

## **WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL**

### **ANNUAL LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS 2021 & 2022**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging period for all council employees, with the council continuing to deliver essential services throughout, to some of the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 1.2 In recognition of these challenges, agreement was reached in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, that key workers would be able to carry over a maximum of 4 weeks unused annual leave from 2020, with two weeks to be taken in 2021 and 2 weeks in 2022. All other employees were able to carry over 2 weeks with one week to be taken in 2021 and one week in 2022.
- 1.3 Whilst employees were given the opportunity to carry over leave, the importance of employees looking after their wellbeing and ensuring that they took sufficient time away from work was also highlighted, with employees being encouraged to take their leave proportionately throughout the year.
- 1.4 This document sets out further arrangements for the use of leave during 2021 and 2022 to ensure consistency in application and treatment of annual leave requests and to support the delivery of essential services by ensuring proportionate use of annual leave over the relevant leave year.

#### **2 SCOPE**

- 2.1 These arrangements apply to all council employees, including Chief Officers.

#### **3 REQUESTING ANNUAL LEAVE**

- 3.1 Arrangements for requesting annual leave remain unchanged and will be agreed subject to the needs of the service.
- 3.2 Employees must take annual leave throughout the leave year. It should be noted that this requirement applies to all employees, regardless of whether they:
  - are a key worker or not;
  - are working from home, the workplace or a combination of both;
  - have amended work arrangements in place; or
  - are at home shielding.
- 3.3 Line managers will have regular discussions with their teams to identify when employees intend to take annual leave, ensuring adequate service provision and proportionate use of leave throughout the year.
- 3.4 As well as supporting an employee's wellbeing, proportionate use of leave throughout the year is required to avoid an excessive amount of annual leave being unused or unallocated in the last quarter of the year.

#### **4. UNUSED ANNUAL LEAVE**

- 4.1 It is standard council procedure that where an employee fails to make requests to use their whole annual leave entitlement during the relevant leave year, any annual leave not used will be lost and will not be carried forward into the next leave year.
- 4.2 During the 2021 and 2022 leave years, if an employee fails to make requests to use their whole annual leave entitlement (inclusive of any leave carried forward from their 2020 entitlement in accordance with the provision outlined in paragraph 1.2 above) during the relevant year, any annual leave not used will be lost and will not be carried forward into the next leave year in accordance with standard procedures. No payment will be made in lieu of holidays not taken.
- 4.3 Only in exceptional circumstances and with Head of Service approval will an employee be permitted to carry forward unused annual leave into the next leave year.
- 4.4 To avoid the loss of leave, employees are encouraged to plan to take annual leave and request annual leave with as much notice as possible to allow managers to:
- ensure adequate cover to meet peaks in service demands;
  - ensure a proportionate use of leave over the leave year;
  - ensure compliance with the working time directive and use of statutory leave entitlement;
  - meet employee preferences for leave dates where possible.

#### **5. FOREIGN TRAVEL**

- 5.1 The rules on foreign travel have changed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and may continue to change throughout the coming months.
- 5.2 Where an employee chooses to travel abroad and is then required to self-isolate on their return (in line with government guidance on quarantine arrangements), they will be required to use their annual leave entitlement for the duration of the self-isolation period. Only where an employee has no remaining annual leave or does not have the option to take annual leave (eg school-based staff) will unpaid leave be used as an alternative.
- 5.3 Employees booking foreign travel should therefore factor in the requirement for a quarantine period or the potential for a quarantine period when discussing leave arrangements with their line manager and requesting annual leave or indeed when deciding to travel.

#### **6. ACCRUED ANNUAL LEAVE**

- 6.1 Arrangements for the carry-over of annual leave which has been accrued during maternity/adoption/shared parental leave or a period of sickness absence remain unchanged.