

HEMYOCK PARISH COUNCIL **SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY**

Policy Statement:

Hemyock Parish Council is committed to improving the health, wellbeing and attendance of all employees. It values the contribution its employees make to the successful running of the Parish Council and regrets the loss of that contribution when an employee is unable to work for whatever reason. This sickness absence policy explains what is expected of the council and its employees when handling absence.

Key Principles:

The council's sickness absence policy is based upon the following principles:

1. As a responsible employer the Parish Council undertakes to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend to work due to sickness. (See Employment Contract).
2. Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment. The Parish Council asks each employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.
3. The Parish Council will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes:
 - a) "Special leave" for necessary absences not caused by sickness
 - b) Flexible approach to the taking of annual leave
 - c) Access to counsellors where necessary
 - d) Rehabilitation programmes in cases of long-term sickness absence
4. The Parish Council will consider any advice given by the employee's GP on the "Statement of Fitness for Work". If the GP advises that an employee 'may be fit for work' we will discuss with the employee how we can help them get back to work – for example, on flexible hours, or altered duties.
5. The Parish Council will use an occupational health adviser, where appropriate, to:
 - a) Help identify the nature of an employee's illness
 - b) Advise the employee and the Parish Council on the best way to improve the employee's health and wellbeing
6. The Parish Council's disciplinary procedures will be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.
7. The Parish Council respects the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness. This policy will be implemented in line with all data protection legislation and the Access to Medical Records Act 1988.

Notification of absence

If an employee is going to be absent from work they should speak to the Chairman as soon as they are aware that they will be unable to fulfil their contractual hours. They should also give a clear indication of the nature of the illness and a likely return date.

The Chairman will check with the employee to ascertain if there is any information that the Parish Council needs to know about the employee's current workload. If an employee does not contact the Chairman when unable to work due to sickness then the Chairman will attempt to contact the employee at home.

An employee may not always feel able to discuss their medical problems with the Chairman. The Chair will be sensitive to individual concerns and make appropriate alternative arrangements where appropriate.

Evidence of incapacity

Employees must use the Parish Council's self-certification arrangements for the first seven days of absence. Thereafter a "Statement of Fitness for Work" is required to cover every subsequent day.

If absence is likely to be protracted, i.e. more than four weeks continuously, there is a shared responsibility for the Chairman and the employee to maintain contact at agreed intervals.

"May be fit for some work"

If the GP advises on the Statement of Fitness for Work that an employee 'may be fit for work' then the Parish Council will discuss with the employee ways of helping him or her to get back to work, possibly by a phased return or amended duties.

If it is not possible to provide the support an employee needs to return to work – for example, by making the necessary workplace adjustments - or an employee feels unable to return then the Statement will be used in the same way as if the GP had advised that the employee was 'not fit for work'.

Return to work discussions

The Chair will discuss absences with employees upon return to work to establish:

- (a) The reason for and cause of absence
- (b) Anything the Chair and/or the Parish Council might have done to help
- (c) That the employee is fit to return to work

If an employee's GP has advised that they 'may be fit for work' then the return to work discussion may also be used to agree in detail how the return to work might work best in practice.

A more formal review will be triggered by:

- (a) Frequent short-term absences

(b) long-term absence

This review will look at any further action required to improve the employee's attendance and wellbeing.

Absence due to disability/maternity

Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records.