

SUBJECT: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY (SICKNESS)

DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK

REPORT AUTHOR: ALI THACKER, HR TEAM LEADER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To enable the Executive to consider and approve on the proposed revisions to the Absence Management Policy.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The HR team have revised the Absence Management Policy (previously Sickness Policy). The revisions include a revised approach to manage long term absence. These changes have been discussed and agreed with the trade unions.

3. Background

- 3.1 The HR team are required to continually review and streamline the Council's policies and procedures as and when required to ensure they are clear, cohesive, fit for purpose, and legally compliant.
- 3.2 Although the Council Sickness rate continues to reduce slightly compared to the previous years, these proposed changes are designed to approach the management of long term absence in a different manner. This is to ensure that there is no perception through the policy, that the manager is putting pressure on the employee to return to work earlier than necessary.

4. Sub section titles

- 4.1 This section of the report details the main proposed changes.
- 4.2 Long Term Absence

Previously in the policy when an employee hit a long term trigger point they would be given a target date to return. In discussions with the Unions, they considered that this was potentially putting pressure on the employee to return to work earlier than necessary. Taking these union concerns into account the Council proposes to change the policy for long term absence so this perception of any pressure is removed.

The proposed changes are that employees will not be given a target date to return to work, but will instead have regular meetings with their manager where the employee's absence will be discussed and monitored.

The manager will have the option to undertake these meetings as follows:

Informal Meeting – after 15 days.

Stage 1 Formal Meeting – after 6 weeks

Stage 2 Formal meeting – after 3 months

Then if an employee's absence continues beyond this point, a Stage 3 Formal Meeting will be held. This would be in the event that following a long term sickness absence, medical advice is that there is doubt about the potential for the employee to return to work within a reasonable time period.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 High performing services

It is envisaged that this policy will continue to ensure that sickness absence is managed effectively and in an appropriate manner which in turn will help to deliver high performing services.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

Not applicable

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

The enclosed policy has been reviewed and updated taking into account legislative requirements.

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

6.4 Human Resources

The joint HR and Trade Union meetings have been used to consult with the Trade Unions so that their views can be taken into account prior to JCC.

This policy has been reviewed at the request of the trade unions and have welcomed the proposed changes.

This policy was presented to JCC in January 2019 and no additional comments were made.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That Executive approves the proposed changes to the Absence Management Policy.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? One

List of Background Papers: None

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