



General Purposes Committee
21 November 2017

**Report from the Director of HR and
Organisational Development**

For Decision

Wards affected: ALL

Revised Attendance Policy and Procedure

1.0. Summary

- 1.1. The Attendance Management Policy and Procedure was last reviewed in May 2015. As part of a regular review of HR policies, the Attendance Policy was identified as causing confusion for both line managers and HR Advisers in its application and for being unnecessarily complex, leading to inconsistency and delays in progressing case management.
- 1.2. This paper recommends changes to the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure to address these concerns. The Council's Management Team (CMT) considered and approved the proposed changes at their meeting on 2 November 2017.

2.0. Recommendations

- 2.1. The General Purposes Committee is asked to ratify the proposed revisions to the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure for immediate implementation.

3.0. Process of Review

- 3.1. The Attendance Policy has been through extensive consultation with comments sought from HR DMT, HR Advisers, Occupational Health, Health & Safety, Equalities, Legal, Trade Unions and the HR Consultation group (Heads of Service) over the last couple of months to ensure that all stakeholders had an opportunity to comment on those aspects of the policy which they felt were not working effectively.
- 3.2. As a result of this extensive review, it is expected that there will be a common understanding with consistent application and advice given on the application of the policy, which isn't always currently the case. A training workshop is being developed, together with a suite of template letters for use by managers in addressing attendance problems to accompany the relaunch of the policy.

- 3.3. The key changes from the current policy are that the distinction between short term absence and long term absence has been removed, although the triggers remain, as these are intended to prompt managers to take action. This means that employees will be managed through the process based on the fact that their level of attendance at work is a cause for concern, rather than the length, pattern or frequency of their absence – at present employees can be managed on a parallel track for short term and long term absence concurrently, which is confusing and can prevent cases from being brought to a conclusion.
- 3.4. The policy no longer automatically escalates from Stage 1 through Stage 2 to Stage 3 and a Stage 3 meeting should now only be held when it is felt that all options for return to work have been explored. It is expected that the only reason why an employee would not be dismissed at a Stage 3 meeting would be because the hearing manager does not feel that the line manager has done enough, whereas the outcome of Stage 3 meetings currently is often an extension to the monitoring period, as the employee is still undergoing treatment or is expected to be able to make a return to work. Managers are expected, with advice from HR, to use their discretion to ensure employees are managed appropriately through the stages on a case by case basis. There is evidence that the prescriptive approach of the current policy deters managers from addressing issues, as they feel that the action required is disproportionate to the circumstances of the case.
- 3.5. The revised policy clarifies treatment of carry-over of annual leave which employees have been unable to take due to sickness absence.
- 3.6. The revised policy adds in further guidance on the treatment of employees who are pregnant, undergoing IVF treatment or gender reassignment in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, including the exclusion of related absences from triggers, whilst ensuring that managers provide appropriate support for affected employees. There is also updated guidance on the treatment of disability related absence.
- 3.7. The order of the sections in the policy has been changed to provide a better flow.

4.0. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Sickness absence is currently averaging around 6.5 days per employee. More effective management of attendance should help to reduce levels of sickness, which will not necessarily reduce the direct costs of sickness, but which will increase productivity. Some indirect savings should be achievable through reductions in Agency staff costs

5.0. Legal Implications

- 5.1. The policy incorporates appropriate actions to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to avoid potential claims of discrimination on the grounds of protected characteristics. The policy reminds managers of their duty to consider reasonable adjustments for employees who have, or who develop, a disability in the course of their employment with the Council.

6.0. Diversity Implications

- 6.1. As detailed above, the revised policy provides specific guidance on the treatment of absenteeism related to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

7.0. Staffing Implications

- 7.1. The revised policy provides a more streamlined and transparent process for the management of absence due to sickness, which managers will be expected to apply with appropriate support and guidance from HR.

8.0. Background Papers

- 8.1. None

Contact Officers

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