



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Sickness and Absence Policy

Adopted by the Finance and General Purposes Committee of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council on 5 September 2023.

1 Statement

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council is committed to the care and well-being of its employees. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all employees have access to information relating to sickness and absence and are aware of the steps that they must follow when absent from work. Employees must keep their manager informed about planned and unplanned absence.

This Policy covers:

- annual leave;
- sickness leave;
- unauthorised absence & lateness;
- compassionate leave;
- family support / emergency leave;
- dentist / doctor / hospital appointments;
- maternity / paternity / adoption / parental leave.

2 Annual leave

The Council is aware that the use of annual leave is vital for the health and wellbeing of its staff. Each employee has an annual leave allowance which is included in employees' contracts of employment.

Employees are therefore strongly encouraged to make use of their annual leave allowance over the course of the year.

The annual leave accounting year runs from 1 April to 31 March. Any unused annual leave over 5 days cannot be carried forward into the next accounting year. Only under the most exceptional circumstances will unused leave be considered for payment. Annual leave that is not taken and exceeds the carryover limit will be lost.

Annual leave should be arranged in advance and must be authorised by the employee's line manager. Authorisation will not be unreasonably withheld.

3 Sickness leave

The Council recognises that there will be occasions when staff are unable to attend work due to sickness. The Council provides a sick pay scheme for its employees and details of

sick pay are included in employees' contracts of employment.

3.1 Notification of absence due to sickness

If an employee is unable to attend work due to sickness, they must inform their line manager by phone. They must give their reason, the duration and expected date of return. This must be as soon as practical on the first day of absence.

Regular contact must be maintained with the line manager during a period of absence.

3.2 Short-term Self-Certificated Sickness

For an absence of 7 days or less, employees must complete a self-certification statement which is available from the Clerk. For all absences which exceed a 7-day period, a medical Statement of Fitness for Work is needed.

All sickness absence will be recorded. Where levels of sickness absence reach the levels set out below, this will trigger the line manager to consider whether to investigate and assess whether any action needs to be taken to address it.

The Council wishes to support its staff and recognises that employees who are often absent may be experiencing problems that could be better managed through other means than sickness absence. The sickness triggers will ensure that proper action is taken promptly in these circumstances. In the first instance, the line manager will meet with the employee to discuss the proper course of action.

3.3 Long-term Absence

Long-term absence relates to a prolonged illness, injury or disability that means that they will be away from work more than a short period. The Council provides a supportive approach to employees in these circumstances and ensure that adequate steps are in place to prepare for employees' return to work. The following options may be considered:

- lighter duties;
- flexible working;
- provision of specialist equipment.

3.4 Sickness triggers

The levels of sickness absence that will trigger line manager action are:

- 10 days or 3 separate events within 6 months; or
- 14 consecutive days; or
- where an employee advises in advance of the need for an absence that will exceed 14 days (for example a planned medical procedure).

3.5 Return to work interview

Where an employee has returned from any period of sickness, a conversation between them and the line manager will be conducted (return to work interview) and recorded as relevant in the circumstances. This should explore the need for

any potential adjustments needed that are reasonable.

3.6 Medical information

Where necessary, to ensure the health of an employee or to further support a return to work, the Council may request the employee to supply further clarification or make arrangement for Occupational Health advice. Any expenses incurred, for example paying for an examination or Medical Certificate, will be agreed in advance and met by the Council.

4 Unauthorised absence and lateness

Unauthorised absence occurs when an employee does not attend work and has not made arrangements with their manager. This is normally a disciplinary matter, but the Council recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances. Where an employee has returned from any period of unauthorised absence, a return-to-work interview will be conducted to decide what action, if any is needed. The employee may have to take unpaid leave for the period or use their annual leave entitlement.

There may be occasions when it is unavoidable to be late for work. The employee should contact the line manager to explain the reason for the delay. The employee will be expected to make up any time lost.

5 Compassionate leave

Compassionate leave is agreed at the discretion of the line manager. In general, paid leave will be granted for the death of a close family relative – a spouse, civil partner, father, mother (or equivalent in laws) or child - normally up to 3 days paid leave (pro-rata for part time working) will be granted. The line manager will consider the individual circumstances, taking account of such matters as the need to organise funeral arrangements.

6 Family support and emergency leave

This can include the following situations – the list is not exhaustive:

- to help or plan for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured;
- when there has been an unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant;
- to deal with an incident that involves a child of the employee.

Employees should be aware that the Council would expect employees to use their annual leave entitlement, subject to the usual approval process, to offset the need to take unpaid leave.

The Clerk and the Chairman have overall discretion to agree further unpaid leave in exceptional circumstances, considering the needs of the individual member of staff at the time of the request and the operational needs of the Council.

7 Dentist/doctor/hospital appointments

Wherever possible, employees should schedule appointments for either early morning or late afternoon, to minimise the disruption to the working day. In-patient appointments or procedures taking the full day will be recorded as sick absence unless

