

**Divisions affected – All**

**COUNCIL**

**8 JULY 2025**

## **COUNCILLOR PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY**

**Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Council is RECOMMENDED to approve a parental leave policy for councillors, ensuring support for new parents and best practice in local governance. The policy includes provisions for temporary cover and reflects the council's commitment to promoting equality and diversity among elected officials.

### **Background**

2. Many councils across England have adopted the Local Government Association's (LGA) model policy or amended versions of it. The Policy attached at Appendix A is based on the LGA model policy.
3. Whilst currently, there is no legal right to parental leave of any kind for elected members, this policy is considered best practice, and will contribute towards enhancing the diversity of experience, age, and background among local authority councillors. Furthermore, it will assist in retaining experienced councillors and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.
4. This policy outlines councillors' entitlements to Parental Leave, which includes maternity, paternity, shared parental, and adoption leave.
5. The aim of this policy is to ensure that, as far as possible, elected members (Members) are able to take suitable leave during the time of birth or adoption. It also aims to enable both parents to take leave and to ensure that reasonable and adequate arrangements are in place to provide cover for portfolio-holders during any period of leave taken.
6. Key highlights of the policy include:
  - a. No existing legal right to parental leave for councillors, but this policy aims to increase and retain diversity and accessibility within the council.
  - b. Maternity Leave: Up to 6 months leave from the due date, extendable to 52 weeks by agreement. Additional leave for premature births is also provided.

- c. Paternity Leave: A minimum of 2 weeks for members who are biological fathers or nominated carers following the birth of their child.
- d. Where both parents are Members each can take shared parental leave up to 50 weeks, with special arrangements in cases of prematurity.
- e. Members adopting a child are entitled to up to 52 weeks of adoption leave from the date of placement
- f. Recognition of a right to Parental Bereavement Leave.

## **Special Responsibility Allowances**

- 7. The policy proposes that Members entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) shall continue to receive their allowance in full in the case of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave. The newly appointed Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) will be requested to confirm their agreement to this aspect of the Policy proposal at their first meeting. This will be confirmed at Council in September 2025.

## **Legal implications**

- 8. There is no legal requirement for the Council to adopt a Parental Leave Policy. However, the introduction of such a policy would help the Council advance equality of opportunity for protected groups. The LGA has taken legal advice on their model policy.
- 9. Any Member who takes maternity, shared parental or adoption leave has a legal duty under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a six-month period. The Council meeting can agree to an extended leave of absence prior to the expiration of that six-month period. This would require the Monitoring Officer to prepare a report to Council seeking an extension of leave.
- 10. Members may either resume their meeting responsibilities prior to expiration of 6 months or give the relevant notice to the Monitoring Officer enabling a report to be taken to Council extending the leave prior to the expiry of the 6-month period.

**Comments checked by:** Kim Sawyer  
Interim Head of Legal & Governance

## **Financial implications**

- 11. There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the policy as advised by this report. However, subject to the approval of the newly

appointed Independent Remuneration Panel, there will be costs associated with the parental leave policy should the councillor be in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and take time off for parental leave, and a decision is taken to award a second Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA).

**Comments checked by:** Drew Hodgson  
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## **Staff Implications**

12. There are no direct staff implications arising from this report. Whilst the leave entitlements mirror those set out for council employees, this policy only applies to elected members.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

13. This policy will contribute towards enhancing the diversity of experience, age, and background among local authority councillors. Furthermore, it will assist in retaining experienced councillors and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.

## **Sustainability Implications**

14. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **Risk Management**

15. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report. However, the implementation of a Councillor Parental Leave Policy would remove barriers that may prevent prospective councillors from standing for public office.

**Anita Bradley**  
**Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

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Annex A: Councillor Parental Leave Policy

July 2025