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# Suspended council staff have been paid £270,000

ARGYLL and Bute Council has paid out nearly £270,000 to suspended staff since April 2011, according to figures obtained by *The Oban Times*.

Many employees have been suspended for up to a year despite guidelines recommending any such periods be kept as short as possible.

One employee was paid £38,650.98 between April 2011 and 2012 while another - understood to be Jo Smith, the former communications manager suspended amidst false spying accusations - was paid £24,766.42 over six months.

Six staff currently removed from work have already been paid £28,285 between them.

A total of £158,759.28 has been paid out to staff suspended since 2012, while staff have been paid for more than 4,000 days off while suspended since 2011.

By NEIL JOHNSTON

In total £265,866.78 has been paid out to 43 workers removed from work between April 2011 and January this year.

Nine people were dismissed in the same period.

The vast majority of suspensions were for longer than 10 working days.

## Brief

The authority's own guidelines are based on the current Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service code of practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures, which states suspension should be as brief as possible.

It recommends: 'Suspension with pay should only be imposed after careful consideration and should be reviewed to ensure it is not unnecessarily protracted.'

All suspensions should be kept under consideration, according to the guide.

Argyll and Bute's own disciplinary procedure states that any decision to remove an employee from duty 'will be reviewed after a period of 10 working days by the officer authorising the temporary removal from duty, and at similar regular intervals thereafter'.

A council spokesperson said: 'There is no basis, from the information provided, on which to draw an inference that the council has not acted properly in dealing expeditiously with such cases.'

## Investigations

'The council is committed to dealing properly with any such investigations and this requires that due process is followed.'

'This can take, in complex matters, some time to complete.'