

Update – D&S IFCA's Managing Absence Policy

Officers' Recommendation

That Members note the received advice and agree to amend D&S IFCA's Managing Absence Policy as set out in Annex B

Background

Members have been informed that the majority of policy documents adopted by D&S IFCA are either a replica of policy adopted by Devon County Council (DCC), or adapted from policy adopted by Devon County Council. Many policy documents referred to by D&S IFCA employees were developed by professional Human Resource (HR) advisors for service providers such as HR Solutions, or HR One.

On 19th September 2024, Officers presented Members with the D&S IFCA Managing Absence Policy. Members approved its introduction; however, during the discussions concern was raised regarding elements of the content as follows:

- 1) In reference to illness related absences divided into long and short term in the current policy, the Chair and the Vice Chair felt that there was a need to expand the type of absences to allow for periods of short-term absences caused by a long-term illness.
 - 2) In reference to the absence relating to a cancer screening, the Chair and the Vice Chair felt that it would be suitable to extend this allowance to cover for screening regarding other types of illnesses.
 - 3) In reference to the absence allowance due to bereavement, the policy states that five days of paid leave are allowed. The Chair and the Vice Chair felt that the Chief Officer should be formally allowed to exercise certain level of discretion and flexibility when managing employees dealing with bereavement in the family including, for instance, unpaid leave.
- **Members requested that the Chief Officer seek further advice and report back to the Authority upon the findings in reference to the items raised in discussion.**

Received Advice

The Chief Officer sought advice from Devon County Council's HR advice regarding the points raised by Members. The advice received was that the draft (as presented in September 2024) of D&S IFCA's Managing Absence Policy was sufficient, but it was up to the Authority whether to accommodate the points raised by Members. However, the advice received also cautioned that any divergence away from the current policy may lead to employees taking paid or unpaid leave for reasons or circumstances that were unintended.

In line with the advice received the amendments (highlighted in yellow and track changes on pages 11, 12, 14, and 15) to the attached Managing Absence Policy (Annex A) looks to provide additional flexibility by allowing the Chief Officer to use their discretion where the stated limits to leave in the policy are not appropriate to the employee's circumstances.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers

- [D&S IFCA Managing Absence Policy \(Version 1.7 – September 2024\)](#)
- [Authority meeting minutes – 19th September 2024](#)