

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY – MARKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the operational efficiency of Markfield Parish Council can be maintained whilst employees are absent from work for sickness or injury related reasons.

This policy also seeks to provide guidance, security and support to the employee during periods of ill health.

Markfield Parish Council values the contribution its employee(s) makes to the successful running of the Council and greatly misses that contribution when an employee is unable to work for whatever reason.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Markfield Parish Council's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and also the Employee's Contract of Employment.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

Markfield Parish Council will support its employees who have genuine grounds for absence. Employees are asked and expected to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance. They should refer to their Contract of Employment for their entitlements to sick pay.

Markfield Parish Council respects the confidentiality of all information relating to the employee(s) sickness. This Policy will be implemented in line with all Data Protection legislation and the Access to Medical Records Act 1988.

Procedure

The employee(s) when unable to attend work through sickness, accident or personal circumstances must inform the Chair/Vice Chair by phone, text or in person of the reason for their absence by no later than 10am on the first morning.

The employee should indicate the reason for absence and, if possible, how long they expect to be absent. If the absence is for a period of less than seven days, the employee should complete a Return to Work Discussion/Interview Form. APPENDIX 1

For an absence of more than seven days the employee must obtain fit notes issued by a doctor or any other medical professional covering the entire period of absence.

The Parish Council will provide for a suitable occupational health assessment for longer periods of absence. The employee is expected to attend this and to cooperate with all reasonable instructions given by the Council for the purposes of managing the absence. The Council will also seek to stay in touch with the employee for pastoral reasons and to support the effective management of the absence.

Where absenteeism appears unreasonable or unwarranted, the employee may be liable for disciplinary action for misconduct.

The employee is expected to mitigate their absence due to sickness or injury by not taking part in activities or events that are likely to hinder a return to work.

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3. SICKNESS PAY

Sick pay will be paid in accordance with your contract of employment and the Green Book Scheme as issued by the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

4. POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS BEFORE RETURN TO WORK

An employee's doctor might indicate on a fit note that the employee "may be fit for work". If this option is selected the doctor will also identify potential amendments that should be made, selecting from: -

- phased return to work;
- amended duties;
- altered hours;
- workplace adaptations

If a fit note suggesting amendments for a return to work is received Markfield Parish Council will contact the employee and arrange for a meeting with the employee. At this meeting the suggested amendments will be discussed with the aim of facilitating the employee's return to work.

If the suggested amendments are not possible the employee will remain on sick leave. If the suggested amendments are possible the employee will return to work, but regular reviews will be carried out to ensure that the amendments are adequate.

It should be noted that any amendments are not to be viewed as a permanent change to the contract of employment.

5. RETURN TO WORK

Employees should expect a "return to work" meeting on their first day in the office after any period of absence, to ensure that the employee is fit to work, that all the support the employee needs is in place and to update the employee on developments and their workload.

Requests for temporary adjustments to the employee's working conditions will be considered by Markfield Parish Council and will be accommodated wherever possible and if Markfield Parish Council's circumstances permit subject to section 5 above.

If the employee is experiencing frequent periods of absence it will be explored with the employee whether there is any underlying reason for the frequency of the absences and whether further support is necessary. Where no underlying reason is identified an informal meeting with the employee will be held to discuss the problem.

6. NECESSARY MEDICAL INFORMATION

Markfield Parish Council may request a fit note issued by a doctor or other medical professional for frequent periods of absence of seven days or less or where there appears to be an unacceptable pattern of absence. In such circumstances Markfield Parish Council will reimburse the doctor's/medical professional's costs for providing the fit note.

Where an employee has frequent absences or there is a long-term absence Markfield Parish Council will need to gain as much information about the employee's medical condition as possible. In these circumstances Markfield Parish Council may request the employee's

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permission to contact their GP and ask for a medical report on the employee's condition. The employee may ask their GP to show them a copy of this report.

Markfield Parish Council may also request the employee to see an occupational health adviser to advise the employee and Markfield Parish Council on the best way to support the employee.

Markfield Parish Council reserves the right to require the employee to be examined by a practitioner of its choice in order to seek a medical opinion.

A refusal to grant permission for contact with a GP or to cooperate with an occupational health adviser will prevent Markfield Parish Council from gaining a proper understanding of the reason for the employee's absences.

The employee will need to be aware that as a result Markfield Parish Council will not be able to properly take into account any medical condition in any formal review under the Absence Management Policy.

7. DISABILITY AND CAPABILITY

If the employee has a condition that means that they might be considered disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, Markfield Parish Council will attempt to If the employee has a condition that means they might be considered disabled make reasonable adjustments to the job to accommodate their requirements. The employee will be fully consulted at all times.

8. RETURN OF COUNCIL'S EQUIPMENT

If the employee is off sick for an extended period (e.g. one month or more) Markfield Parish Council may require them to return Parish Council equipment until they are well enough to return to work. It may be necessary to request this within the first month if the non-return affects operational requirements.

If the employee does not return to work following a period of sickness absence, the employee will be required to return all outstanding Parish Council equipment and documents on the date of termination of their employment.

9. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

In the event of the employee having frequent short term absences which are affecting their work or an employee having an extended ill health absence Markfield Parish Council will institute the appropriate absence management policy in consultation with the employee. This procedure is non-contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment with Markfield Parish Council.

10. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE FOR FREQUENT SHORT-TERM ABSENCES

Informal Meeting

If an employee suffers frequent short-term absences Markfield Parish Council will organise an informal meeting to establish if there is any underlying reason for the absences and whether the employee requires any support from Markfield Parish Council to improve their attendance record. The meeting will set a date for a future review of the employee's absence record to review the improvement in the attendance record. If no improvement has been achieved this will trigger the first stage of the formal absence procedure.

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First Formal Meeting

If no improvement is achieved by the agreed review date then Markfield Parish Council will write to the employee specifying its concerns with the level of absence and inviting the employee to a first formal absence review meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or a union representative.

At the meeting there will be formal consultation with the employee about the attendance record and whether medical information should be sought to establish whether there is an underlying health condition. If following any medical enquiries no underlying reason for the absences is established Markfield Parish Council will write to the employee setting out the improvement in the absence that is required. Markfield Parish Council will also set a date for a second formal meeting to evaluate the improvement and write to the employee inviting them to attend the second formal meeting.

Second Formal Meeting

The employee has the right to be accompanied at the Second Formal Meeting by a work by a friend or union representative. The employee's attendance will be reviewed at the meeting and if attendance has improved no further action will be taken although attendance will continue to be monitored.

If attendance has not improved and no underlying reason for the absence is established then a further absence review date will be set for improvement in the standard of attendance. The employee will be formally warned that if no improvement in attendance is achieved by the review date then consideration will be given to triggering the final stage of the formal disciplinary process which may result in dismissal.

Third Formal Meeting / Disciplinary Meeting

If no improvement in attendance is achieved by the date off the Third Formal Meeting, a disciplinary hearing will be convened to establish whether the employee should be dismissed. (Refer to Markfield Parish Council Disciplinary Policy).

Right of Appeal

At each stage in the formal procedure Markfield Parish Council will write to the employee setting out the outcome of the meeting and the reasons for any decisions. The employee has a right to appeal against any of the decisions reached at any of the formal meetings including any final decision to dismiss.

If the employee wishes to appeal they should write to the Chair stating the grounds on which they wish to appeal within five working days of the employee's receipt of the letter. The appeal will be heard in accordance with Markfield Parish Council's disciplinary appeals procedure.

11. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE FOR LONG TERM ABSENCES

Informal Procedure

In the case of long-term absence Markfield Parish Council will maintain regular contact with the employee with the aim of remaining informed about their recovery and exploring how Markfield Parish Council can support the employee. Markfield Parish Council will agree with the employee what type of contact is acceptable and how frequently contact should be made.

If the employee or their GP believe that there is no imminent return to work and it is becoming difficult for Markfield Parish Council to hold the job open then Markfield Parish Council will ask

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the employee's permission to obtain an up- to-date medical report on the employee's ability to do the job now and in the future, a prognosis on the employee's condition and a possible date for return to work.

If the medical information suggests there is no possibility of an imminent return to work then Markfield Parish Council may need to trigger a formal procedure to consider the alternatives with the employee. This will be through a formal long-term absence review meeting.

Formal Long-Term Absence Review Meeting

If as a result of the medical information it appears that the employee has become incapable of fulfilling their job because of ill health then a formal long-term absence review meeting will be set up. The employee will be informed in advance and in writing about the meeting and the reason for the meeting. The employee has a right to be accompanied at the meeting by a friend or SLCC representative.

If the employee is not well enough to attend and is not likely to be well enough to attend any meeting then Markfield Parish Council will make arrangements to ensure that the employee has a proper opportunity to make their case and offer additional information before any decision is made. This may be through a representative or written representations or change of venue.

If reasonable adjustments are identified which may help the employee return to work or a potential improvement in the likelihood of a return to work is identified then a further review date may be set when a further formal long- term absence review meeting will be held.

If no further information is provided to suggest a return to work is likely to prove possible and no reasonable adjustments are identified that would enable the employee to return to work, then a decision may be taken to dismiss. The employee will be given notice of the decision in writing.

Right of Appeal

If the employee wishes to appeal they should write to the Chair stating the grounds on which they wish to appeal within five working days of the employee's receipt of the letter. The appeal will be heard in accordance with Markfield Parish Council's disciplinary appeals procedure.

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APPENDIX 1

RETURN TO WORK DISCUSSION/INTERVIEW FORM

If sickness absence has been longer than 7 continuous calendar days employees must provide a medical certificate(s) (known as the fit note) to cover them.

NAME: _____

SECTION ONE: ABSENCE DETAILS

1. Date of return to work:
2. Dates of absence: From: To: Hours lost:
3. Did the employee follow correct absence reporting procedures: Yes / No
4. Self-Certification/Doctor's Note received: Yes / No (If No, why?) <i>Completed self certification forms and doctor's notes to be included</i>
5. Reason for Absence:
6. Is the employee fit to resume normal duties: Yes / No

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APPENDIX 2

SECTION TWO: RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW

Date of Interview: _____
TOTAL ABSENCE OVER LAST 12 MONTHS: <i>(Including this period of absence)</i>
No. of occasions: _____
Total days (or hours for part-time staff) lost: _____
Currently under absence monitoring? Yes / No
Issues to address and employee response:
<input type="checkbox"/> How are you now and are you able to carry out normal hours and duties?
<input type="checkbox"/> What was the possible cause of your sickness absence and what action have you taken to avoid any future occurrence (work, accident or personal)
<input type="checkbox"/> Did you consult a Doctor or other medical practitioner?
<input type="checkbox"/> Are you on any medication which may affect your performance?
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you feel that there is anything we can do to support you?
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you consider your illness to be work-related? If the answer is yes in what way is it work related? <i>If so an incident or hazard report form should be completed.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> If you feel it is work related did you complete an accident, incident or hazardous report form?
<input type="checkbox"/> Update on work during period of absence.

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Continued...

APPENDIX 2 - continued

SECTION TWO: RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW – continued

SECTION THREE: NEXT STEPS

Summary of action points (if applicable) agreed and any other comments:

Review date for agreed actions

Employee signature

Chair signature

Date
