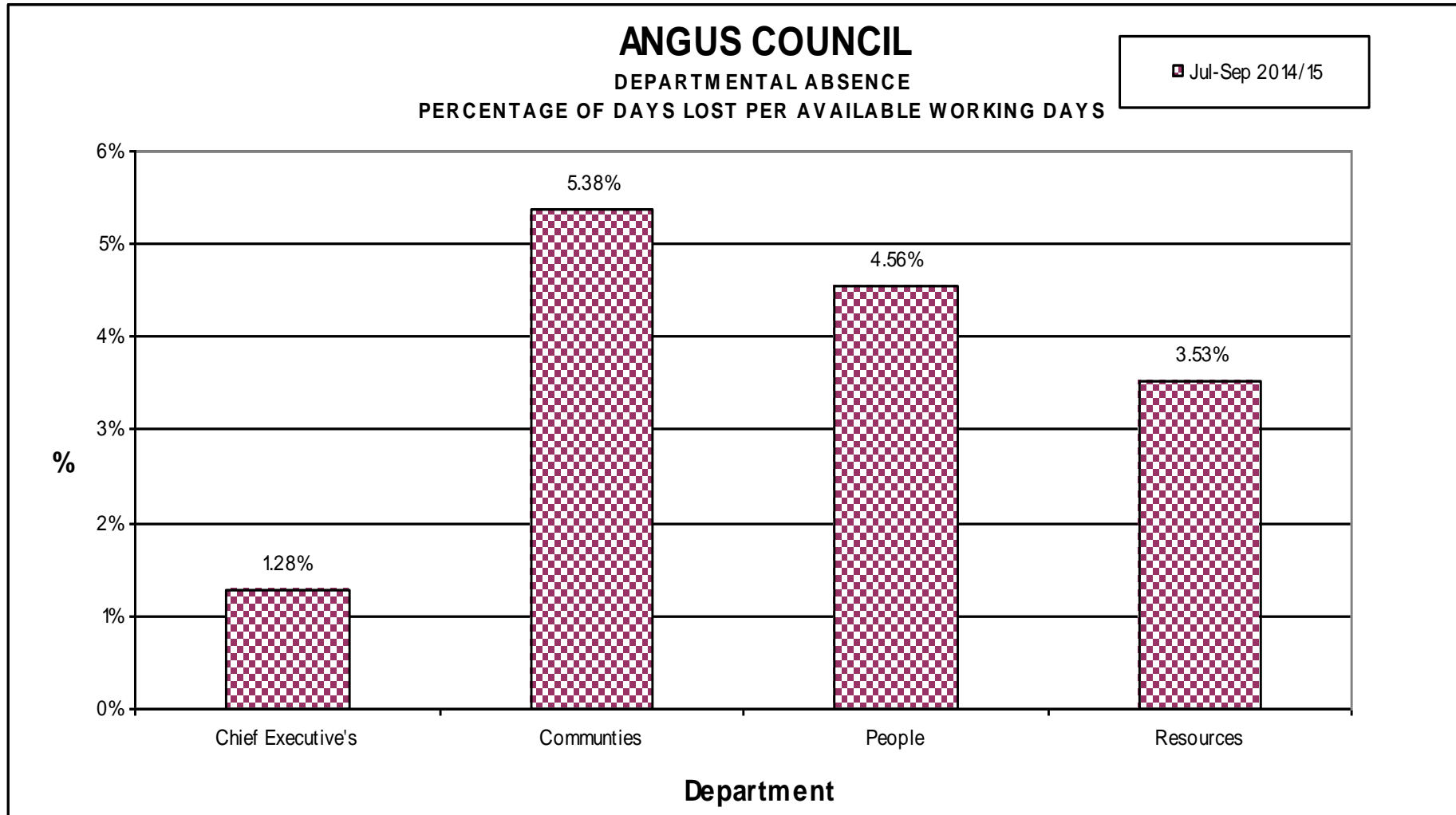
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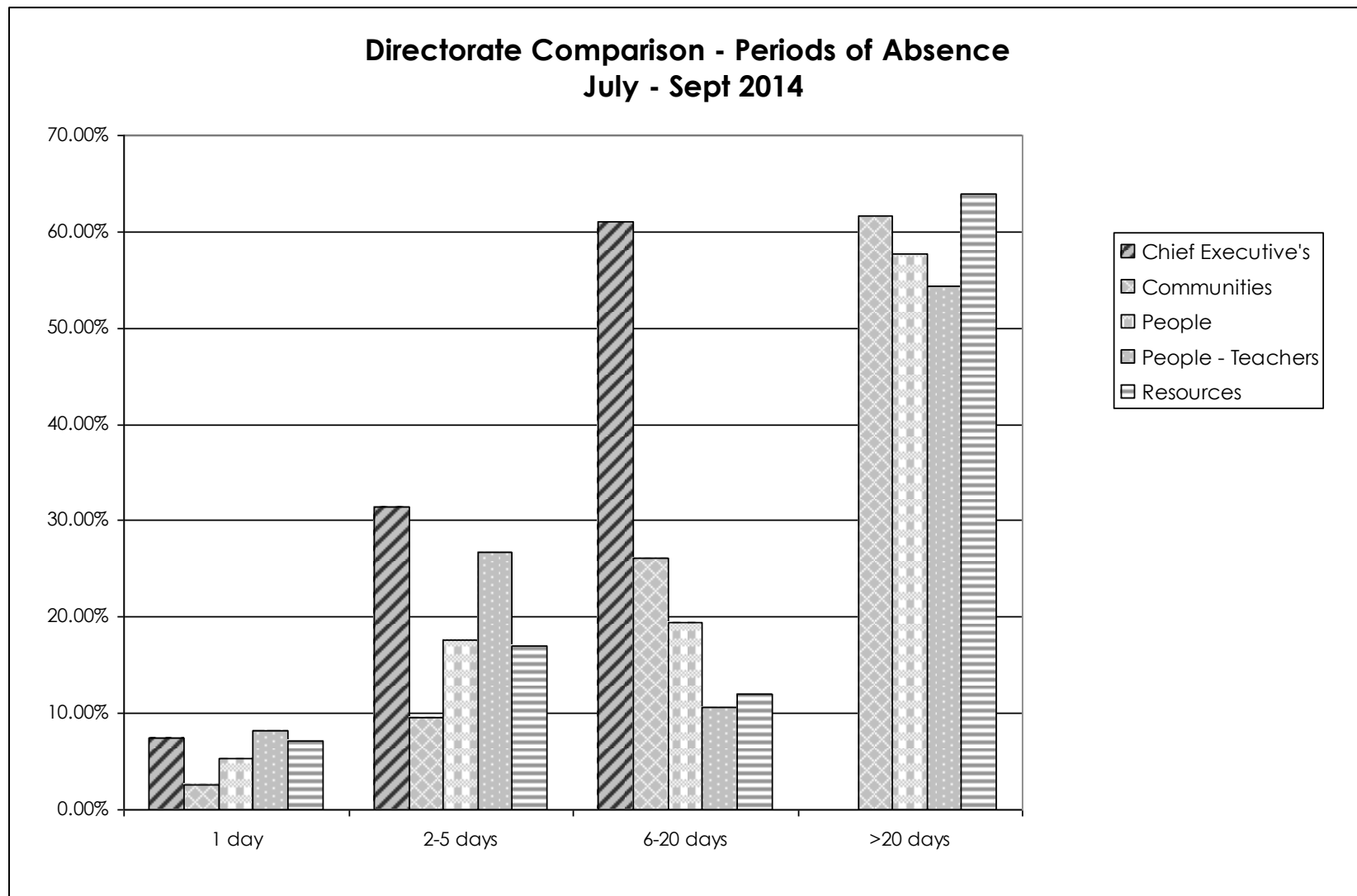
List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Departmental Absence: Percentage of Days Lost per Available Working Days

Appendix 2: Directorate Comparison: Periods of Absence – July-September 2014

Appendix 3: Reasons for Sickness Absence





REASONS FOR SICKNESS ABSENCE

Reason	%
Stress Related	22.76
Stomach	9.57
Lower Limb	8.77
Back	8.46
Respiratory/Circulatory/Heart	6.64
Cold/Flu	3.62
Upper Body	3.03
Upper Limb	2.99
Headache	2.63
Ear/Nose/Throat	2.10
Eye/Face	0.39
Other Medical Reason	29.03