



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 31ST JULY 2012

**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S MANAGING SICKNESS ABSENCE
PROCEDURE**

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the proposed amendments to the Managing Sickness Absence Procedure and seek feedback from the Committee prior to Cabinet approval.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The new Managing Sickness Absence Procedure was introduced in April 2010 and a commitment was made that the procedure would be reviewed after 12-18 months of use to establish the success of the procedure in terms of its' operation and to make any appropriate amendments in consultation with the Council's recognised trade unions.
- 2.2 A review has been undertaken in consultation with the Trade Unions and there are a number proposed changes recommended for approval.
- 2.3 The main change is that warnings will no longer be issued under the Disciplinary Procedure but under the Managing Sickness Absence Procedure. The warnings will now be called notifications but will have the same effect and will last for the same period of time as the warnings under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 2.4 Other changes implemented are around processes regarding iTrent, the HR IT system, self service and the role of the FSU. Also there is a firming up of procedures already being undertaken by the Managing Attendance Team but not stated explicitly in the Procedure, i.e. the management of patterns of absence.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The new Policy links to the People Management Strategy and therefore to all other strategies, including all equality strategies, policies and procedures, that relies on employees to deliver the strategy and service provision.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 When the new Managing Sickness Absence Procedure was launched in April 2010 after significant consultation with the Trade Unions, a commitment was made to review the Procedure after 12-18 months to establish how it was being used, how successful it was in supporting employees and managers in dealing with sickness absence issues and whether

there were any issues or concerns with the Procedure.

- 4.2 The review has now been completed and amendments to the Procedure are recommended. The primary amendment is around the sanction description. Previously, warnings issued under the Procedure were disciplinary warnings. The new Procedure has a notification under the Managing Sickness Absence Procedure. The notifications follow the same structure as disciplinary warnings.
- 4.3 There are a number of reasons for the recommended change. A disciplinary warning on file prevents an employee from accessing the Council's Green Car Scheme as the scheme rules state if someone has a warning on file they cannot be considered for a vehicle. Also teachers and social workers have to have disciplinary warnings reported to their respective professional bodies and it is thought that a disciplinary warning for sickness absence is somewhat different to a warning for misconduct. Additionally, the Trade Unions are more supportive for this new notification system to be adopted.
- 4.4 The new system would not prevent someone from being dismissed from the organisation for unacceptable levels of sickness absence.
- 4.5 The second change to the Procedure is the inclusion of information around patterns of sickness absence. The Managing Attendance Team have, as a matter of course, been reviewing patterns of long and short term sickness absences when dealing with an employee, however this was not previously explicit in the Procedure.
- 4.6 Other minor changes relate to administrative details, for example how employees and managers should be administering sickness absence which is dependent on whether they are using iTrent, self service or not.
- 4.7 It is intended that the Managing Sickness Absence Procedure becomes effective on 1st October 2012 for data purposes.

SUMMARY

- 4.8 In summary the review has resulted in limited change to the Procedure overall and a renaming of the sanction process. The spirit of the Procedure has not been changed and it continues to make a significant impact in reducing sickness absence levels across the organisation.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The draft Procedure was Equality Impact Assessed in February 2012 and no significant changes were recommended. The previous Procedure already took into consideration the different individual circumstances of staff members, which could have a bearing on any absences due to sickness, and this has continued to be reflected in the updated Procedure.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no added financial implications to the amendments to the Procedure.
- 6.2 Sickness absence is a significant cost to the organisation, however, the reducing levels of absence, as a result in part of the Managing Attendance Procedure, is a positive step forward.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no changes to personnel implications in introducing these amendments.

7.2 Sickness absence warnings will be reported on separately to disciplinary warnings in Ffynnon and in reports.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 As stated above, the Policy has undergone the Council's consultation process and the views of the Council's recognised trade unions and the Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language) have been considered.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee recommend the amendments to the Procedure and forward on to Cabinet for approval.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To ensure that sickness absence is managed in a robust and consistent way across the Council.

10.2 To deliver a fair and equitable Procedure that is fit for purpose for the organisation

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972
Local Government Act 2000
Employment Act 2008

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Managing Sickness Absence Procedure