Belfast City Council

Report to:	**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**
Subject:	**2007/08 Absence Rates**
Date:	**May 2008**
Reporting Officer:	**Peter McNaney, Chief Executive**
Contact Officer:	**Jill Minne, Acting Head of HR**

Purpose

This report:

- Provides sickness absence data for the council for the financial year 2007/08.
- Compares this year's absence figure with the same period for financial years 2005/06 and 2006/07.
- Recommends a target for reduction in sickness absence.

Relevant Background Information

A robust and corporate approach to the consistent management of absence has been put in place and resources have been prioritised to carry out considerable work in this area. This has included the development and negotiated agreement of a new Attendance Policy; identification and monitoring of 'hot spots'; weekly identification and monitoring of priority cases across the council; monthly central monitoring of departmental compliance with absence procedures; implementation of a case review mechanism; and the delivery of a training programme on effective absence management.

This is a good example of how a central support service can work in conjunction with departments to deliver a corporate priority.

Key Issues

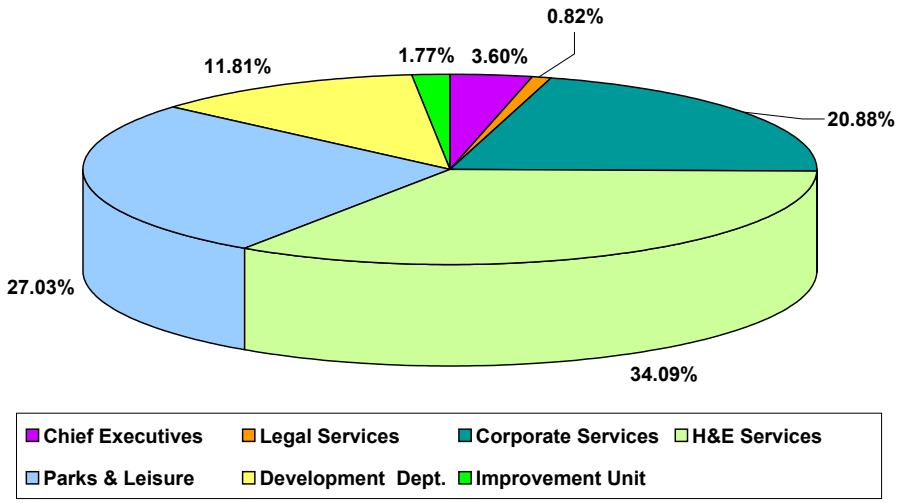
- This work has resulted in a reduction of almost two days during the past two years.

Average number of days sickness absence per full time employee		
2006/06	**2006/07**	**2007/08**
15.75	**15.08**	**13.91**

- At the end of the financial year 2007/08 the average number of sickness absence per employee is 13.91 days per full time employee.
- This is the lowest figure for absence the council has had since 1999/00.
- The council has reduced its absence by 2,708 days, or 7.75%, this year.
- Over two years the figure has reduced by nearly two average days per person (1.84 days or 11.6%)
- 35% of staff had no absence during 2007/08
- 65% of staff had less than the CBI norm for the private sector, i.e. 6 days.
- 17.5% of staff were absent from work on a long term basis (more than 20 consecutive working days)
- Long term sickness accounted for nearly 70 % of the council's sickness absence.
- Departmental sizes have a significant impact on the overall sickness figures and so the size of each department is shown overleaf at Figure one.
- Table 1 shows council and department performance this year compared to last year.
- Table 2 shows council and departmental performance against council and departmental targets.
- Three departments met their annual absence targets; those departments that did not either reduced notably on their 2006/07 figure or more or less maintained their 2006/07 figure.
- All departments will develop action plans to improve absence rates and achieve their targets as part of the departmental planning process and it will be a performance target for all senior managers to develop and implement these action plans in accordance with Council policy.
- Performance at section level for this year compared to last year and against section targets is shown in appendices 1-5. (CIT and Legal Services are not included due to their size and the fact that they are not structured down to service level. This information is covered however in tables one and two)

Figure 1

Percentage of BCC's workforce by department (07/08)



Percentage of BCC's sickness by department (07/08)

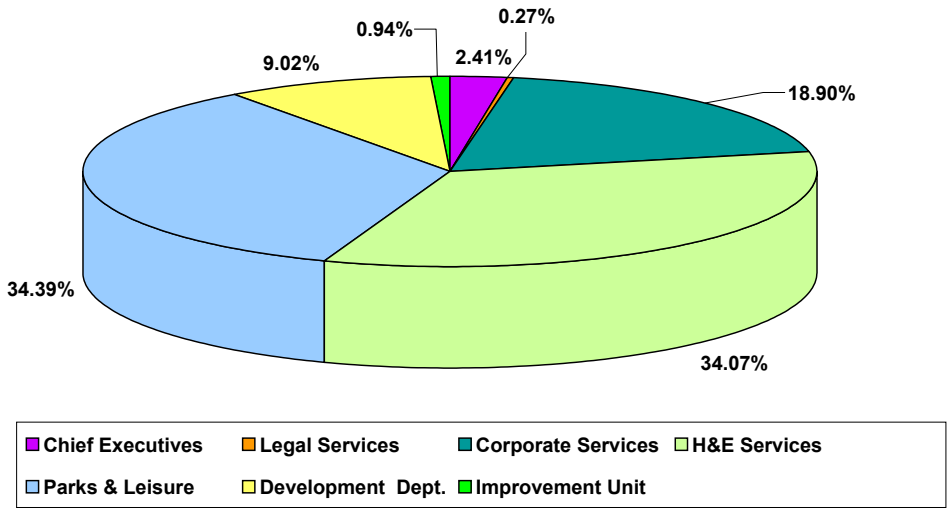


TABLE 1

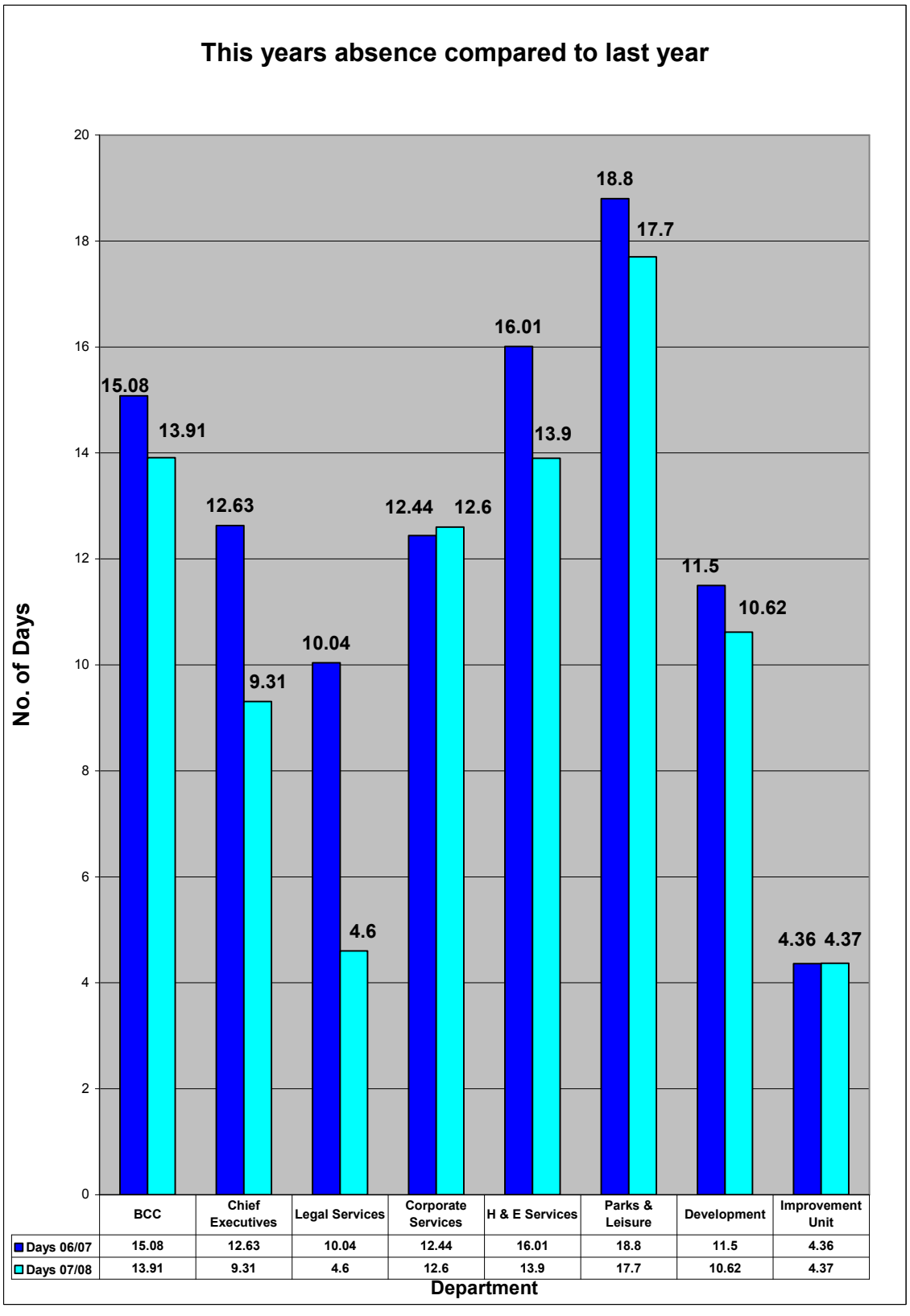
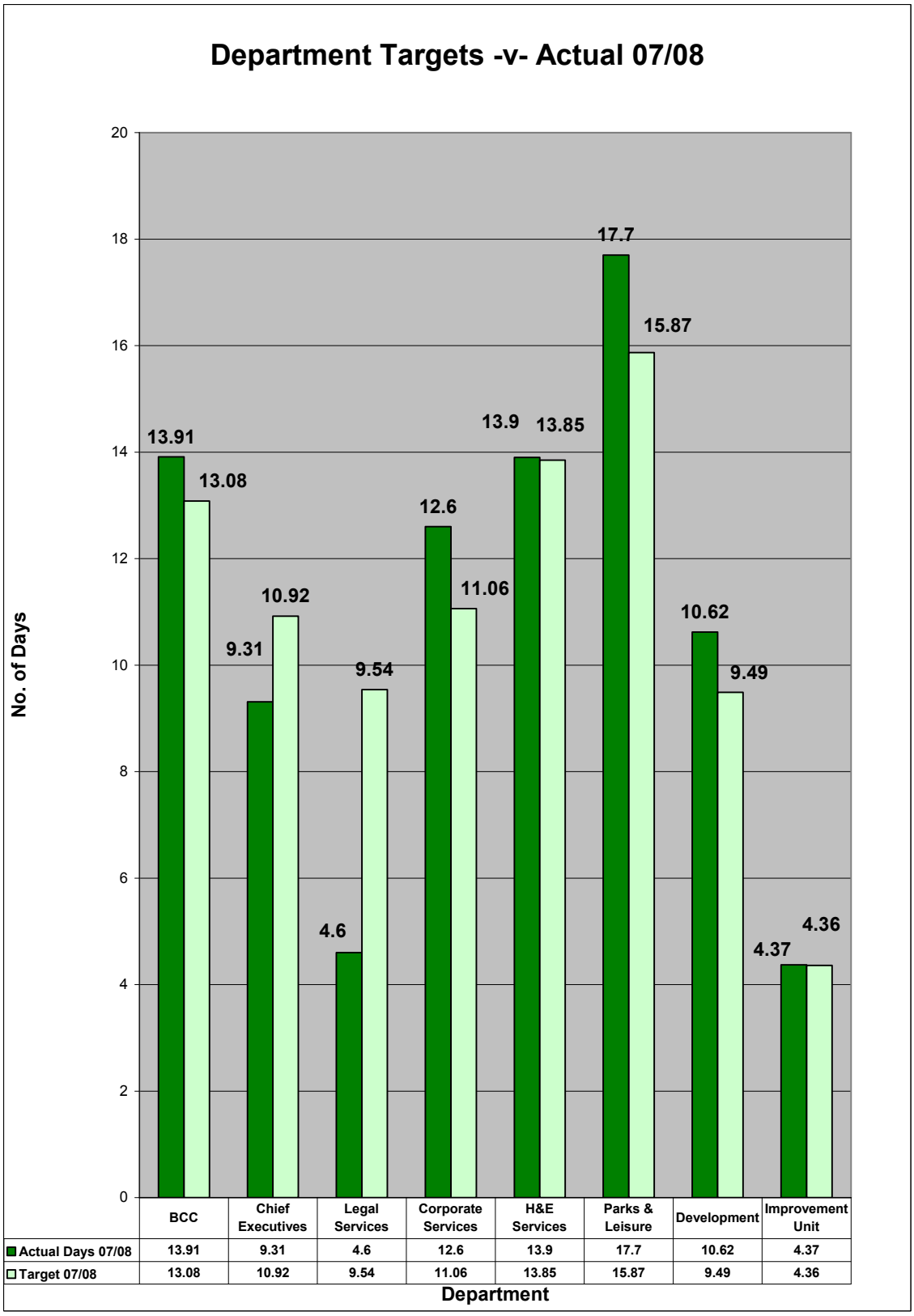

This years absence compared to last year
No. of Days
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
15.08
13.91
12.63
9.31
10.04
4.6
12.44
12.6
16.01
13.9
18.8
17.7
11.5
10.62
4.36
4.37
BCC
Chief Executives
Legal Services
Corporate Services
H & E Services
Parks & Leisure
Development
Improvement Unit
Days 06/07
15.08
12.63
10.04
12.44
16.01
18.8
11.5
4.36
Days 07/08
13.91
9.31
4.6
12.6
13.9
17.7
10.62
4.37
Department

TABLE 2


Department Targets -v- Actual 07/08
No. of Days
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
13.91
13.08
9.31
10.92
4.6
9.54
12.6
11.06
13.9
13.85
17.7
15.87
10.62
9.49
4.37
4.36
BCC
Chief Executives
Legal Services
Corporate Services
H&E Services
Parks & Leisure
Development
Improvement Unit
Actual Days 07/08
13.91
9.31
4.6
12.6
13.9
17.7
10.62
4.37
Target 07/08
13.08
10.92
9.54
11.06
13.85
15.87
9.49
4.36
Department

Absenteeism rates in Northern Ireland employment sectors.

The council's figure of 13.91 compares as follows;

Belfast City Council average days absence 2007/08	13.9
N I Councils average days absence for the sector 2006/07	13.8
N I Housing Executive average days absence 2007/08	14.8
N I Health Service average days absence 2006/07	13.9
N I Civil Service average days absence 2006/07	13.8

Members should note:

- Belfast City Council figures are in line with the average figure for all NI councils even though Belfast is the largest of the NI authorities and there is a direct correlation between organisation size and workplace absence.

- According to the Noble Index, the 10 worst super output areas (SOA) in terms of multiple deprivation are located in Belfast and the 20 worst SOAs in terms of health and disability deprivation are all in Belfast.

- The NI Civil Service figure does not include industrial staff (some 1,500 staff) and if included the overall NICS figure may well be higher.

- Comparisons above have been made with 2006/07 figures (with the exception of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) as 2007/08 were not yet available.

Proposed targets for reduction

Best practice indicates that longer term targets for reduction in absence rates should be set by organisations. Also, the introduction of the new Attendance policy will take time to embed. It is therefore proposed that the council's target should be to reduce its average day's absence rate to 12 days by 2011. This is a reduction of a further two days and will represent a 14% reduction in the period 2008/09 to 2010/11

Continuing work on absence management

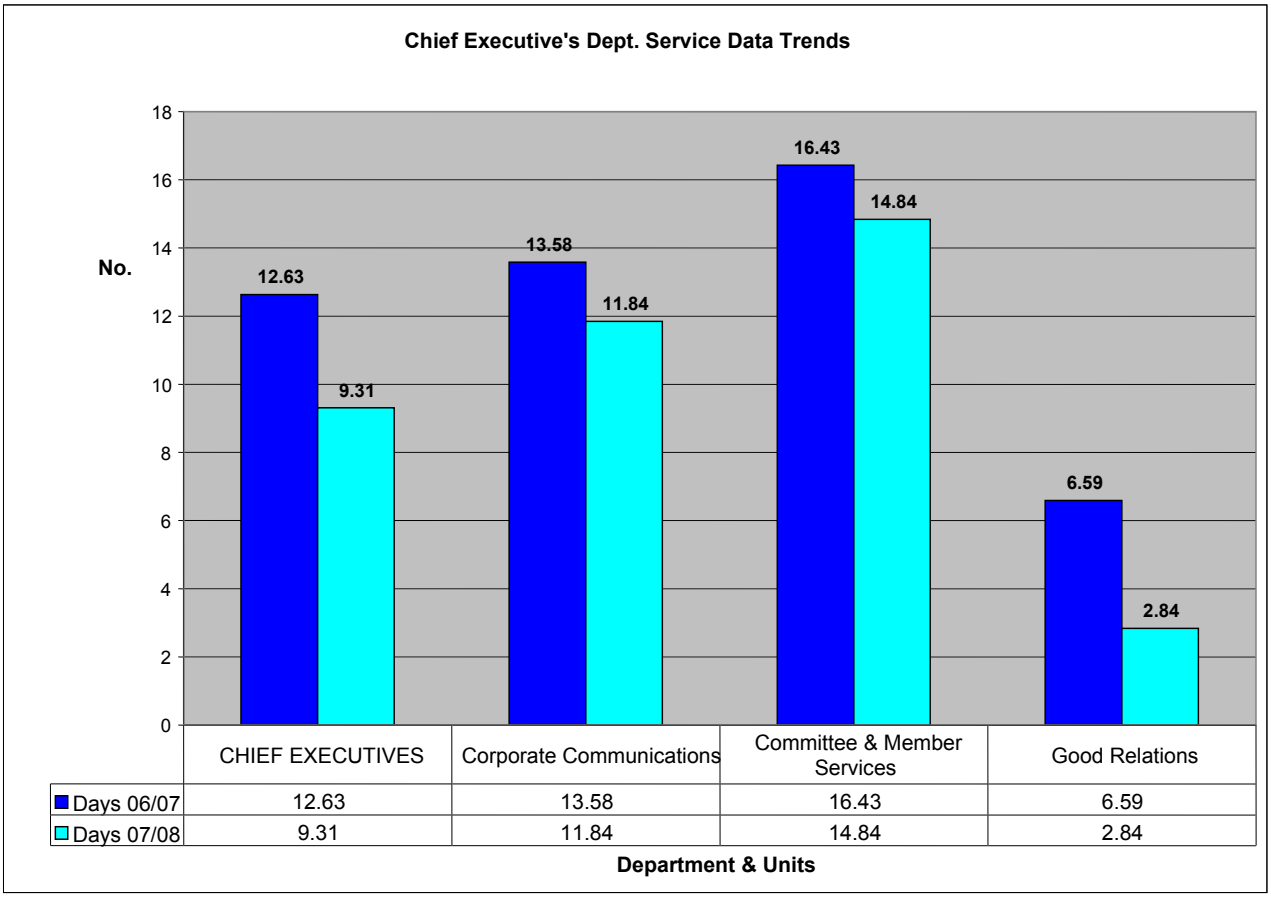
In order to help the council achieve this target absence management continues to be a key priority within the council's HR framework. Work is continuing to maintain and improve absence rates, including:

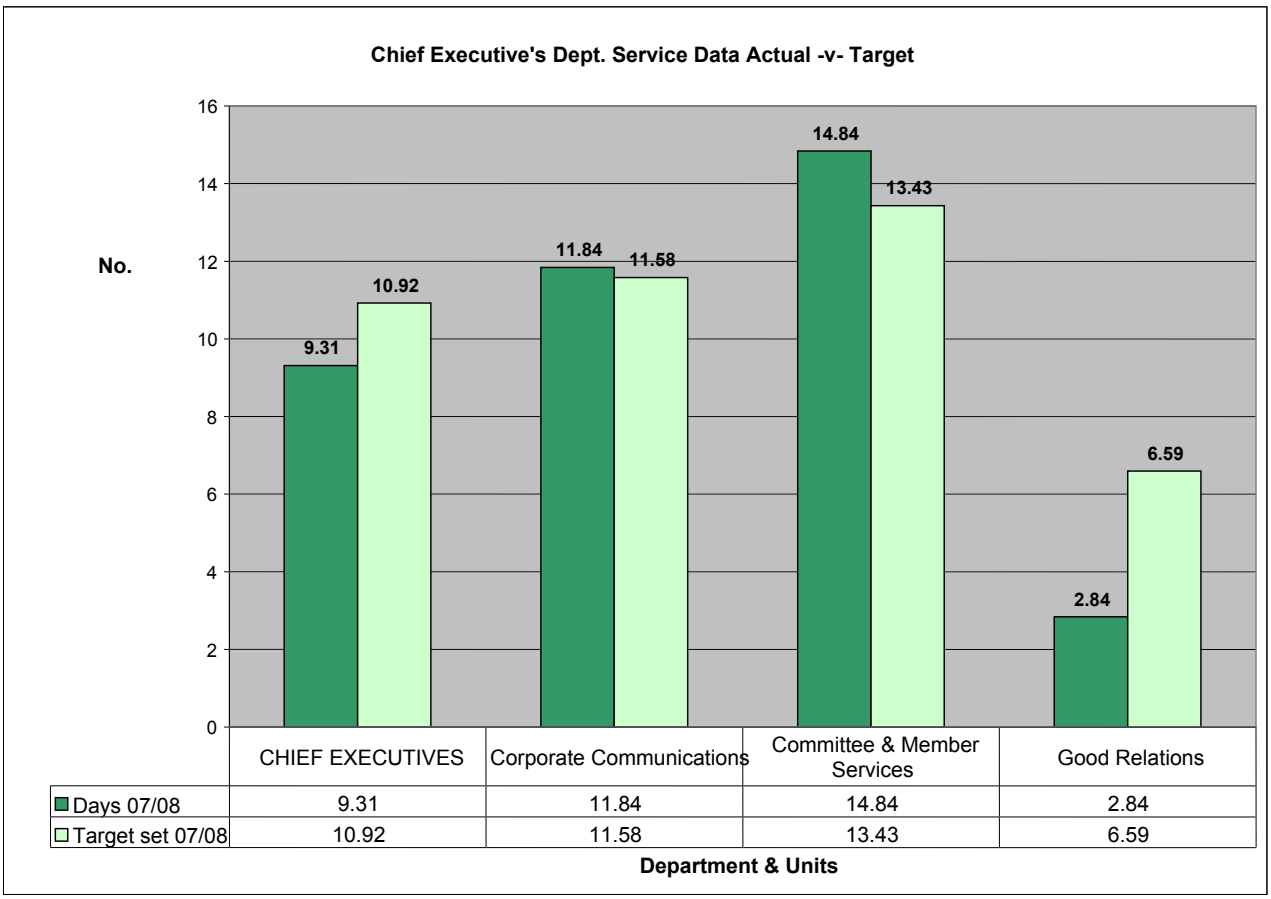
- Implementation of the new Attendance Policy. The trade unions have agreed the new policy and work is now underway to develop and agree detailed guidance on the application of the policy. A training and communication plan has been developed to ensure effective implementation.
- Review of Occupational Health service to ensure it can effectively support a robust attendance culture.
- Ongoing monthly central monitoring of compliance with absence management procedures; weekly identification and monitoring of priority cases across the council; and the effective management of case reviews.
- A programme of health and well being activities.
- Performance management targets have been set for all senior managers to develop absence action plans and implement them in accordance with Council policy.

Recommendations

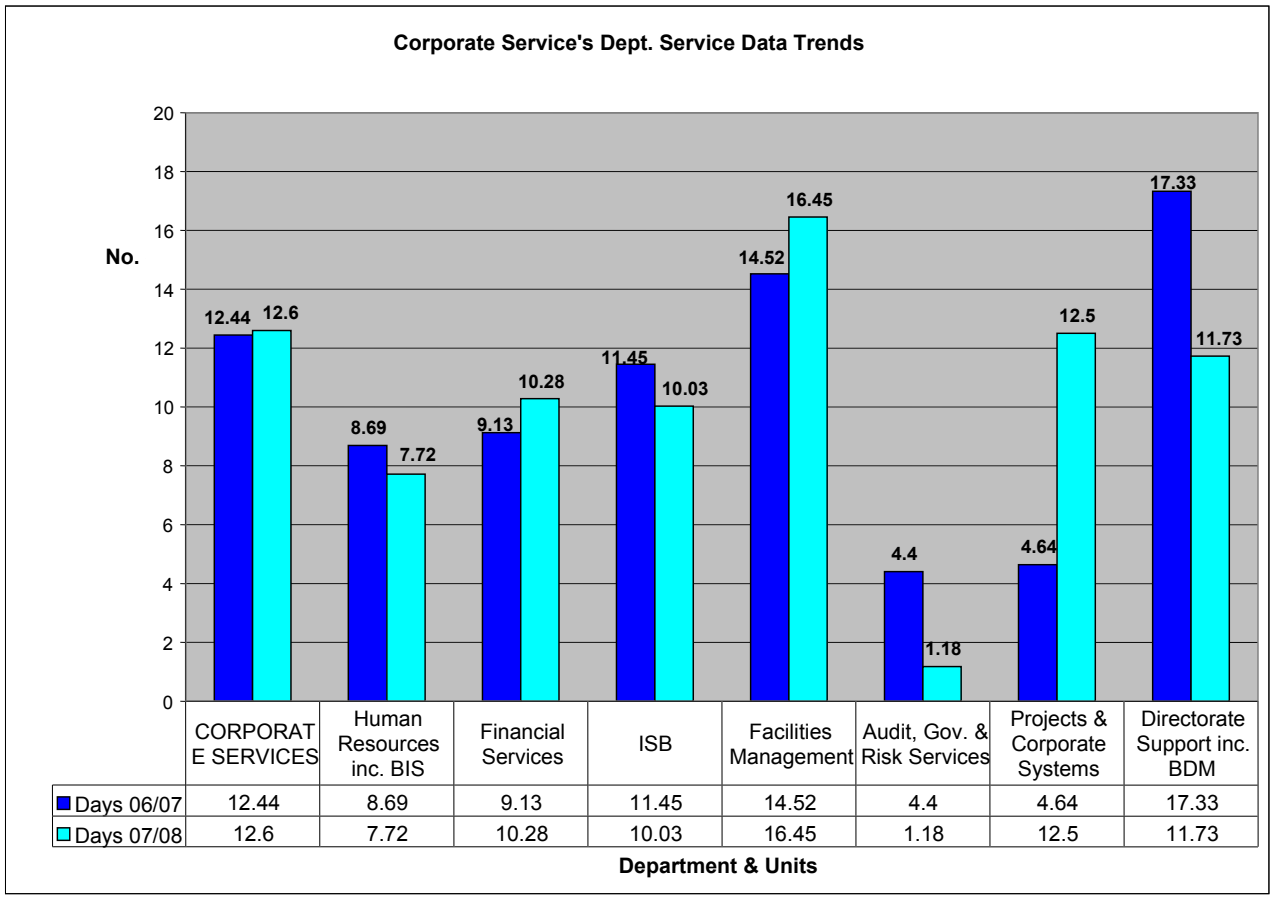
Members are asked to note the year end performance figures and agree the above target.

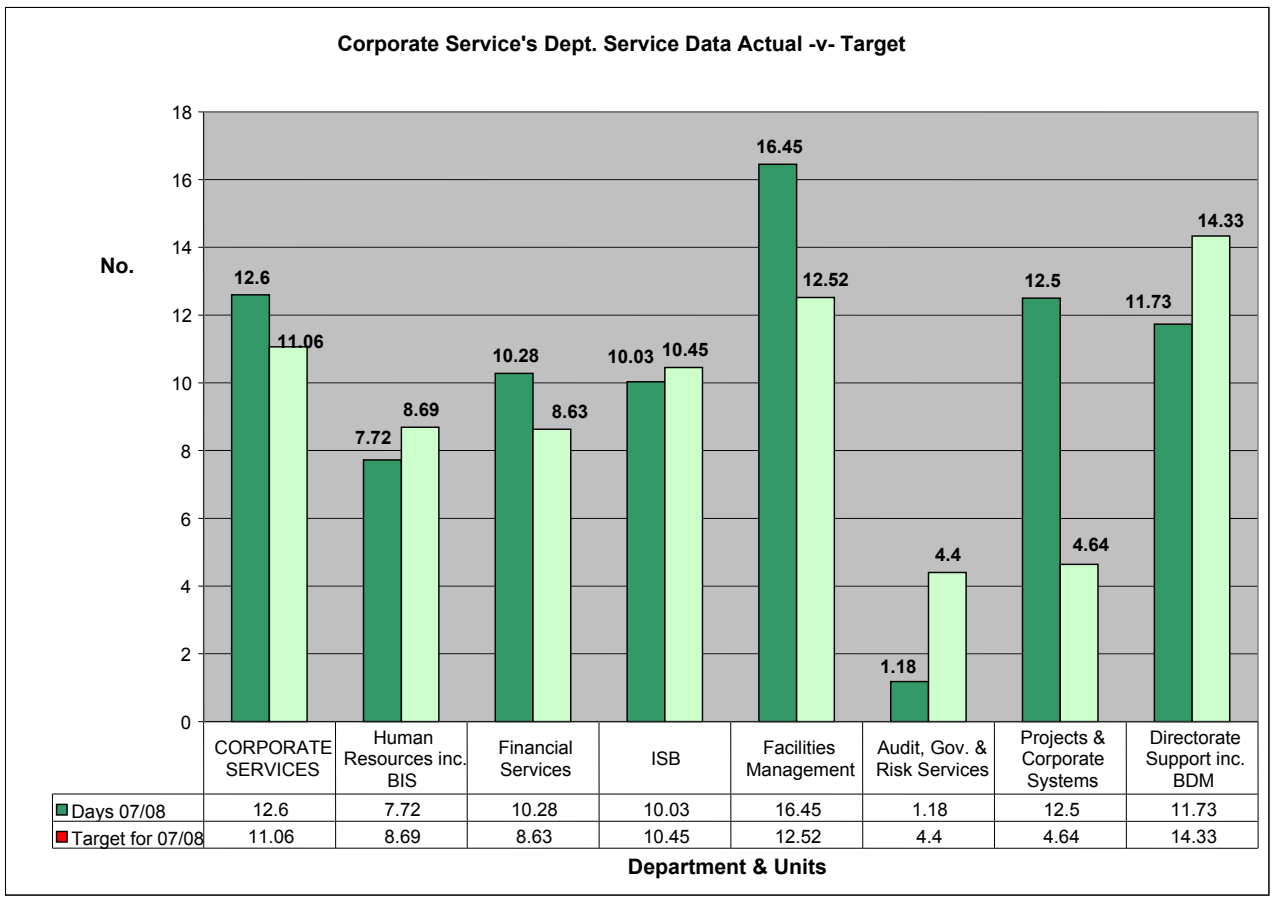
APPENDIX 1


Chief Executive's Dept. Service Data Trends
No.
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
12.63
9.31
13.58
11.84
16.43
14.84
6.59
2.84
CHIEF EXECUTIVES
Corporate Communications
Committee & Member Services
Good Relations
Days 06/07
12.63
13.58
16.43
6.59
Days 07/08
9.31
11.84
14.84
2.84
Department & Units

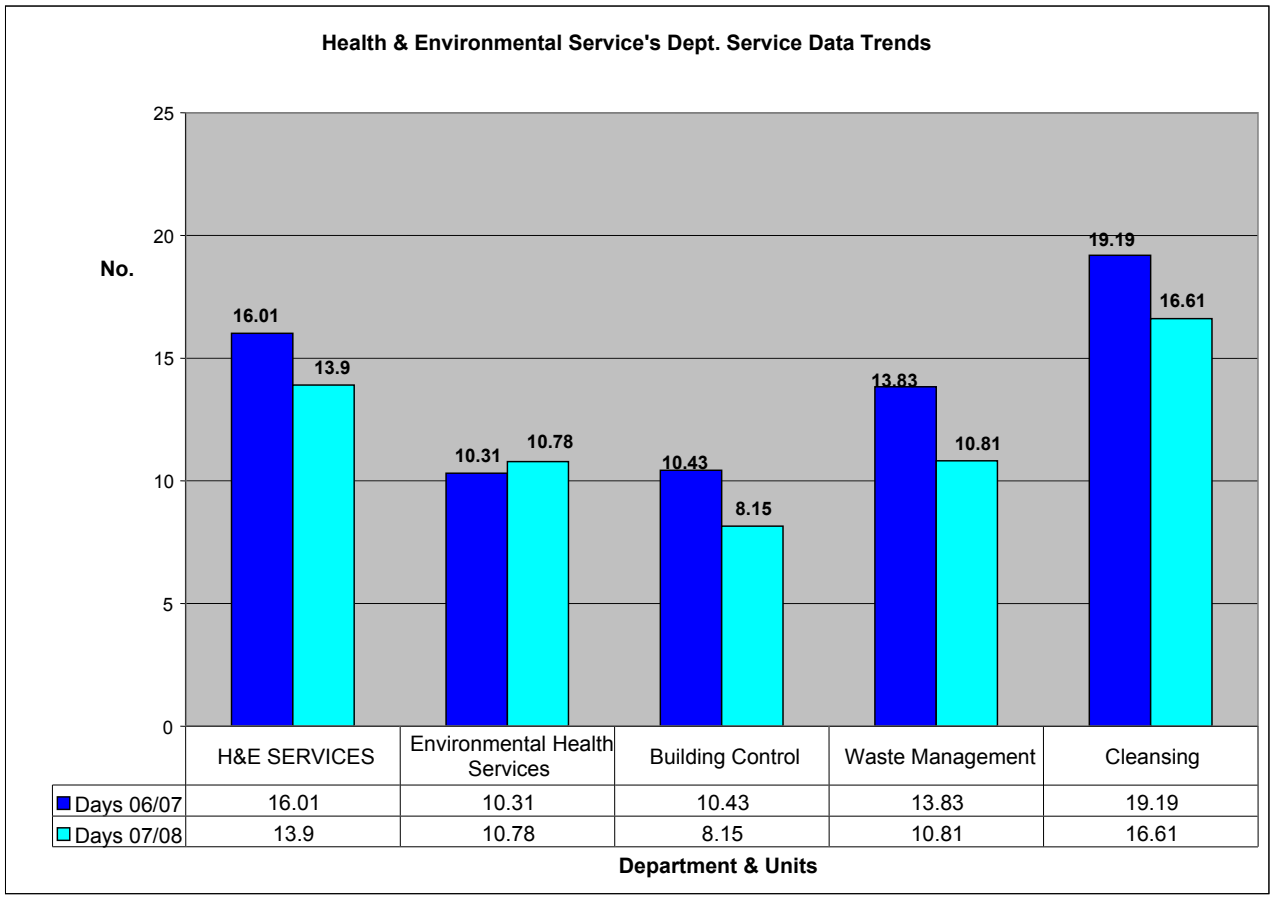

Chief Executive's Dept. Service Data Actual -v- Target
No.
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
9.31
10.92
11.84
11.58
14.84
13.43
2.84
6.59
CHIEF EXECUTIVES
Corporate Communications
Committee & Member Services
Good Relations
Days 07/08
9.31
11.84
14.84
2.84
Target set 07/08
10.92
11.58
13.43
6.59
Department & Units

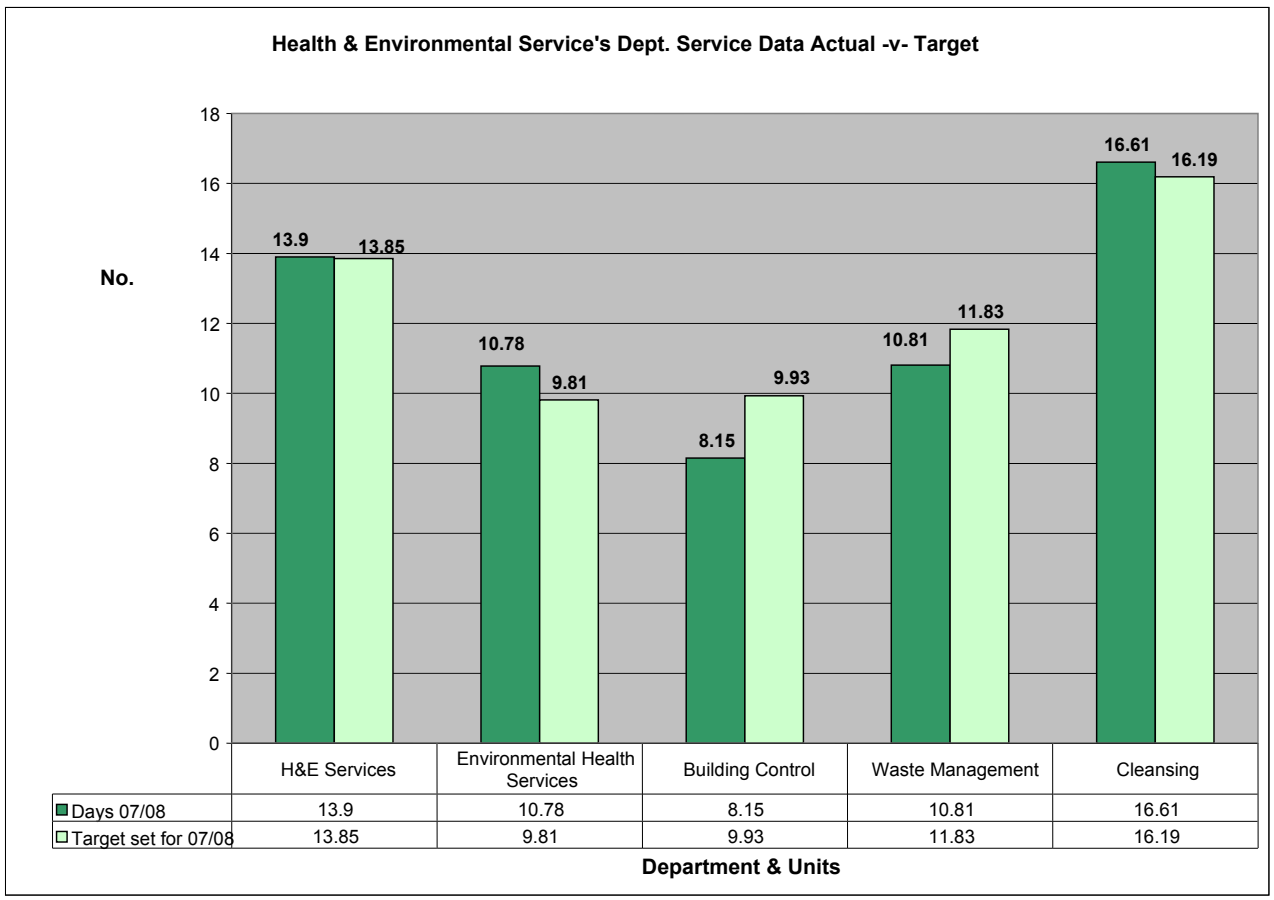
APPENDIX 2


Corporate Service's Dept. Service Data Trends
No.
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
12.44
12.6
8.69
7.72
9.13
10.28
11.45
10.03
14.52
16.45
4.4
1.18
4.64
12.5
17.33
11.73
CORPORATE SERVICES
Human Resources inc. BIS
Financial Services
ISB
Facilities Management
Audit, Gov. & Risk Services
Projects & Corporate Systems
Directorate Support inc. BDM
Days 06/07 12.44 8.69 9.13 11.45 14.52 4.4 4.64 17.33
Days 07/08 12.6 7.72 10.28 10.03 16.45 1.18 12.5 11.73
Department & Units

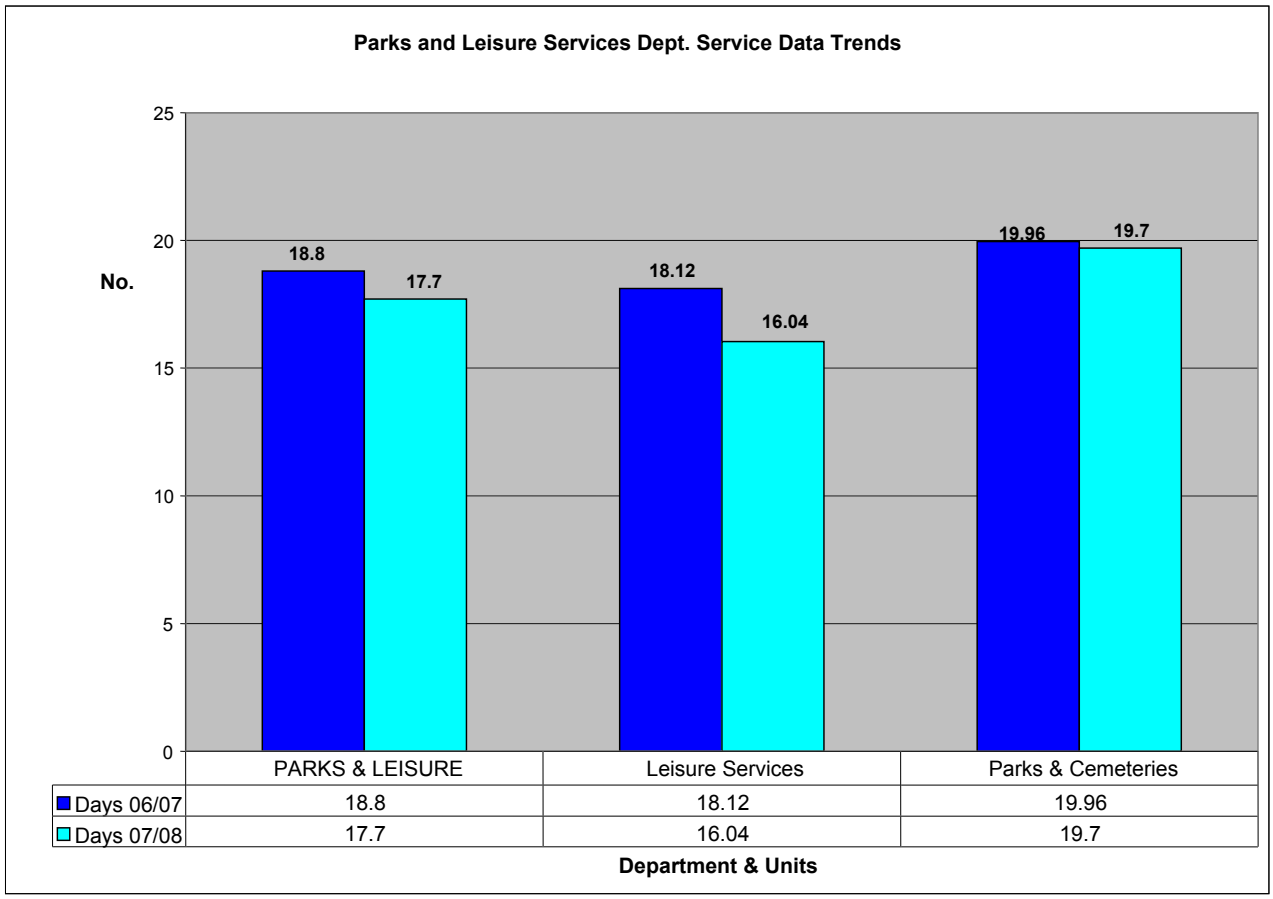

Corporate Service's Dept. Service Data Actual -v- Target
No.
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
12.6
11.06
7.72
8.69
10.28
8.63
10.03
10.45
16.45
12.52
1.18
4.4
12.5
4.64
11.73
14.33
CORPORATE SERVICES
Human Resources inc. BIS
Financial Services
ISB
Facilities Management
Audit, Gov. & Risk Services
Projects & Corporate Systems
Directorate Support inc. BDM
Days 07/08 12.6 7.72 10.28 10.03 16.45 1.18 12.5 11.73
Target for 07/08 11.06 8.69 8.63 10.45 12.52 4.4 4.64 14.33
Department & Units

APPENDIX 3


Health & Environmental Service's Dept. Service Data Trends
No.
25
20
15
10
5
0
16.01
13.9
10.31
10.78
10.43
8.15
13.83
10.81
19.19
16.61
H&E SERVICES
Environmental Health Services
Building Control
Waste Management
Cleansing
Days 06/07
16.01
10.31
10.43
13.83
19.19
Days 07/08
13.9
10.78
8.15
10.81
16.61
Department & Units

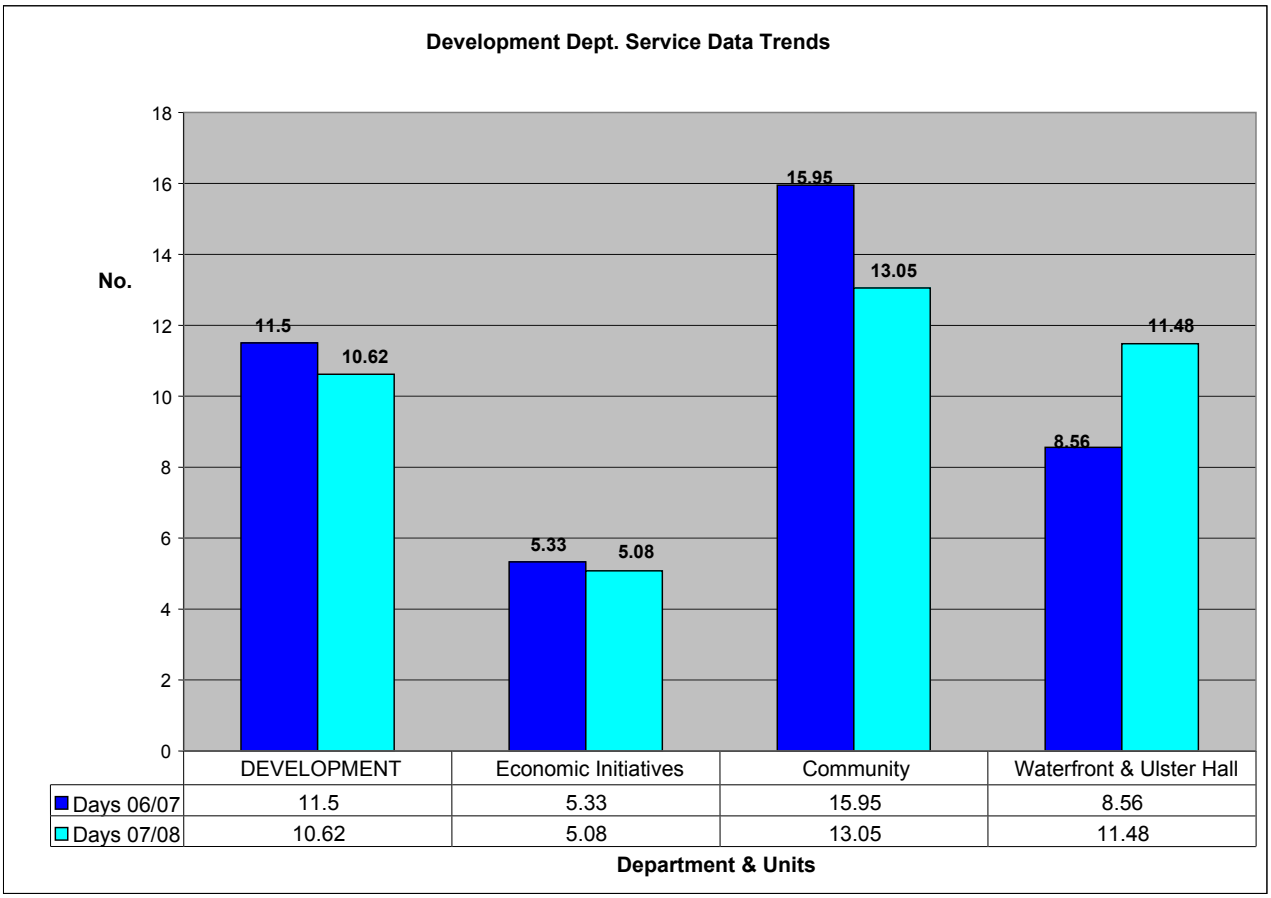

Health & Environmental Service's Dept. Service Data Actual -v- Target
No.
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
13.9
13.85
10.78
9.81
8.15
9.93
10.81
11.83
16.61
16.19
H&E Services
Environmental Health Services
Building Control
Waste Management
Cleansing
Days 07/08
13.9
10.78
8.15
10.81
16.61
Target set for 07/08
13.85
9.81
9.93
11.83
16.19
Department & Units

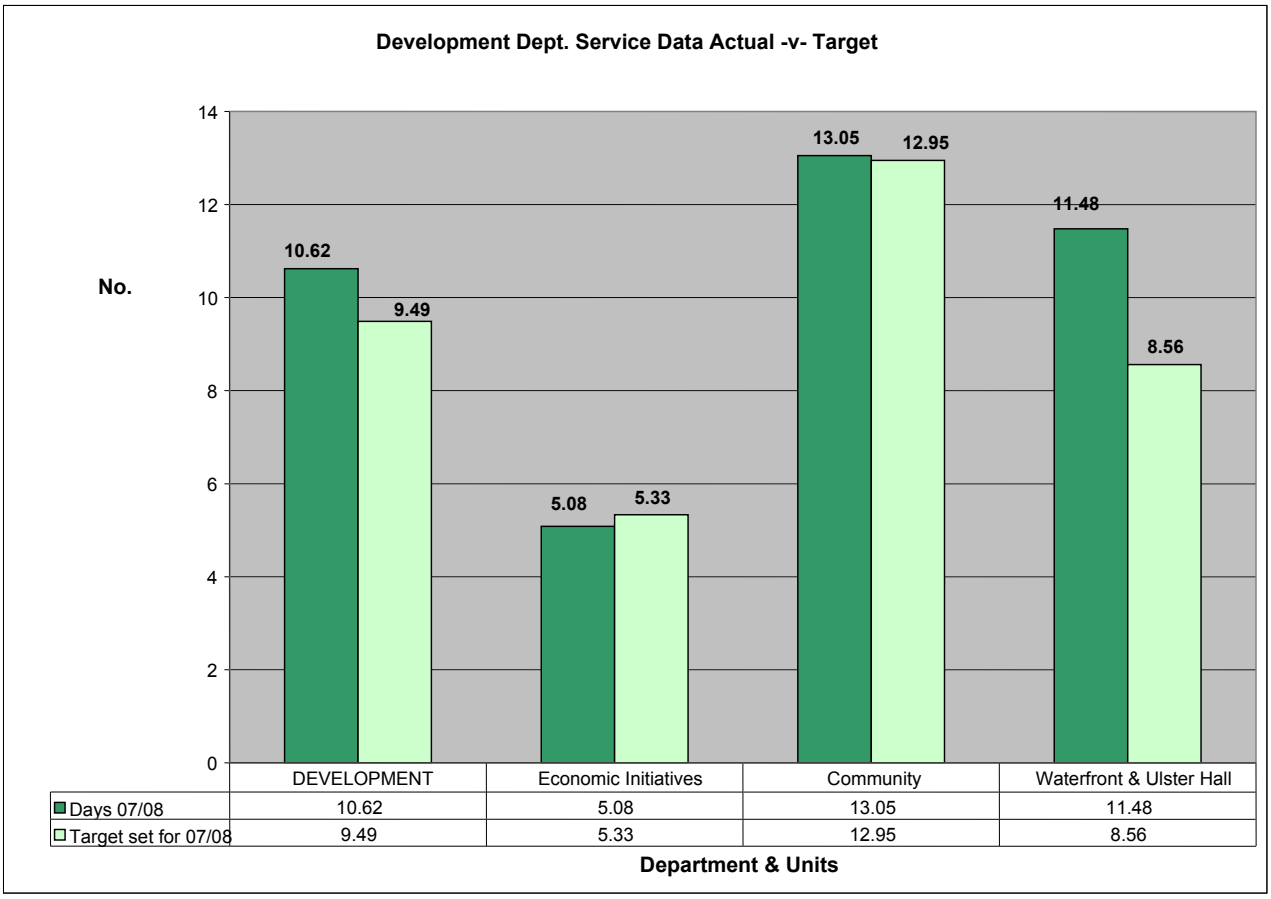
APPENDIX 4


Parks and Leisure Services Dept. Service Data Trends
No.
25
20
15
10
5
0
18.8
17.7
18.12
16.04
19.96
19.7
PARKS & LEISURE
Leisure Services
Parks & Cemeteries
Days 06/07
18.8
18.12
19.96
Days 07/08
17.7
16.04
19.7
Department & Units

Parks & Leisure Service's Dept. Service Data Actual -v- Target
No.
25
20
15
10
5
0
17.7
15.87
16.04
15.12
19.7
16.96
PARKS & LEISURE
Leisure
Parks & Cemeteries
Days 07/08
17.7
16.04
19.7
Target set for 07/08
15.87
15.12
16.96
Department & Units

APPENDIX 5


Development Dept. Service Data Trends
No.
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
11.5
10.62
5.33
5.08
15.95
13.05
8.56
11.48
DEVELOPMENT
Economic Initiatives
Community
Waterfront & Ulster Hall
Days 06/07
11.5
5.33
15.95
8.56
Days 07/08
10.62
5.08
13.05
11.48
Department & Units


Development Dept. Service Data Actual -v- Target
No.
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
10.62
9.49
5.08
5.33
13.05
12.95
11.48
8.56
DEVELOPMENT
Economic Initiatives
Community
Waterfront & Ulster Hall
Days 07/08
10.62
5.08
13.05
11.48
Target set for 07/08
9.49
5.33
12.95
8.56
Department & Units