



# CAREER BREAK POLICY

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HR60	1	HRM	86198		25/03/2022	25/03/2025	New policy

**Distribution**

Internal: All SCC Staff

External: Website/Councillors/Partners

## **1. Policy Statement**

1.1. The Council recognises that there may be times when employees wish to take extended periods of time away from work during the course of their employment in order to pursue other interests outside of work. This may include but is not limited to: spending time with family, pursuing further education, taking an extended holiday or participating in voluntary / community work.

1.2. This is a new policy for SCC and will be introduced from 25 March 2022.

1.3. This policy is non-contractual.

## **2. Introduction**

2.1. A career break will be an authorised unpaid leave of absence. Career break leave does not constitute a break in the period of continuous service. However when calculating the total length of service, the time taken on a career break will not be counted.

2.2. Career breaks are granted at the Council's discretion and are not an entitlement.

## **3. Scope**

3.1. This policy applies to all permanent employees, irrespective of their grade or whether they are full or part time, who providing they satisfy the length of service requirement outlined in section 4 below, can apply for extended periods of leave.

## **4. Eligibility**

4.1. This scheme applies to all permanent employees with at least 2 years continuous service working for the Council and a performance and attendance record that is satisfactory. Employees may apply for more than one career break during their employment, however any previously agreed career breaks may be taken into consideration before approving further requests.

## **5. Length of career break**

5.1. A career break granted under this scheme may be for any length of time between 1 month and 12 months. Once agreed the length of the period can only be varied by mutual agreement.

## 6. Approval process

- 6.1. All requests for career breaks should be made in writing to the line manager, at least 3 months before the period of absence is to commence. The request should clearly detail the start and end date of the proposed career break and outline the reasons for the leave. It may also provide an outline on how the absence would impact on service delivery and how work may be covered during the absence.
- 6.2. The line manager, City Clerk and Human Resources Manager will consider requests. All requests will be discussed with the Senior Management team for final approval. The decision on whether to grant a career break will usually be confirmed to the employee in writing within 28 days of your request.
- 6.3. Each request will be considered on an individual basis taking into account a range of relevant issues including but not limited to:
  - 6.3.1. Financial implications
  - 6.3.2. Workload implications for colleagues
  - 6.3.3. Impact on quality and level of service provision
- 6.4. Employees granted career break leave will be required to use any outstanding annual leave entitlement accrued up until the start of the career break period and will not be allowed to retain it to take on their return or receive pay in lieu of annual leave.

### **Example A:**

Sally is entitled to 40 days annual leave and works for 3 months of her leave year prior to starting a career break therefore she would be required to take the 3 months holiday entitlement of  $40/12 \times 3 = 10$  days before starting the career break.

### **Example B:**

Joe is entitled to 30 days annual leave and works for 6 months of his leave year prior to starting a career break. He has therefore accrued 15 days of leave however he has already taken 18 days leave. Therefore on his return to work, the 3 days leave will be carried over and deducted from his new leave balance. However, should Joe not return to work then he will be required to pay back to The Employer the equivalent of 3 days leave. ]

- 6.5. Annual leave will not be accrued during the period of career break leave.

## **7. Declined requests**

- 7.1. The scheme operates at the discretion of the Council and is not a right of the employee. It depends on the existing and longer term operational requirements and business needs. Your manager has the right to refuse a career break request.
- 7.2. Circumstances where a career break request may be declined or postponed are:
  - 7.2.1. Where an employee has been appointed to cover another member of staff to carry out a specific task
  - 7.2.2. Where an employee is on an approved training course funded by the Council
  - 7.2.3. Inability to recruit additional staff or reorganise work amongst existing staff
  - 7.2.4. The activity could affect the Council's reputation.
- 7.3. As there is no guarantee that an application for a career break will be accepted, you should not commit yourself to any plans unless your career break has been approved.
- 7.4. If your request is refused you will be informed in writing. The letter will include the reasons for the refusal.
- 7.5. There is no right to appeal.

## **8. Keeping in touch**

- 8.1. Methods and frequency of contact during the period of leave must be agreed between the employee and their line manager before the leave period begins.
- 8.2. Where organisational changes are proposed at the Council (during the leave period) which may affect the employee, every attempt will be made to contact them in a timely manner and treat them in the same way as other employees. However if this has been unsuccessful then such change may need to be implemented before the employee returns.
- 8.3. The employee is required to keep the Council informed of any change of address or change of circumstances that arise during their career break.
- 8.4. Effect on employee terms and conditions of employment • There is no entitlement to payment of salary, allowances, annual leave, occupational sick pay or occupational maternity / paternity pay during career break leave.

- 8.5. All Council property should be returned prior to the start of the career break unless otherwise agreed with City Clerk.
- 8.6. The purpose of career break leave is to allow employees time away from work to pursue personal interests such as travel, voluntary / community work, study or to spend more time with family. It is not to be used for work purposes and therefore employees are restricted from acting as a consultant / contractor or working as an employee / Director for any other organisation or individual unless they have the express written consent of the City Clerk. In considering the request City Clerk will need to ensure that the work does not, in view of the Council, conflict with the Council's interest or in any way weaken public confidence in the conduct of the Council's business.
- 8.7. The Council will not be liable for any tax or national insurance contributions during career break leave. As a period of career break could affect the right to and payment of Statutory Payments such as SSP, SMP or Working Tax Credits - it is recommended that contact should be made with the local Job Centre Plus Office for further advice and guidance on this matter.
- 8.8. If you are a member of the Pension Fund, you should follow advice on Wiltshire Pension fund website.

<https://member.wiltshirepensionfund.org.uk/article/3375/What-if-I-take-a-leave-of-absence>

## **9. Salary**

- 9.1. Any cost of living salary increases that the Council implements during the period of leave will be applied accordingly once the employee returns to work.

## **10. Cycle Scheme**

- 10.1. Staff will be required to pay any outstanding cycle scheme deductions prior to commencing career break leave.

## **11. Return to work**

- 11.1. Employees returning to work following a career break will normally return to the same job, however, if this is not reasonably practical then the Council will make every effort to redeploy the employee to a similar role on a similar grade.
- 11.2. Should the employee wish to return to work early, they must make a request to do so in writing, allowing a minimum of 6 weeks' notice. The City Clerk and HR Manager will consider the request and confirm the decision in writing to the employee, advising them of the decision as soon as reasonably possible. However it may not always be possible to agree a return, this will

depend on the arrangements that were made for the duration of the career break by SCC.