GRINDON & THORPE THEWLES PARISH COUNCIL

SICKNESS AND ABSENCE POLICY

Scope

Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council currently has only one employee, the Parish Clerk, who works 20 flexible hours per month; never-the-less, the Council recognises that a certain level of absence may be necessary due to sickness, through illness or injury. It is the Parish Council's policy to offer as far as is possible, security of employment during such periods, subject to operational requirements and the conditions below.

Related policies and procedures

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Parish Council's Health & Safety Policy and Discipline and Grievance Procedures

Notification and certification

If the employee is unable to attend work due to sickness/injury, they must notify the Council by contacting the Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Chair is unavailable) as soon as possible, but no later than 7 days after the absence first occurs. The Clerk should indicate the reason for the absence and, if possible, when they expect to return to work. If the absence period includes a meeting of the Parish Council, the employee should consult the Chair about the possibility of postponing the meeting if the absence is likely to be for no more than 7 days. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, then:

(a) the employee should complete a self-certification form for the first seven calendar days of all sickness absences and give it to the Parish Council. If the employee is absent by the eighth day (including Saturday and Sunday), they must send a fit note, issued by their GP to the Parish Council. Current fit notes must cover subsequent periods of absence. The employee should also keep in touch with the Parish Council regarding their condition and likely return to work date. If the employee does not follow this procedure, they may be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Policy. Furthermore, the employee's contractual sick pay and statutory sick pay (SSP) may be withheld; and

(b) The Chair should consult other Councillors as to how they wish the Clerk's role to be filled during their absence (e.g. advertise for a Locum).

Return to work

The employee will not be allowed to return to work until their GP deems that they are fit to return. Requests for temporary adjustments to the employee's working conditions will be considered by the Parish Council and will be accommodated wherever possible and if Council's circumstances permit. In the case of extended periods of absence, the Parish Council may require that the employee's fitness to return is confirmed by a medical practitioner of the Parish Council's choice, and the employee will be interviewed on their return to work to:

- Check on the employee's fitness to return
- Ensure that all the support the employee needs is in place
- Bring the employee up to date on any changes.

Fit notes

An employee's GP might indicate on a fit note that the employee "may be fit for work". If this option is selected the GP will also identify potential amendments that should be made, selecting from:

- Phased return to work
- Amended duties
- Workplace adaptations.

If a fit note is received, the Parish Council will contact the employee and arrange for a meeting with the employee. At this meeting the suggested amendments will be discussed with the aim of facilitating the employee's return to work. If the suggested amendments are not possible the employee will remain on sick leave. If amendments are possible the employee will return to work, but regular reviews will be carried out to ensure that the amendments are adequate. It should be noted that any amendments are not to be viewed as a permanent change to the contract of employment.

Medical examination

The Parish Council reserves the right to require the employee to be examined by a practitioner of its choice in order to seek a medical opinion. (A refusal to be examined may lead the Parish Council to take disciplinary action against the employee, up to and including dismissal.)

Access to medical reports

In order to gain as much information about the employee's medical condition as possible, the Parish Council may also request the employee's permission to contact their GP and ask for a medical report on the employee's condition. The employee may ask to see this report.

Extended absences

The Council will be sympathetic when an employee is ill, but the employee should appreciate that if they are persistently absent through ill-health or long-term injury or incapacity, it will not be possible for the situation to continue indefinitely, and their employment may be reviewed or terminated. Termination will not take place without:

- Full consultation with the employee
- Medical investigation.

Where a return to work does prove possible, the Parish Council may require that the employee's fitness to return is confirmed by a practitioner of the Council's choice.

Meetings/home visits

During any absence it is important that the employee keeps in touch so that the Parish Council is kept informed of the employee's health and likely return-to-work date. The employee will therefore be periodically asked to attend meetings for the purpose of providing information and facilitating an effective return to work. If the employee is too unwell or physically unable to leave their home, the Parish Council reserves the right to visit them at their home.

Disability

If the employee has a condition that means they might be considered disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, the Council will attempt to make reasonable adjustments to their job to accommodate their requirements. The employee will be fully consulted at all times. If reasonable adjustments prove not to be viable options, and there is no likelihood of a return to work in the near future, a decision to dismiss may be the inevitable outcome.

Dismissal and the right to appeal

In the event of a dismissal, the reason for the dismissal and the circumstances leading up to that decision will be documented in writing to the employee. The employee may appeal against their dismissal by writing, within five working days of their receipt of the dismissal letter, to the Chair of the Parish Council stating the grounds of which they wish to appeal. The appeal will be heard in accordance with the Parish Council's disciplinary appeals procedure. This right also applies to 'action short of dismissal' such as alteration of duties.

Payment arrangements

Statutory sick pay (SSP)

The employee's SSP qualifying days are those days that they normally work. If the employee is eligible for the payment of SSP, it will be subject to the deduction of tax and National Insurance contributions.

Contractual sick pay

Information relating to the scale of payment is in the contract of employment.

Return of the Council's equipment

If the employee is off sick for an extended period of time (eg one month or more) the Parish Council may require them to return Parish Council equipment until they are well enough to return to work. If the employee does not return to work following a period of sickness absence, they will be required to return all outstanding Parish Council equipment on the date of termination of their employment.

Absences for reasons other than sickness

Requests for time off for reasons other than sickness will be considered by the Parish Council in the light of the individual's circumstances, legal requirements and operational needs. Unauthorised absences will be dealt with in accordance with the Parish Council's Disciplinary Policy.

Abuse of this policy

Any abuse in the application of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Parish Council's Disciplinary Policy and may possibly result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal.

Alterations and amendments to this policy

This policy does not form part of employees' contractual rights. The Parish Council reserves the right to revise the contents of this policy and procedure from time to time or withdraw it at its absolute discretion, in accordance with the needs of the Parish Council. The Parish Council will review this policy annually.

Adopted: December 2022

Last Updated: February 2026