

## Creech St Michael Parish Council

<b>Policy Title</b>	Absence Policy
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<b>Applies to</b>	All Parish Council Employees
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## **1.0 Introduction**

This policy applies to any employee of Creech St Michael Parish Council. The Parish Council aims to secure the attendance of its employees throughout normal working patterns. However, it recognises that periods of absence may be unavoidable and necessary.

This policy sets out the Parish Council's approach to managing periods of unplanned absence. 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.

## **2.0 Related Policies and Procedures**

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Parish Council's Health & Safety Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Annual Leave Policy and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

## **3.0 Unplanned Absence**

An unplanned absence is a period of absence from work that has not been previously requested and approved. The reasons for the unplanned absence could include illness, injury, bereavement and travel disruption and can last a few hours or for an extended period.

Unplanned absence can have a significant impact on the ability of the Parish Council to function effectively. Therefore, it is important that this disruption is managed via the procedure set out in this policy.

## **4.0 Procedure for Notification of Absence**

In the first instance, if an employee is unable to attend work, they should contact the Clerk and RFO or the Chair of the Staffing Committee or Chair of the Parish Council as soon as is possible, but no longer than the end of the working day on which the absence first occurs.

The employee should ensure that the following information is shared.

- The reason for the absence.
- The likely duration of the period of absence.
- Any key tasks that will need to be allocated to other employees.

If the employee expects the period of absence to continue past the initial estimate, they should contact the Clerk and RFO or the Chair of the Staffing Committee or Chair of the Parish Council with an updated duration of absence.

## **5.0 Sickness Absence**

If a period of absence is as a result of sickness or injury, the employee must notify the Parish Council of this for the first seven calendar days of the absence period in writing. This can be completed on the employee's return to work if their absence lasts less than seven calendar days.

If the employee is absent by the eighth day (including Saturday and Sunday), they must send a fit note to the Clerk and RFO or the Chair of the Staffing Committee or Chair of the Parish Council. A fit note can be obtained from a GP or many other medical professionals. Further fit notes must be obtained if the absence continues for longer than the period of the original.

A failure to follow this process may result in the Employee being subject to disciplinary action and may negate the employee's rights to contractual sick pay and statutory sick pay (SSP).

The employee will not be allowed to return to work until they provide evidence from a medical professional 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 the Parish Council's circumstances permit.

In the case of extended periods of absence, the Parish Council may require that the employee's fitness to return to work is confirmed by a medical practitioner of the Parish Council's choice.

## **6.0 Payment of Salary During Absence**

### **6.1 Contractual sick pay**

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

### **6.2 Statutory sick pay (SSP)**

The employee's SSP qualifying days are either Monday to Friday or, in the case of part-time employees, 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.

To qualify for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) you must:

- be classed as an employee and have done some work for your employer,
- earn an average of at least £123 per week,
- have been ill for at least 4 days in a row (including non-working days).

## **7.0 Illness or Injury During Planned Leave**

Statutory holiday entitlement is built up (accrued) while an employee is absent from work. Any statutory holiday entitlement that is not used because of illness can be carried over into the next leave year. If an employee is ill just before or during their planned leave absence, they can take it as sickness absence instead.

An employee can ask to take their paid planned leave for the time they're off work sick. They might do this if they do not qualify for sick pay, for example.

## **8.0 Other Absences**

If a period of absence occurs for reasons other than sickness or injury, the Parish Council will adopt a pragmatic and compassionate approach to the absence. Depending on the reasons for the absence the employee may request that the absence is recorded in the following ways.

- Unpaid leave.
- Paid leave, using the employees annual allocation of leave.
- Paid leave, excluding the employees annual allocation of leave (usually only for short periods of absence).

## **9.0 Extended Periods of Absence**

The Parish Council will be sympathetic when an employee is absent for an extended period, usually due to illness or injury. But persistent absence through ill-health or long-term injury or incapacity may result in a review of the terms and conditions of employment or termination of employment.

Termination of employment will not take place without:

- full consultation with the employee,
- a thorough and complete medical investigation,
- full consideration of alternative employment.

## **10.0 Return to Work**

Following a period of absence the Clerk and RFO, Chair of the Staffing Committee or Chair of the Parish Council may undertake to meet with the employee to discuss their return. The purpose of this meeting is as follows.

- To make sure the employee is ready to return to work.
- To provide an update on any Parish Council decisions while the employee was absent.
- To determine if the employee will benefit from additional support.
- To agree on a plan for returning to work, and if appropriate, to discuss a phased return to work.
- To discuss and agree about what they would like other employees or councillors to know about their absence.
- To consider any recommendations from the employee's GP or other medical professional.
- To consider whether a referral to a medical service such as occupational health is appropriate.

A record of the return to work meeting will be held by the Parish Council and shared with the employee.

## **11.0 Disability**

If the employee has a condition that means they might be considered disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, the Parish Council will attempt to make reasonable adjustments to their role to accommodate their requirements. The employee will be fully consulted at all times and use of an occupational health professional will be made to assist in the process. If reasonable adjustments or alternative employment prove not to be viable options, and there is no likelihood of a return to work within a reasonable time scale, a decision to review the terms and conditions of employment or termination of employment may be progressed.

Termination of employment will not take place without:

- full consultation with the employee,
- a thorough and complete investigation,
- full consideration of alternative employment.

### **12.0 Absence During Probationary Period of Employment**

Frequent or prolonged absence from work during a probationary period can make the task of confirming the completion of a probationary period difficult. Therefore, should this arise, the Parish Council may decide to extend a probationary period to allow for an accurate assessment of suitability to be undertaken.

In some circumstances, Frequent or prolonged absence from work during a probationary period may result in an employee's employment being terminated.

### **13.0 Return of the Parish Council's Property**

If the employee is absent for an extended period of time (e.g. one month or more) the Parish Council may require them to return Parish Council property 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 property on or before the date of termination of their employment.