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**Sickness Absence Policy**

Seaford Town Council is committed to maintaining the health, well-being and attendance of all its employees.

The Town Council’s absence policy is based on the following principles:

* It undertakes to provide reasonable payments to employees who are unable to work due to sickness.
* It will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes a flexible approach to the taking of annual leave and returning to work after long term sickness.
* It will respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee’s sickness and information will be held in line with all data protection legislation.

Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee’s contract of employment and the Town Council asks each employee to take responsibility for maintaining good attendance and reporting absence according to the procedures set out in this policy.

1. **Absence reporting**

An employee must report their absence from work owing to illness to their line manager by telephone as early as possible and no later than one hour after they are due to commence their working day on which the absence first occurs.

When possible, notification of absence should be given the previous evening to allow staff cover to be arranged. When reporting their absence, the employee should give a clear indication of the nature of their illness and the likely date of their return to work.

In the case of the Town Clerk being absent, they should inform key department managers so they are aware of the absence as well as the Chair of Personnel and Mayor. If the Town Clerk’s absence is to be over one week an email should be sent to all councillors by the senior member of staff on duty, advising them accordingly as well as advising of contingencies that are in place.

# Certification

Sickness certificates are required for all absences and should cover all calendar days, including work days, weekends, public holidays and any days not normally worked.

A self-certification may be made for the first seven calendar days of absence. From the 8th day onwards a medical certificate is required. A final Doctor’s statement giving the date on which the employee will be fit to resume work must be given to their line manager prior to their return to work of absences where a medical certificate has been obtained.

The Town Council reserves the right to require an employee to attend an Occupational Health Doctor / professional where it is deemed appropriate.

If the absence is not continuously covered by a self certificate, Doctor’s statement or in-patient certificate, it may be treated as unauthorised absence and dealt with using the disciplinary procedures.

# Return to Work

On return to work the employee should complete and give to their line manager a Self-Certification Form.

A ‘fit for work’ certificate is required should the employee wish to return to work before their medical certificate runs out.

On return to work the line manager will have an informal discussion with the employee in order to establish: the reason for and cause of absence, the employee’s fitness to return to work and whether they need any support to return to work.

# Sent Home

If while an employee is at work they decide that they are unwell and need to go home, for health and safety purposes they must inform their line manager before they leave the building. The employee will need to discuss with their line manager how this absence is to be treated i.e. sickness absence or time off in lieu.

# Medical, Dental, hearing or Optician Appointments

Where possible medical appointments should be made outside of working hours. If this cannot be arranged they should disrupt the working schedule as little as possible, e.g. made early or late in the day. Employees will be required to make up the time to cover such absences or take it as unpaid leave.

Where attendance for a medical or hospital appointment necessitates a complete day’s absence from work, this will be treated as sick leave (unless annual leave is utilised) and the procedure for self-certification should be followed.

An exception to the above is where an expectant mother/father/person due to have parental responsibility is taking time off to attend an antenatal appointment, as per the Council’s Maternity, Paternity & Adoption Leave Policy.

# Use of Leave

The Council recognises that some employees choose to take annual leave or allocate time off in lieu (TOIL) on days or periods where they are ill. This should be discussed with the employee’s line manager, who will consider the request for alternative leave instead of sickness absence. The use of annual leave instead of sick leave is however discouraged, as it is not the most beneficial use of an employee’s annual leave which is intended to ensure employees take adequate rest periods from work throughout the year.

There may be occasions where it is possible for an employee to work from home despite not being fit enough to attend work, an example may be post-operation/ injury recovery or in the circumstances of contagious illnesses, that physically means they cannot attend the workplace but may still able to carry out work functions from home. The employees line manager will be able to discuss with the employee whether or not working from home will be possible and arrangements for this.

The principle consideration when making this decision will be the employee’s wellbeing.

# Absence during pregnancy

Pregnancy-related absence will be dealt with separately from sickness absence in accordance with the Town Council’s Maternity Policy.

# Sick Pay

An employee will be paid their agreed basic remuneration in line with the scale of payment for any one year that runs from 1st April to 31st March.

Entitlement to payment is subject to notification of absence and production of medical certificates as required above.

The Town Council operates the Statutory Sick Pay scheme and the employee is required to co-operate in the maintenance of necessary records. For the purposes of calculating entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay ‘qualifying days’ are those days on which an employee is normally required to work. Payments made to an employee by the Town Council under its sick pay provisions in satisfaction of any other contractual entitlement will go towards discharging the Town Council’s liability to make payment to an employee under the Statutory Sick Pay scheme.

The Town Council reserves the right to require an employee at any time to submit to a medical examination by a medical practitioner nominated by the Town Council, subject to the provisions of the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 where applicable. Any costs associated with the examination will be met by the Town Council.

Whilst on absence due to sickness or incapacity or for any other reason under this policy, the employee is not permitted to undertake any paid work for another employer or for any business established by the employee without express permission from the Town Clerk. In the case of the Town Clerk, permission will need to be sought from the Mayor and Chair of Personnel and this shall be reported back to the Personnel Committee at the next available time.

Line managers shall have discretion to discuss with employees as to whether certain tasks can be carried out from home during sick leave without impacting on their entitlement to sick pay and agree all necessary arrangements. This can be utilised in assisting with an employee’s phased return to work after a longer-term period of absence, where relevant.

The scale of payment is set out in all employee’s contracts of employment, subject to meeting the conditions of the scheme.

1. **Sickness Levels**

Where an employee’s levels of sickness absence are causing concern, the HR & Governance Manager will work with line managers to investigate the matter; checking for any patterns in absence or recurring reasons for absence, and looking at whether any adaptions may be needed within the workplace to assist an improvement in absence levels.

Where there is belief that absence levels are at an unacceptable level or unjustified, this may be dealt with initially through informal meetings with the employee or if felt necessary, through the Town Council’s Disciplinary Procedure.

Adopted: May 2022

Review: January 2026 (or if legislation changes)