

Staff Consultation Document

APRIL 2018

Proposed move to compulsory annual 4 day closure over the Christmas and New Year holiday period, to enable ongoing savings on the salary budget

The aim of this document is to enable consultation to take place with the trade unions and staff members affected by the proposed changes arising from a proposal to move to compulsory annual 4 day closure over the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

The lead officer for the consultation is Zoe Hanim

It invites unions and staff to comment on these changes and make any additional suggestion or alternatives that enable the budgets saving necessary to be achieved.

Background Information and Summary

This document sets out a proposal to introduce compulsory Christmas to New Year closure of council services each year, other than those deemed essential. This will mean that all staff other than those who work to provide essential services will be required to take annual leave, with the option to purchase up to 2 days annual leave and receive up to 2 days concessional leave in return to make up the four days or the amount required to cover this leave period.

This document will discuss:

- the reasons why we are proposing this change
- what the proposed changes will be
- how you can comment about the proposals
- the next steps in the process
- who you can go to for help or advice about what these proposals might mean for you

We want your ideas and comments about how we achieve the changes. If there is a better way of achieving the same savings and outcomes for service users, we would appreciate your input and contribution.

Key Reasons for Proposed Change

Following the recent pilot closure¹ over the Christmas and New Year period it is proposed that we move to compulsory closure in future years for all non-essential services subject to a formal consultation period.

The Christmas and New Year is generally a period of low demand and will provide staff the opportunity for a break for family or other reasons during a time when many staff already take leave. This is also an opportunity to make ongoing savings on the salary budget through voluntary additional purchase of leave for which there is already a well - established process.

Finance/Budget

An annual saving of £200,000 in relation to Christmas Closure was included in the budget proposals agreed at Policy Committee on 19 February 2018 which officers have delegated authority to deliver now as one of the Council's savings.

Proposed Changes

It is proposed that we close for 4 working days each year (specific days to be determined each year) meaning all non - essential services during that period would close and operate as we would on a public holiday on those days.

Directorates will identify essential services and those which generate income which will continue to operate.

Staff identified as essential will be able to take up the offer of additional purchase of leave and concessional leave at another time of the year but within the financial year, in agreement with their manager. For part-time staff the purchase of leave and concessional leave will be pro-rata.

Annual leave will be compulsory for all staff, other than those exempted, with the choice of:

- Use 4 days of their normal annual leave days
- Purchase additional 2 days and receive 2 concessional days back

Managers will be required to identify what is essential and plan accordingly using the following criteria:

- 'Life and limb' emergency cover - e.g. Safeguarding

¹ An evaluation of the pilot closure is provided at Appendix 1

- Income generating services - e.g. Reading Arts
- Health protection e.g. waste collection

Managers and staff were given notice earlier in this year to retain annual leave for the potential closure in December 2018, subject to staff consultation, with the dates for this year specified in the notification which would be 24,27,28,31 December, with the final working day being Friday 21 December and reopening Wednesday 2 January 2019. The buying annual leave and gifting of annual leave would continue but no voluntary option to work during this time would be available.

If a decision is made to go ahead with this proposal following the consultation period then a formal notification to staff will be required and all managers will be required to plan for the closure including all exempted staff identified and staffing levels planned for effectively to provide adequate cover. All managers would be required to review arrangements for out of hours and update procedure notes for out of hours (OOH) services.

Work would be done with OOH providers to ensure they are advised as soon as possible of the requirement to cover.

For future years we would specify the dates of the Civic offices closure and other buildings so that all staff and customers are clear year on year.

Communications would be planned from the summer onwards and in the run up to the closure for both staff and the public.

A planning group would be set up to coordinate the closure with the aim to have all plans in place and signed off by early September each year.

Appendix 2 provides information which set out the closures of buildings and opening hours over this period in 2017. As part of the planning for 2018, should we go ahead, this will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

We would review the closure of any non - public facing buildings as part of the planning process for 2018.

Staffing Implications

The Christmas and New Year period is generally a period of low demand and will provide staff the opportunity for a break for family or other reasons during a time when many staff already take leave.

Annual leave will be compulsory for all staff, during the closure period, other than those exempted. Staff will have the choice to:

- Use 4 days of their normal annual leave days
- Purchase additional 2 days and receive 2 concessional days back

The purchase of voluntary additional leave is already a well - established process through the Buying Annual Leave policy. This has been reviewed and updated to take on board comments from the Joint Trade Unions, this has been supported at JTUC and on the agendas at LJF and Personnel Committee 15 March 2018 for approval.

An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) has been undertaken and the responses to this consultation will inform the final assessment.

Staff Opportunity to Comment

Staff are encouraged to consider the detail of the proposal outlined in this document and make comments.

The consultation period will run for 30 days from 18/04/2018 until 17/05/2018 inclusive.

If you wish to comment, you can do so in one of the following ways:

Provide your comments online at
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/christmasclosure>

If you are a member of a trade union, your trade union representative will be able to ask questions or request information on your behalf.

Should you prefer an alternative arrangement of providing feedback, please discuss this with your line manager who will, where possible, arrange this for you.

What happens next?

Date	Event
18 April 2018	Consultation starts
17 May 2018	Consultation ends
12 June 2018	Corporate Management Group review proposal in the light of the consultation results and report to staff and Trades unions
June/July 2018	Decision to be taken on whether or not to proceed
July 2018	Staff informed of final outcome and next steps

We will take comments and questions during the consultation period and liaise with trade unions throughout.

Following the consultation we will collate all responses. Management will assess and feed back to all staff the outcome of the consultation, following discussion with CMT.

FAQs will be posted on <http://www.reading.gov.uk/christmasclosure> and added to as questions come in during the period.

Support to Staff

It is appreciated that times of change are difficult for some and the following support is available to employees on an individual basis:

- The Employee Assistance Programme is available to provide confidential support and can be contacted free on 0800 282193. Please refer to the EAP page on IRIS.

<http://inside.reading.gov.uk/myhome/staffstuff/staffbenefitpod/advice/article.asp?id= SX9452-A77F9A94>

- Trade Unions, if you are a member.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Evaluation of the pilot

Appendix 2: Information on public building closures 2017

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 4: FAQs