Personnel Committee November 2026

Absence Management Policy and Procedure

Rationale for Adoption

Purpose

The Council's existing Employee Handbook includes a Sickness Procedure covering absence notification, evidence of incapacity, statutory sick pay, return-to-work interviews, and action where sickness absence is not genuine.

The proposed Absence Policy and Procedure would complement this existing procedure by providing a more detailed and structured framework for managing sickness absence. It would support a consistent, fair, and supportive approach to employee wellbeing, attendance, and return to work.

The Handbook and Absence Policy and Procedure are supplied by the Council's HR Provider.

Benefits of the proposed procedure

The proposed Absence Policy and Procedure would introduce several additional measures not currently covered, or only briefly addressed, in the Employee Handbook:

a. Consistent absence management: Clear attendance review stages and management triggers would help ensure that repeated short-term absences are addressed consistently and proportionately.
b. Employee support and wellbeing: Formal opportunities to discuss underlying health concerns, identify support needs, and consider appropriate adjustments would reinforce the Council's duty of care.
c. Return-to-work support: A more structured approach to return-to-work interviews and phased returns would help employees resume their duties safely and successfully.
d. Long-term sickness absence: A defined process for reviewing prolonged absence, considering medical advice, and identifying reasonable adjustments would support informed and fair decisions.
e. Clear expectations: Employees and managers would have a clearer understanding of reporting requirements, attendance expectations, and the process followed when absence becomes a concern.

Relationship with the existing procedure

The proposed Absence Policy and Procedure would be read alongside the Sickness Procedure in the Employee Handbook.

The existing Sickness Procedure would continue to cover statutory sick pay and the Council's position on sickness absence that is not genuine, while the new Absence Policy and Procedure would provide additional practical guidance on absence management and employee support. [1]

Recommendations

1. That the Committee recommends to council the adoption of the proposed Absence Policy and Procedure as a supplementary document to the existing Sickness Procedure in the Employee Handbook.
2. Includes the new policy in the list if linked policies at the rear of the Staff Handbook.

[1] *Use of Artificial Intelligence was used to assist with the preparation and wording of this report. The content has been officer reviewed and the officer retains responsibility for the draft report.*