

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 23 May, 2016

Report of the Leader

Revised Managing Attendance at Work Policy

Purpose of the Report

1. To ask Members to consider and approve the new Managing Attendance at Work Policy for Council staff following consultation and agreement with the trade unions.

Recommendations

1. That Members consider and approve the revised Managing Attendance at Work Policy as set out in [Appendix A](#).

Reason for the Recommendation

1. To help maintain high levels of staff attendance across the Council and support those employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness absence.

Background

2. Members will be aware that discussions have been ongoing with the recognised trade unions in relation to the adoption of a new Management of Attendance Policy. The request to review the current Policy was initially raised by the trade unions in response to concerns about the application of certain provisions within the Policy. Whilst not necessarily accepting all of these concerns it was recognised that a different approach to the management of attendance was needed to address changing circumstances across the Council and the challenges of the future.
3. Specific issues which have guided those discussions have included a small increase in absence levels over the last two years, a recognition that a particular focus needs to be placed on the management of long term absence and the need for a Policy which is congruent with the principles of the Council's Staff Engagement Strategy.
4. Agreement was reached with the recognised trade unions on the 4th May 2016 subject to approval of Cabinet and a review period over the next 18 months.

Relevant Issues and Options

5. As indicated above, it is felt that the new Policy will be help to meet the changing needs of the Council going forward. It reflects the principles as set out in the new

Staff Charter (as approved by Cabinet on 11th April 2016) and helps to focus attention on the biggest challenges when managing attendance.

6. The main features of the new Policy are as set out below:-
 - It provides clarity in relation to the mutual expectations of managers and staff in the context of attendance management.
 - It broadens the range of "triggers" for managers to use in managing attendance and to help guide appropriate interventions (as set out in paragraph 10.1 of the Policy).
 - It continues to require a sequential "advisory notice" style approach in the management of short-term, intermittent and unpredictable absence (as set out in section 11 of the Policy).
 - It separates out the management of long term/chronic sickness absence requiring more of a case management approach to such absence (see section 12 of the Policy). Members will be aware that long term absence over the last year accounted for 69% of all absence compared with 67% in the previous year.
7. An important addition to the Policy is the mechanism for managing employee absence patterns which combine both long and short term absence. This is based on introducing a modified version of the "Bradford Factor" weighting formula as a generic trigger. This is set out in paragraphs 13.2 and 13.3 of the Policy.
8. Members will be aware that the above formula is based on research originally undertaken by the Bradford University School of Management and which helps to highlight the disproportionate impact of short term absence on an organisation compared with single instances of long term absence.
9. The formula has, however been modified for use as part of the Policy in accordance with helpful discussions with the trade unions and to take on board their initial concerns. It will be an area for scrutiny as part of the eighteen month review period.
10. Members will note that the provisions of the new "Care First" Employee Assistance Programme are also included in the Policy as approved by Cabinet on the 11th February 2016. This will be an important part of the Council's approach to managing attendance; providing a facility for all employees to access immediate counselling and health support services on a 24 hour, 365 day a year basis.
11. In encouraging a case management approach to long term/chronic absence the new Policy is seen as having a positive impact for employees with protected characteristics and particularly for employees who have disability related absence. A full copy of the Equality Impact Assessment report is attached at [Appendix B](#).
12. As indicated above, the new Policy is seen a congruent with the Council's Employee Engagement Strategy and the emphasis on the need for employees to be supported in the workplace but to be clear about the expectations on them in delivering services and in responding to the challenges over the next five years.
13. The momentum built up as part of the Council's Engagement Strategy will continue over the coming years and the effect of this will be measured as part of the new Corporate Health Performance Indicators. It is expected that the Strategy will play an important role in the reduction of absence levels.
14. Subject to the approval of Cabinet it is proposed to run a series of briefing sessions with all managers up to the end of September 2016 with a view to implementation of the new Policy from the 1st October 2016. The Policy will then be subject to review with the trade unions on a six monthly basis.

15. The Policy will be operated in tandem with the revised and tighter performance management arrangements as developed by the Corporate Management Team and in place across all Directorates.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

16. There are no direct resource implications arising from the content of this report.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

17. There are no sustainability or climate change implications directly arising from the content of this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

18. The new Policy continues to recognise the potential to legally end the employment of an employee on the grounds of capability if their absence from work is negatively affecting service delivery. Such circumstances will need to continue to be managed fairly and in accordance with agreed procedures. The Policy also continues to recognise the Council's requirements under the Equality Act 2010.

Crime and Disorder Implications

19. None identified.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

20. The new Policy seeks to ensure that employees whose absence is disability related or due to any other protected characteristic are supported and appropriate adjustments are put in place to help facilitate their safe return to work. The provisions of the Policy have been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment as set out in [Appendix B](#).

Corporate/Service Objectives

21. The Plan seeks to support the delivery of service objectives set out in the redrafted Corporate Plan and individual service plans.

Policy Framework and Budget

22. This is a matter for Executive decision.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

23. The Trade Unions have been consulted on, and contributed to the development of the new Policy.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

24. Corporate Performance and Resources.

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

Reuben Bergman, Head of Human Resources

Officers Consulted

Corporate Management Team
All Heads of Service
Operational Manager - Human Resources
Employment Lawyer

Responsible Officer:

Rob Thomas, Managing Director