

**CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PERSONNEL AND GENERAL COMMITTEE  
10 DECEMBER 2008**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

**REVISED SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY**

**1 Introduction and Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the attached revised Sickness Absence policy.

**2 Wards Affected**

None.

**3 Effect on Policy**

- 3.1 None.

**4 Contact Officers**

- 4.1 Anne-Marie Scott, Head of Human Resources (extension 1731)

**5 Background**

- 5.1 The level of sickness absence taken by members of staff impacts directly on the efficiency and effectiveness with which the Council is able to deliver its services to the public. The revised Sickness Absence Policy seeks to minimise sickness absence levels whilst maintaining a supportive, fair and consistent approach to members of staff.
- 5.2 During 2007-8 9.05 days sickness absence were taken on average per employee against a corporate target of 8.3 days per employee. The corporate target for 2008-9 is an average of 8 days per employee and from 2009-10 onwards is 7 days per employee per year.
- 5.3 To support the achievement of these targets the attached revised sickness absence policy provides a more robust process for use by line managers in managing sickness absence.
- 5.4 According to research undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) "Return to work" meetings, i.e. one-to-one meetings between the line manager and the member of staff as soon as they come back to work are an essential tool in minimising sickness absence levels by providing proactive and early intervention. The revised policy requires that a Return to Work meeting is held and recorded after any period of sickness absence.
- 5.6 The policy sets out a three stage formal process for managing high levels of sickness absence ending ultimately in the dismissal of the employee if their level of sickness absence continues at an unacceptably high level over a significant period of time, or if they repeatedly fail to comply with the Councils sickness absence reporting procedure.
- 5.7 The policy also sets out the process for long term sickness absence and ill health dismissal in circumstances where due to a genuine medical condition a member of staff is permanently incapable of carrying out their job. From 1 April 2008 the new Local

Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) was introduced including a revised three tier ill-health retirement approach. Appendix G of the policy summarises how Cherwell District Council complies with the new LGPS ill-health pension requirements.

- 5.8 The competence of line managers in the implementation of this policy will be essential to its effectiveness. It is proposed that the policy is introduced from 1 April 2009 and that during January to March 2009 comprehensive training will be provided for staff with line management responsibility.
- 5.9 The Staff consultation group including Unison representatives have been consulted and have endorsed the policy.

## **6 Risk Assessment, Financial Effects and Contribution to Efficiency Savings**

6.1 The following details have been approved by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management & Insurance Officer, 01295 221566 and Karen Curtin, Chief Accountant, 01295 221551.

### **6.2 Risk Assessment**

The risk associated with not approving the recommendations contained in this report is that corporate sickness absence targets will not be met.

### **6.3 Financial Effects**

None.

### **6.4 Efficiency/Savings**

None.

## **7 Recommendations**

7.1 The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to resolve to approve

- (1) The attached revised sickness absence policy, including the ill health retirement process set out in Appendix G of the policy, for implementation from 1 April 2009.

Background Papers: None