

Sickness & Absence Policy

This policy applies to any employee of Wrockwardine Parish Council ('the Council'). The Council is committed to the care and well-being of its employees and, the purpose of this policy is to ensure staff have access to information relating to sickness and absence and, are aware of the steps to follow when absent from work.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Health & Safety Policy and the Disciplinary & Grievance Policy.

Procedure

Notification and Certification

If an employee is unable to attend work due to sickness, they must notify the Council by contacting the Chairman or Vice-Chairman as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the working day on which the absence first occurs. They should indicate the reason for the absence and, if possible, when they expect to return to work. For absences of seven calendar days or less, the employee should complete a self-certification form when they return to work. For all absences exceeding seven days, a medical certificate (or certificates) from the doctor is required. The certificate should be sent to the Chairman of the Council.

Employees who are frequently absent could be suffering from poor health which may require medical investigation. In consultation with the employee, the Council will offer support and guidance and will consider referral to occupational health specialist services if deemed appropriate.

The Council will investigate and assess whether further action is necessary if periods of absence due to short-term self-certification sickness reach unacceptable levels or, if patterns emerge.

The Council takes a sympathetic view towards genuine ill health problems and will provide a supportive approach to employees who have been subject to long-term sickness. An employee returning to work following a period of long-term sickness will be supported on their return to work and, the following options may be considered:

- A phased return to work
- A change of working pattern
- The provision of specialist equipment

When an employee has returned to work from any period of sickness, a return to work interview should be conducted as soon as possible by the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman.

In cases where an employee's absence reaches excessive levels or, there is a lack of information about the circumstances of the sickness absence, the Council may request medical information about the employees' condition from the employee's GP.

Any medical information received by the Council will be treated as strictly confidential. Any expense in obtaining medical information from the GP will be met by the Council.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence occurs when an employee fails to attend work and has not made arrangements with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman. Where an employee returns to work following an unauthorised absence, they will be required to attend a meeting with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to explain their absence. The employee will be expected to take any unauthorised absence from their annual leave entitlement or, if no entitlement remains, pay will be deducted for the period of the unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary & Grievance Policy.

Annual Leave

Annual leave entitlements are detailed in the employee's Contract of Employment.

Requests for annual leave are at the discretion of the Council, with consideration of the operational requirements of the Council being taken into account before a decision is made. Annual leave requests will not be unreasonably refused.

Compassionate and/or Emergency Leave

Compassionate leave is at the discretion of the Council. The Council recognises that each individual's respective relationships are different. However, in order to achieve consistency, paid compassionate leave will be granted in the following circumstances:

- The death of a close family member i.e. spouse, civil partner, child, sibling, parent (or equivalent in-laws) or grand-parent
- The diagnosis of, or final stages of care for, a serious (life threatening) illness affecting a close family relative (as defined above)
- The employee falling victim to a serious crime
- Fire/flood/burglary at the employee's home
- Road traffic collisions or other distressing accidents/incidents involving the employee or a close family member (as defined above)

The length of paid compassionate leave granted is at the discretion of the Council, but is limited to a maximum of three days. Where a situation requires an extended period of leave beyond three days, other options should be discussed including the use of TOIL, annual leave and/or a period of unpaid leave.

Requests for compassionate leave for situations not included above will be considered on an individual basis.

Parental Bereavement Leave

If an employee's child dies before they turn 18, or if the employee suffers a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy the following applies:

- 2 weeks bereavement leave together; or
- 2 separate weeks of leave; or
- Only one week of leave

A week is the same number of days that the employee normally works in a week. It can start on or after the death or stillbirth or must finish within 56 weeks of the date of the death or stillbirth.

See www.gov.uk/parental-bereavement-pay-leave for more details.

Time off in lieu (TOIL)

Individual weekly working hours are detailed in the employee's Contract of Employment.

The Council recognises an employee's right to receive recompense for working beyond their contracted hours. Any paid overtime must be agreed in advance with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and ratified by Full Council. Overtime is paid at the standard hourly rate.

Maternity/Paternity/Adoption/Parental leave

The Council recognises an employee's right to these as set out in relevant legislation.

Disability

Absences relating to the disability of an employee will be kept separate from sickness absence records and managed in accordance with relevant legislation and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Where an employee has a condition that means they might be considered disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, the Council will attempt to make reasonable adjustments to their job to accommodate their requirements. The employee will be fully consulted at all times. If reasonable adjustments are not a viable option and, there is no likelihood of a return to work in the near future, a decision to dismiss may be the inevitable outcome.

Dismissal and the Right to Appeal

In the event of dismissal, the reason for the dismissal and the circumstances leading to that decision will be documented in writing to the employee. The employee may appeal against their dismissal by writing, within 5 working days of their receipt of the dismissal letter, to the Chairman stating the grounds on which they wish to appeal. The appeal will be heard in

accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Appeals Procedure. This right also applies to 'action short of dismissal' such as an alteration of duties.

Payment Arrangements

Contractual Sick Pay

Information relating to the scale of payment is in the employee's Contract of Employment.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

The employee's SSP qualifying days are either Monday to Friday, or, in the case of part-time employees, those days that they normally work. If the employee is eligible for the payment of SSP, it will be subject to the deduction of tax and NI contributions.

Abuse of this Policy

Any abuse in the application of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary & Grievance Policy and may result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal.

Alterations and amendments to this policy

This policy and procedure do not form part of an employee's contractual rights. The Council reserves the right to revise the contents of this policy and procedure from time to time or withdraw it at its absolute discretion, in accordance with the needs of the Council. The Council will review this policy annually.