

TELSCOME TOWN COUNCIL



SICKNESS AND ABSENCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is committed to the care and well-being of its employees. The purpose of this policy is to ensure all staff members have access to information relating to sickness and absence and are aware of the steps they must follow when absent from work.
- 1.2 By managing sickness and absence, the Council will continue to provide a high quality service to members of the public.
- 1.3 This policy covers:
 - sickness leave
 - sick pay
 - unauthorised absence and lateness
 - annual leave
 - compassionate and/or emergency leave
 - time off in lieu (TOIL)/flexitime
 - medical/dental appointments
 - severe weather & disruptions to travel
 - maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave
 - Jury service
 - falsifying claims

2. Sickness Leave

- 2.1 As an Employer, we need to measure and record sickness absence and to know when and why we need to do something about it. We will therefore record and keep all records relating to absence. The Council will investigate and assess whether further action is necessary if periods of absence due to short-term self-certification sickness reach unacceptable levels, or if patterns emerge. As an employee, you need to know that you work for someone who cares about your health and welfare.
- 2.2 The Council recognises that there will be occasions when staff members are unable to work due to sickness. If you are ill and unfit for work, you must personally contact the Town Clerk as early as possible on the first day and certainly within 1 hour of starting your shift work pattern so that service levels can be maintained. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Council accept notification of absence from a third party. Regular contact must be maintained with the Town Clerk during a period of absence.
- 2.3 For absence of 7 days or less, employees are required to complete a self-certification document. (A copy of the self-certificate form can be found at the end of the handbook in section 13.)
- 2.4 If absence continues for more than 7 days (Saturday and Sunday included), a Doctor's 'Fit for Work' certificate must be supplied to the Town Clerk and thereafter additional 'Fit for Work' certificates must be sent to cover the whole period of sickness. Certificates should be posted or emailed to the Town Clerk as soon as possible.

TELSCOME TOWN COUNCIL



- 2.5 Whilst an employee is absent due to sickness, they must do nothing to aggravate or delay recovery such as working for another employer or taking part in inappropriate social or sporting activities.
- 2.6 Employees who are frequently absent or on long-term sickness could be suffering from poor health which may require medical investigation. The Council will offer support and guidance in consultation with the employee and will consider referral to occupational health specialist services if deemed appropriate at TTC's expense.
- 2.7 The Council takes a sympathetic view towards ill health problems and will provide a supportive approach to employees who have been subject to long-term sickness. An employee returning to work following a period of long-term sickness will be supported on their return to work. The Town Clerk will discuss the advice on the Doctor's certificate with you and consider any comments made and/or any return-to-work tick boxes. The following options may be considered:-
- Phased return to work
 - Change of role or working pattern
 - Provision of specialist equipment
- If you return to work on reduced hours, your pay will reflect this. If TTC is not able to make any adaptations or adjustments to help you return to work, the Town Clerk will explain the reasons for this to you.
- 2.8 If you return to work but are on any form of medication that could affect your ability to carry out your normal duties, you must inform the Town Clerk.
- 2.9 Where an employee has returned from any period of sickness, a return-to-work interview will be conducted by the Town Clerk and a form completed. (A copy of the return-to-work form can be found at the end of the handbook in section 13.)
- 2.10 Whilst TTC will endeavour to support employees throughout periods of prolonged sickness, a heavy burden is thrown onto colleagues and TTC is unable to plan work effectively. In cases where an employee's absence reaches excessive levels or there is a lack of information about the circumstances of the sickness absence, TTC may request medical information about their condition from their GP. In cases of persistent repetition of or prolonged absence due to sickness or injury, TTC reserves the right to terminate your employment. In some situations, this may be before expiry of your sick pay. TTC would not decide to do this without meeting with you first.
- 2.11 Any medical information received by the Council will be treated as strictly confidential. Any expense in obtaining medical information from the GP will be met by the Council.
- 2.12 During all periods of absence, the Town Clerk as Line Manager will maintain contact with the employee.
- 2.13 During periods of long-term absence, holiday will accrue in line with the statutory allowance.

TELSCOME TOWN COUNCIL



3. Sick Pay

- 3.1 SSP will be paid in accordance with legislation in force at the time of absence. After successful completion of the probationary period and subject to the correct notification, additional sick pay may be paid at TTC's absolute discretion as detailed in your Contract of Employment.
- 3.2 Sickness absence is calculated on a rolling 12-month basis. This means that an employee's sickness record will be reviewed by looking back over the previous 12 months from the most recent date of absence, rather than a fixed calendar year. The rolling 12-month period moves forward continuously which means that sickness absence is reassessed whenever a new absence occurs or when an ongoing absence continues. Older periods of sickness will therefore drop out of the calculation once they are more than 12 months old.
- 3.3 For the purposes of calculating a period of sickness absence, all calendar days are included. This means that weekends and public holidays falling within a period of sickness absence will be counted as part of the total absence, even where these are not the employee's normal working days. The same applies for full-time and part-time staff.
- 3.4 Once a particular year's sickness entitlement is exhausted (even if during the period of absence, the anniversary of the employee's employment is passed), no further discretionary additional sick pay eligibility will accrue until the employee has been back at work for 60 working days. Periods of sickness absence separated by less than 20 working days may be deemed by the Council to be a continuation of the earlier period of leave (whether the employee's medical condition during both periods of absence are in fact related or not).
- 3.5 If you are absent due to incapacity caused by a third party or for an accident covered by insurance, any payments made by us under the additional sick pay scheme will be a loan and you or your personal representatives must include in any claim you make against a third party or Insurance company, a claim in respect of that loan.

4. Unauthorised absence and lateness

- 4.1 Unauthorised absence occurs when an employee fails to attend work and has not made arrangements with the Town Clerk.
- 4.2 Where an employee returns to work following an unauthorised absence, they will be required to attend a meeting with the Town Clerk to explain their absence. The employee will be expected to take any unauthorised absence from their annual leave entitlement, or if no entitlement remains, pay will be deducted for the period of unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- 4.3 There may be occasions when it is unavoidable to be late for work. The employee should contact the Town Clerk to explain the reasons for any delay. The employee will be expected to make up any time lost at work due to lateness. Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action being taken.



5. Annual Leave

- 5.1 The annual leave period runs from 1st April to 31st March the following year. With effect from 1st April 2023, full-time employees are entitled to 23 days paid holiday per annum plus Statutory Bank and Public Holidays. Your leave will increase to a maximum of 26 working days per year when you have completed five years continuous service. This is pro-rata for part-time employees. Details of annual leave entitlements are included in an employee's Contract of Employment.
- 5.2 It is normal practice for TTC's offices to be closed on UK public holidays. TTC reserves the right to deem any working day falling between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day a compulsory holiday, to be taken from your annual leave entitlement, where it is reasonable for efficiency to close the offices. You will be entitled to 2 extra statutory days to be taken at Christmas as notified to you by the Town Clerk.
- 5.3 Requests for annual leave are at the discretion of the Town Clerk, with consideration of the operational requirements of the Council being taken into account before a decision is made. For this reason, no bookings should be made before approval is received. Annual leave requests will not be unreasonably refused.
- 5.4 Where two or more employees request annual leave on the same dates, and it is not operationally possible to grant all the requests, preference will be given based on the following:
- seniority of role/grade
 - length of service
 - parental/carer commitments
- 5.5 TTC expects employees to take all their holiday entitlement within the year it is accrued, however, in exceptional circumstances and with prior written agreement from the Town Clerk, a maximum of 5 days may be carried over into the next leave year. Any holiday not taken or carried over will be lost.

6. Compassionate and/or emergency leave

- 6.1 Compassionate leave is at the overall discretion of the Town Clerk. The Council recognises that each individual's respective relationships are different, however in order to achieve consistency, in general paid compassionate leave will be granted in the following circumstances:
- the death of a close family member i.e. spouse, civil partner, child, sibling, parent (or equivalent in-laws) or grand-parent
 - the diagnosis of, or final stages of care for, a serious (life threatening) illness affecting a close family relative (as defined above)
 - the employee falling victim to a serious crime
 - fire/flood/burglary at the employee's home
 - road traffic collisions or other distressing accidents/incidents involving the employee or a close family member

TELSCOME TOWN COUNCIL



- 6.2 The length of paid compassionate leave granted is at the discretion of the Clerk, but is limited to a maximum of 5 days. Where a situation requires an extended period of leave beyond 5 days, other options should be discussed including use of TOIL, annual leave and/or a period of unpaid leave.
- 6.3 Requests for compassionate leave for situations not included above will be considered on an individual basis.
- 6.4 Requests for emergency leave are at the discretion of the Clerk. The Council recognises that each individual's personal circumstances will dictate what may be deemed as an emergency, however in order to achieve consistency, in general paid emergency leave of one day will be granted in the following circumstances:
- To provide assistance or make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured.
 - On the occasion of an unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant.
- 6.5 Employees are expected to use the day's paid emergency leave to make any ongoing care arrangements for dependents. Any additional requests for leave should be considered as requests for annual leave, and assessed using the Council's annual leave guidelines.
- 7. Time off in lieu (TOIL) / Flexitime Scheme**
- 7.1 The standard Council working week is 37 hours. Employee's individual weekly working hours are detailed in their Contract of Employment.
- 7.2 TTC operates a flexitime scheme for calculating time worked in addition to an employee's contracted hours. This enables staff to work more flexibly and meet personal needs, but must be with prior agreement of the Town Clerk. Hours worked without prior agreement will not be credited.
- 7.3 Full details are contained within Section 2 the Employment Handbook.
- 8. Medical/Dental Appointments**
- 8.1 Employees are expected to arrange medical/dental appointments out of normal working hours wherever possible.
- 8.2 The Council recognises this is not always possible. Where it is necessary to make an appointment during normal working hours, employees are encouraged to make the appointments at either the start or end of the day where possible to minimise disruption to the work of the Council. The flexible working system allows you to make adjustments to your working hours to facilitate this. You must inform the Town Clerk of any such appointments in advance and arrangements for making up the time agreed.
- 8.3 In-patient appointments or procedures taking the whole day will be treated as sick leave in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

TELSCOME TOWN COUNCIL



9. Severe Weather and Disruptions to Travel

- 9.1 The Council acknowledges that employees may occasionally have problems travelling to and from work due to either severe weather conditions or major disruptions to public transport (for example, train strikes or accidents on the roads). Whilst we understand and are committed to protecting the health and safety of all our employees, we must also ensure that the business and our residents are not unduly disrupted by external factors.
- 9.2 You should make every effort to attend work. When severe weather conditions occur or where there are major disruptions to public transport, you should take steps to obtain advice on the position from the appropriate external agencies and allow extra time for your journey, making alternative travel arrangements where appropriate.
- 9.3 If you are unable to attend work or are going to be delayed by the weather conditions or public transport disruptions, you should contact the Town Clerk as soon as possible to discuss the position.
- 9.4 Where the Council accepts that you have used your best endeavours to attend work but you are unable to do so or you are late because of the severe weather conditions or the major disruptions to public transport, the Town Clerk will discuss the various options potentially available. At the Council's discretion, you may be required or permitted to:
- Make up the time at a later date.
 - Take any absence from work as part of your annual leave entitlement.
 - Take any absence from work as special unpaid leave (in this case, your pay will reduce accordingly to take account of the hours/days you have not worked).
 - Be paid as if you had attended work on the day(s) of absence.
 - Work from home or otherwise work remotely.

The Council will base its decision on your individual circumstances, for example your distance from home to work, your mode of transport and how viable it is for you to work from home, and on the needs of the Council.

- 9.5 If severe weather conditions or major disruptions to public transport occur during the working day which will cause problems for you travelling home, the Town Clerk will decide whether to allow you to leave work early (and to make up the time at a later date if necessary). The decision will be based on your individual circumstances, for example your distance from home to work, your mode of transport and how viable it is for you to take work with you and work from home for the rest of the day, and on the needs of the Council.
- 9.6 TTC is committed to protecting the health and safety of all its employees and this includes during severe weather conditions. Where there are major disruptions to public transport a reasonable approach will be taken to the situation. You also have a duty of care to take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of other persons who may be affected by your acts or omissions. This includes taking extra care when travelling to and from work in severe weather conditions and allowing more time for your journey, including making alternative travel arrangements where appropriate.



TELSCOME TOWN COUNCIL

9.7 Unjustified or unacceptable absence or lateness may give rise to disciplinary action under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

10. Maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave

10.1 The Council recognises an employee's right to maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave as set out in the relevant legislation in force at the time.

11. Jury Service

If you are called to Jury Service you should inform your manager immediately. The Court will send you a loss of earnings form which you should complete and return to the Court with a copy to the Town Clerk. You will be paid in full whilst carrying out your jury service but the loss of earnings payment made by the Court to you will be deducted from your salary.

If you attend Court and are told your services are not required that day, you must telephone us immediately and then return to work.

12. Falsifying Claims

12.1 In the event of an employee taking time off fraudulently under any of the above sickness and absence policies, the Council will investigate and disciplinary action may be taken.

Policy	Sickness & absence
Review Cycle	Every 3 years, or earlier in the event of legislative changes
Date Last Adopted	21.1.26
Previous Adoption Dates	March 2021, March 2024
Responsibility	Policy & Resources Committee and then adoption by Full Council