

Sabbatical Leave Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The council recognises the importance of employee's work life balance and personal development. This can include returning to full time education, research, caring responsibilities, travel or other issues. We do however also recognise that staffing levels must at all times remain in line with the business needs.

2.0 Length of sabbatical leave

2.1 Sabbatical leave is suitable for a period of more than one month and up to a maximum of twelve months.

2.2 If employees wish to take less than one months' leave then they should either request to take annual leave or unpaid leave or perhaps a mixture of both to cover the period of time.

2.3 The council would not normally consider a break of more than 12 months.

3.0 Eligibility

3.1 Employees with two or more years' service at the point that the sabbatical leave would start are eligible to apply. Both full and part time staff would be eligible subject to working a minimum of 18.5 hours per week.

3.2 Employees may request more than one period of sabbatical leave during their employment subject to them having returned to work for a period of no less than two years before any further request is made.

4.0 Requests for sabbatical leave

4.1 All requests must be made in writing in the first instance addressed to the line manager. The request should state the preferred start date, the duration and the purpose.

4.2 Employees should clearly state how they feel the council may be affected by their absence and how they feel any potential problems may be overcome.

4.3 The line manager must discuss the request with the service manager. All requests should be brought to EMT for a decision before any response is given to the employee. Any response should be in writing. EMT will ensure that a fair and consistent approach is taken across the organisation.

4.4 The council will consider any request that is made however the decision as to whether or not to grant the sabbatical leave will be entirely at the council's discretion. There is no right of appeal against the decision.

5.0 Terms and Conditions during sabbaticals

- 5.1 During the period of the sabbatical the employee will not be paid any salary. This includes any other payments or benefits such as car allowance.
- 5.2 All of the other terms of the employees contract of employment will remain in force. These include notice periods, confidentiality clauses, pension membership.
- 5.3 Employees may be asked to take any untaken accrued annual leave before their sabbatical starts.
- 5.4 During their sabbatical employees will continue to accrue statutory annual leave but not contractual annual leave. Statutory annual leave is currently 20 days per annum including bank holidays.
- 5.5 An employee must get permission if they wish to take up any other paid employment or any consultancy service to other organisations on a self-employed basis during their sabbatical.
- 5.6 If the employee is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme, they will be sent a form to complete from Payroll which confirms whether or not they would like to pay the employee's contribution during the period they are taking unpaid leave. If they wish to pay the contributions, they must return the form to Payroll within 30 days from receipt. If you do not return it within this time, Payroll will not deduct the contributions and this will constitute a break in pensionable service

6.0 Staying in contact

- 6.1 In advance of the sabbatical leave starting the line manager should arrange to stay in contact during the period of leave. Typically arrangements should be made to make contact about once a month.
- 6.2 This contact will also enable the manager to keep the employee informed of any workplace developments such as reorganisation, training opportunities or job opportunities. Similarly the employee should keep the council informed of any changes in personal circumstances such as change of address.

7.0 Returning to Work

- 7.1 When the sabbatical leave ends the employee will return to the same job as before or if that is not reasonably practical, to a job of equivalent seniority and on terms and conditions not less favourable than those that would have applied had the sabbatical not been taken.
- 7.2 The employees period of service will be regarded as continuous service for all statutory purposes. However the period of service will be treated as paused for the purposes of service related benefits such as long service awards and contractual redundancy pay.