

Title of meeting: Employment Committee

Date of meeting: 2nd October 2012

Subject: Career Break Policy

Report by: Head of Human Resources (Acting)

Wards affected: N/A

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to recommend the removal of or amendment to the existing Career Break Policy.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Employment Committee:

- (i) consider if the existing career break scheme should be permanently removed
- (ii) consider if the existing career break scheme should be replaced with an alternative career break scheme which terminates employment and no longer guarantees a post to return to

3. Background

The Authority has a Career Break Scheme for employees (excluding those employed in schools) who have completed 2 years' service. This allows an employee to take a break from work to pursue work and home responsibilities or leisure interests, for an extended unpaid period from one month to one year.

The purpose of the policy was to recognise that employees wish to preserve continuous service employment rights and to preserve their pension. This has also assisted the authority to retain competent and skilled workers.

4. Reasons for recommendations

Costs to the Authority

Annual Leave

When an employee takes a career break, they continue to accrue statutory annual leave entitlements in accordance with the Working Time Regulations 1998 (5.6 weeks paid leave per year). Part time employees receive a pro rata entitlement.

Annual leave accrued is to be taken during the career break and as such is paid to the employee at a cost to the authority however five days of the accrued annual leave may be carried forward into the following leave year

Pension Contributions

Employees have the option to pay LGPS contributions during their career break. If contributions are paid, the Authority is required to continue to pay Employer Contributions throughout the Career Break.

Organisational Change

Organisational change and redundancies are complicated to manage for employees on career breaks. It is often difficult to contact employees to undertake the proper consultation and can result in the employee returning from their career break with no substantive role to return to.

Recommendations

It is recognised that in the current economic climate and with the number of service reviews taking place on an annual basis that it is difficult to guarantee an employee a post to return to following a career break.

Recommendation 1: Remove the Career Break Policy permanently and do not replace it.

Recommendation 2: Remove the current Career Break Policy and replace with a new policy which states that the employee must resign from their substantive post, that there will be no accrual of annual leave or pension contributions made during the break and there is no guarantee of a job at the end of the career break. At the end of the Career Break, the employee will have preferential consideration for any job vacancies ahead of external candidates but NOT ahead of employees who are on the Redeployment Register. The period of the career break will not count towards continuous employment service for Redundancy or Pension purposes, but the service either side of the break will be aggregated.

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

This report has not undergone an Equality Impact Assessment

6. Head of legal, licensing & registrars' comments

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7. Head of finance's comments

Based on the average annual number of employees (12) that take up the existing scheme the savings generated by permanently removing the scheme would be approximately £53,000 over a 6 month period or a sum pro-rata to this depending on the length of the career break taken.

Should the current scheme be removed and replaced by the new policy the Authority will not incur any costs of employment for those employees who are on a career break.

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Signed by City Solicitor and Strategic Director

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: