Agenda Item No. 7

Personnel Committee - 22 April 2024

Sickness Absence Policy

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To gain Personnel Committee approval for the revised Sickness Absence Policy (Appendix 1).

2. Recommendations

2.1 Personnel Committee is recommended to approve the Sickness Absence Policy (summary of changes detailed below), endorsed by Corporate Management Team at its meeting of 28 March.

3. Background Information

Aim

3.1 This report provides a summary of the rationale for reviewing the Sickness Absence Policy and outlines the main changes of the revised policy (Appendix 1).

Know

3.2 The current Sickness Absence Policy was approved in April 2021. This policy revision compliments a system driven change in One Source due to the need to revert to Oracle seeded functionality and supports a trade union request to replace the Bradford Factor Score trigger process for managing sickness absence.

3.3 The main changes to the policy are outlined below;

- The removal of the Bradford Factor Score (BFS) and the introduction of the use of day/occurrence ‘triggers’ to prompt management action where an employee’s sickness absence has reached an unacceptable level. For example, the short-term sickness (STS) absence trigger which requires a SAR meeting to be held is triggered once the employee has either a combined total of 14 calendar days sickness absence (pro-rata part time based on FTE modified days) or 3 separate occurrences of absence in a rolling 12-month period (Appendix 1, section 3.5 & 5.4.2).

- The removal of reference to ‘stages’ within the process for dealing with sickness absence in response to consultation feedback. This has been replaced with ‘steps’ due to the sensitivity around certain illnesses.
- Clarification around the eligibility for employees considering taking ill health retirement and seeking independent pension / financial advice (Appendix 1, section 10.1).

Our Council Plan Priorities

3.4 The policy is directly aligned to the Council’s strategic priority of internal focus, ensuring all council services are customer focused, effective, efficient and equitable and helps embed the behaviours and values expected of all employees as part of the Behaviours and Standards Framework.

Response

3.5 Subject to approval and in line with system implementation currently scheduled for 1st September 2024 go live, workforce communications and training will be rolled out to support the implementation of the system change and revised sickness absence policy, including finalising accompanying sickness absence guidance, forms and letters (where relevant).

Review

3.6 Employment policies will usually be reviewed on a three yearly cycle, unless legislation or internal organisational need prompt a review earlier.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There is no intended financial implications arising from this report.

5. Legal Considerations

5.1 There are no legal issues arising from this report.

6. Risk Management

6.1 An equality impact assessment is attached (Appendix 2).

7. People

7.1 Employment policies include a scope section (where applicable) and in each policy it clearly sets out who the policy applies to and who it does not (Section 2 of Appendix 1).

7.2 There is no direct impact on our residents as a result of this policy. However, as part of the employment framework, helps to ensure that residents of Walsall get the best possible services from Walsall Council and its employees.

8. Consultation

8.1 The policy has been consulted upon formally with senior managers, stakeholders and trade union colleagues across the council between 7 March 2023 and 21 March 2023. There has been a number of returns, which have included a number of positive comments welcoming the changes around the removal of the Bradford Factor Score and introduction of trigger points.

8.2 Trade union colleague's raised no particular issues or queries that were not either addressed or incorporated into the policy reviews. Trade union colleagues are in favour of replacing the Bradford Factor Score and have no issues with the new triggers established.

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