

BILBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

Absence Management Policy

1. OVERVIEW

All employees are covered by our policy for reporting and managing absences and sick pay.

If you are absent due to sickness on a normal working day, you must notify the Parish Clerk or the Chair of the Parish Council as soon as possible stating the reason for your absence, and the expected duration of your illness absence if known.

From your first day of absence, a self-certification will need to be completed on your return if greater than 7 days you will require a statement of Fitness for Work from your G.P. All period of prolonged absence must be covered by a doctor's note which must be forwarded to the Parish Clerk.

Sick pay entitlement will be made on a sliding scale depending on the length of continuous service and sickness period as per individual employee contracts.

2. LONG-TERM, OR PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Formal steps may be taken if there is concern about the number of days taken off for sickness or injury. What action is taken will depend on reasons and pattern for absence. Informal talks may be held and medical evidence may be sought to better understand the situation.

Review meetings may also be necessary to explore whether reasonable adjustments can be made to help either return to work or work for longer periods.

The Parish Council shall have the right at any time to require you to submit to an examination by an independent medical practitioner selected by the Council, to obtain a confidential report on your condition from such practitioner and to discuss with such practitioner the findings of his/her examination and his/her prognosis of your likely recovery and/or fitness to resume work and recommended treatment.

If medical evidence is required the Council will usually ask for examination by a doctor, an occupational health therapist or another specialist. The Parish Council will pay for this and all reports will be kept confidential. Consent from the employee will be sought to have full access to medical reports and to discuss the contents with the relevant medical practitioner. The Employee does not have to consent, but if they do not, decisions will be made based on existing medical and other information. Reasonable adjustments to the role and/or workspace will be made if the employee is found to have a disability

The Parish Council understand that this process is difficult and upsetting if the employee suffers from a serious health condition and they might feel as if the Council is pressurising the employee into returning to work before they are ready. The Parish Council does not want them to feel that way, but no business can continue employing people indefinitely if they are not able to work.

The Parish Council will write to the employee before any formal meeting and explain when, where, and why it is taking place. If this date is not acceptable a mutually convenient alternative date will be arranged.

At the meeting, the discussion will be why the employee is off work, how long they expect to remain off work, and whether they are likely to be off work for the same reason in the future. There will also be a review of any medical evidence, and explore whether further reports are needed and if there is anything the Parish Council can do to help to improve their health and/or make it easier for them to work. If they have been off work long-term the Parish Council may suggest a return-to-work program; if there is persistent absence, they may set targets to improve the attendance against a deadline. The employee should also expect to be warned that they may face dismissal if the attendance does not improve.

Should the employee be unable to return to work, or fails to meet the deadline set for improved attendance, they will be asked to attend another meeting. The aim at this meeting will be to find out if the situation is expected to change, and the Parish Council may have to give notice of dismissal if it becomes clear they are either unlikely to return to work or their attendance will not improve in the short-term. Before issuing a notice of dismissal, options will be explored whether redeployment within the Parish Council could be made which would address the attendance issues and consideration will be given to any other issues that may want discussing.

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If the Parish Council concludes that the employee is not off work for a medical condition and they are unable to offer any other satisfactory explanation the employee may face action under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure. This may lead to dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct.

3. RIGHT OF APPEAL

An employee has the right to appeal if the Parish Council dismiss them on the grounds of their long-term absence. A response must be lodged within a week of being told they have been dismissed, by writing directly to the Parish Clerk. In response to that letter, there must be an explanation of exactly what is being appealed.

Wherever possible, the appeal hearing meeting will not be led by the person(s) who decided to dismiss you. The Parish Council's final decision will be sent to you in writing, where possible within two weeks of the appeal hearing. There is no further right to appeal.

4. RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED

The employee has the right to take a colleague or trade union representative with them to any formal meeting called under this procedure, including the appeal meeting. The employee should tell the Parish Council as soon as possible who will accompany them and it is their responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If a work colleague is chosen the Parish Council will not prevent them from attending but may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work causes operational problems.

The colleague or union representative can, if this is a preference, explain the key points of the case to the meeting and can respond on behalf of the employee. It is also acceptable to confer during the meetings, they must not however, answer questions put directly to the employee or try to prevent the Parish Council asking questions or outlining its arguments.

5. OTHER TYPES OF ABSENCE

Jury Service – The Parish Clerk must be informed as soon as possible. While on Jury Service, employees will receive full pay minus any allowances paid by the court

Other public duties – Time off will be allowed to carry out duties in some public roles, including magistrate and school governor. As soon as duties are known and meeting dates available the Parish Clerk should be informed. The Parish Council will not pay for the time taken off work.

Emergencies involving dependants - Reasonable time off may be taken to deal with emergencies involving dependants. A dependent is defined as spouse, civil partner, children (including adopted children), or a parent. Also included are other people who live in your household or anyone else who relies on the employee – for example, an elderly family member. Procedures for sickness leave must be followed. The circumstances of each case will be considered to allow for some flexibility, but the time taken off must both be reasonable and necessary to deal with something immediately and /or respond to an emergency. Normally this means hours, or a maximum of one or two days and this type of leave is not designed to provide care over the longer term. No payment will be made for time taken off for dependants if the time is not made up.

Other family-related absences – Time off for family-related matters will be paid including maternity, paternity, and adoption leave.

Carrying out trade union duties – Elected trade union officials are legally entitled to reasonable time off to fulfil obligations and will be paid at the full basic rate for all related absences during working hours. Duties carried out outside working hours will not be paid.

The Parish Council reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.