



## AGENDA ITEM: 8

### SUMMARY

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>22 March 2016</b>
<b>PART:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Review of Absence Management Policy and Procedures</b>
Contact:	<p>Cllr Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services</p> <p>Author/Responsible Officers – Anne Stunell, HR Team Leader Matthew Rawdon - Group Manager (People) James Deane – Corporate Director (Finance and Operations)</p>
Purpose of report:	To seek Cabinet’s approval of the recommended amendments to the Council’s Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedures
Recommendations	That Cabinet recommend Council to approve the amendments to the Council’s Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedures as summarised in the report and set out in full within Annex A.
Corporate objectives:	Having an effective and robust sickness absence management policy and procedures will support all of the Council objectives. We need staff to feel valued and supported whether they are at work or absent due to sickness. If we can support them to remain in work it will ensure their behaviours and performance reflect the High Performance Environment.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u>
	There are no financial implications linked to the revisions in the sickness absence management policy and procedures.
‘Value For Money Implications’	<u>Value for Money</u>
	Reducing sickness absence contributes to the Council ensuring that the services represent ‘value for money’.
Risk Implications	None
Equalities	Community Impact Assessment carried out in March 2016,

Implications	which did not highlight any implications.
Health And Safety Implications	None identified
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<p><b>Monitoring Officer:</b></p> <p>No comments to add to the report.</p> <p><b>S.151 Officer:</b></p> <p>There are no budgetary implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.</p>
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services</p> <p>Council Team Leaders, Group Managers and CMT</p> <p>All recognised Trade Unions</p> <p>Human Resources Team</p>
Background papers:	<p>EELGA research into industrial injuries</p> <p>Annex 1 – Revised Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedures</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>CMT – Corporate Management Team</p> <p>RTWI – Return to work Interview</p> <p>OSP – Occupational Sick Pay</p> <p>EELGA – East of England Local Government Association</p>

## 1 Background

- 1.1 As part of a corporate wide sickness absence management project, a task of reviewing the current sickness absence policy and procedures was identified as an area which could assist the Council in reducing sickness absence.
- 1.2 The current sickness absence management policy and procedures were last fully reviewed in 2011, although some minor updating has taken place in the interim period.
- 1.3 The Council's sickness absence rates are currently higher than previous years. The projected outturn for 2015/2016 is 10.2 days per FTE, where previous years have seen results at 9.5 days per FTE. The CIPD Absence Management 2015 suggests that the public sector average is 9.3 days per FTE.
- 1.4 The 2011 sickness absence policy and procedures have been successful in reducing absence over the past 5 years, but there are some areas that need improving so that sickness is managed fairly but robustly.

## 2. Summary of main amendments:

- 2.1 **Sickness trigger points** – These have been amended to bring them in line with the Council's sickness absence target (8 days per FTE rather than 9 days per FTE). (paragraph 41)
- 2.2 **Concerns over level of sickness** - A more direct route to a Formal Capability (Sickness) Hearing when a manager has concerns over level of sickness absences and/or sickness trends. (paragraph 42 ii). This approach introduces scope for increased management discretion within the formal sickness management process. In order to ensure that this discretion is moderated across all services within the Council, this route requires formal Corporate Director sign off, in addition to the standard involvement of HR and the more directly affected management structure.
- 2.3 **Long term sickness** – Upon managers reviewing a case after three months, the manager may wish to hold a Capability (Sickness) Hearing to determine how long the absence can be sustained. (paragraph 55).
- 2.4 **Payment in lieu of notice** - The Council reserving the right to withhold payment in lieu of notice when dismissing a member of staff. (paragraph 64)
- 2.5 **Note taking** – Minutes to be taken at formal meetings only to reduce the need for unnecessary administrative burden. (paragraph 15)
- 2.6 **Sickness triggers** – Clarification on which absences count towards sickness triggers to assist managers and staff. (paragraph 21)
- 2.7 **Return to Work Interviews (RTWI)** – Strengthening the wording around staff attending RTWI's, in order for these to be carried out earlier on in the process. (paragraph 35)
- 2.8 **Attendance Targets** – the targets set in line with formal warnings have been reduced from 8 days to 4 days and 16 to 8 days if covered under the Equality Act (paragraph 64)
- 2.9 There have been some other minor amendments to assist with clarification to make the process easier for managers and staff to follow.
- 2.10 The Council has committed to the trade unions to undertake a joint review of these amendments after 12 months.

## 3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Cabinet recommend Council to approve the changes to the Council's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedures as explained in the report and set out in full in Annex A.