

Full Council

12 March 2024



Report of: Tim O’Gara, Director Legal and Democratic Services

Title: Parental Leave Policy for Councillors

Recommendation

That Full Council endorses the Parental Leave Policy for Councillors.

Summary

This report proposes a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors. Adopting a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors was supported by the Independent Remuneration Panel during their recent review of Members’ Allowances. The Parental Leave Policy for Councillors will give councillors rights to maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave allowances.

The Policy is set out in full in Appendix 1 of this report.

Introduction

1. This report contains a proposal for a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors which is based on recommended best practice guidance from the Local Government Association and South West Councils. The introduction of a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors is also supported by the recent review of Members' Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel.
2. This policy is designed to contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of councillors and the retention of experienced councillors, particularly women, and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded.

Parental Leave Policy for Councillors

3. The proposed Parental Leave Policy for Councillors sets out the rights of all councillors to maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave allowances.
4. In summary, the main features of the policy are as follows:
 - Members giving birth are entitled to up to six months' maternity leave from the due date, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement (paragraph 2.1 of the Policy);
 - Additional rights where a birth is premature (paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3);
 - Members are entitled to take two weeks' paternity leave if they are the biological father or nominated carer of their partner/spouse following birth (paragraph 2.4);
 - Shared Parental Leave that reflects, so far as possible, any employment arrangements (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6);
 - Members who adopt a child are entitled to up to six months' adoption leave from the date of placement, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement (paragraph 2.7 of the Policy);
 - Members shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full whilst on approved parental leave (paragraph 3.1);
 - Provision for the payment of a proportion of any Special Responsibility Allowance that the Member receives (paragraphs 4.1 – 4.4);
 - Notification obligations for Members using the policy (paragraphs 6.1 – 6.4); and
 - Arrangements for handling of casework during parental leave (paragraphs 7.1 – 7.2).
5. Full details of the proposed Parental Leave Policy for Councillors is set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

RECOMMENDATION

That Full Council endorses the Parental Leave Policy for Councillors.

Appendix 1 – Parental Leave Policy for Councillors

Background papers: None