

## Review of D&S IFCA's Managing Absence Policy

### Officers' Recommendation

**That Members approve the introduction of the D&S IFCA Managing Absence Policy and Procedure (September 2024).**

### Background

D&S IFCA has a large number of policy documents covering a range of topics and scenarios, with many relating to human resources or contractual requirements. The majority of policy documents 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.

### Merging and Adapting Policy

D&S IFCA is a relatively small organisation, and it is in the best interests of the organisation and the employees if, where possible:

- a) the overall number of separate policy documents is reduced; and
- b) policy content is reviewed and tailored to reflect the differences between D&S IFCA and a larger employer such as Devon County Council.

### The Managing Absence Policy and Procedure (September 2024)

The D&S IFCA Senior Management Team (SMT) have examined a selection of DCC policy documents relating to managing absence and an existing D&S IFCA adopted policy relating to absence, which focussed only on **sickness**. The opportunity has been taken to expand a single policy document to reflect that absence, and specific procedures for different types of absence, **go beyond sickness**.

The modified policy (Agenda item 9 Annex B) has retained the majority of the past information, but careful consideration has been given to how the Authority is equipped to observe the set procedures relating to absence and the responsibilities for managing procedures. The bulk of the administration requirements is now the responsibility of D&S IFCA's Finance and Administration Manager (F&AM), with the Chief Officer, rather than Line Managers, responsible for the HR aspect of the policy. This change in approach, and the policy content, reflects the documented responsibilities set out in individual job profiles, as agreed by the Authority in the job evaluation exercise completed in 2023.

### The New Sections

The additional sections (4, 5, 6, and 7) provide clarity on the following types of absence:

- Absence relating to Annual Leave Entitlement.
- Absence related to Time Off In Lieu (TOIL).
- Absence for Compassionate Leave.

- Absence for Public Duties.

### **Differences in Content – Compared to DCC Policy**

The policy reflects that D&S IFCA is a relatively small and independent organisation, and that D&S IFCA officers have different terms and conditions for their employment compared to those at DCC. Examples of differences include a reduced annual leave entitlement for D&S IFCA officers, and a provision that unpaid leave is unlikely to be approved.

D&S IFCA has less scope to function over a longer term with reduced levels of staff, and minimal ability to re-direct staff (departmental) to cover for other officers due to the types of roles undertaken by officers, that have different skill sets for the different roles they undertake.

### **Public Duties**

The policy recognises paid absence for public duties, such as jury service, but where possible the content/procedure has once again been simplified compared to DCC policy.

### **Limitation of Content**

A single policy document can not cover every eventuality or process for every type of absence. The policy sets out that for scenarios not covered, such as Adoption Leave and Employees under Notice of Redundancy, the Chief Officer will gain advice from outsourced service providers such as Devon County Council HR support.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

### **Background Papers**

- D&S IFCA Managing Absence Policy & Procedure 2023
- Selected and relevant DCC Policy Documents

**End.**