

PROPOSED POLICIES

1. PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Introduction

This Policy sets out support available to Councillors to enable them to carry out their duties on behalf of residents regardless of caring responsibilities. It includes Councillors' entitlement to maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption and fostering leave and relevant allowances.

Improved provision will help the council better reflect the people it represents, contributing towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of local authority councillors. It will also assist with retaining experienced councillors – particularly women – and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.

The objective of the policy is to ensure that insofar as possible Members are able to take appropriate leave at the time of birth or adoption or fostering, that both parents are able to take leave, and that reasonable and adequate arrangements are in place to provide cover for portfolio-holders and others in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) during any period of leave taken.

1. Leave Periods

- 1.1 Members giving birth are entitled to up to 12 months maternity leave from the due date, within the legal requirement of attending at least one council meeting in six months.
- 1.2 In addition, where the birth is premature, the Member is entitled to take one week extra for every week the baby is in hospital.
- 1.3 Members shall be entitled to take a minimum of 4 weeks paternity leave if they are the biological father or nominated carer of their partner/spouse following the birth of their child(ren).
- 1.4 A Member who has made Shared Parental Leave arrangements through their employment is requested to advise the Council of these at the earliest possible opportunity. Every effort will be made to replicate such arrangements in terms of leave from Council.
- 1.5 Where both parents are Members leave may be shared up to a maximum of 24 weeks for the first six months and 26 weeks for any leave agreed thereafter, up to a maximum of 52 weeks.
- 1.6 A Member who fosters a child or adopts a child through an approved adoption agency shall be entitled to take up to 12 months adoption leave from the date of placement.

- 1.7 Any Member who takes maternity, shared parental, adoption or fostering leave retains their legal duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a six month period unless the Council Meeting agrees to an extended leave of absence prior to the expiration of that six month period. That is at the discretion of the Council and cannot be guaranteed.
- 1.8 Any Member intending to take maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or fostering leave will be responsible for ensuring that they keep the Head of Democratic Services informed, both in terms of the point at which the leave starts and the point at which they return.
- 1.9 Any Member taking leave should ensure that they respond to reasonable requests for information as promptly as possible, and that they keep the Head of Democratic Services and colleagues informed and updated in relation to intended dates of return and requests for extension of leave.
- 1.10 Democratic Services and/or Ward Councillors will assist to provide cover for a period of leave.

2. Basic Allowance

- 2.1 All Members shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full whilst on maternity, paternity, adoption or fostering leave.

3. Special Responsibility Allowances

- 3.1 Members entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall continue to receive their allowance in full in the case of maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or fostering leave. Where a replacement is appointed to cover the period of absence that person shall receive an SRA on a pro rata basis for the period of the temporary appointment.
- 3.2 The payment of Special Responsibility Allowances, whether to the primary SRA holder or a replacement, during a period of maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or fostering leave shall continue for a period of 12 months or until the date when the Member taking leave is up for election (whichever is soonest)
- 3.3 Should a Member appointed to replace the member on maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or fostering leave already hold a remunerated position, the ordinary rules relating to payment of more than one Special Responsibility Allowances shall apply.
- 3.4 Unless the Party to which they belong loses control of the Council during their leave period, they shall return at the end of their leave period to the same post, or to an alternative post with equivalent status and remuneration which they held before the leave began. This provision does not apply if the Member taking leave is removed from their post at an Annual General Meeting of the Council whilst on leave.

4. Resigning from Office and Elections

- 4.1 If a Member decides not to return at the end of their maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or fostering leave they must notify the Council at the earliest possible opportunity. All allowances will cease from the effective resignation date.
- 4.2 If an election is held during the Member's maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or fostering leave and they are not re-elected, or decide not to stand for re-election, their basic allowance and SRA if appropriate will cease from the Monday after the election date when they would technically leave office.

2. *DYING TO WORK POLICY*

1. Adoption of the TUC Dying to Work Charter

- 1.1 In conjunction with the Council's provisions for employees under the charter, it is recognised that a Member with a terminal illness will require support and understanding and not additional and avoidable stress and worry. Terminally ill Members with up to one year to live will be supported by the Council following their diagnosis to undertake their duties in a way that enables them to maintain dignity, provides a valuable distraction and can be therapeutic in itself.
- 1.2 Members will be provided with peace of mind and the right to choose the best course of action for themselves and their families which helps them through this challenging period with dignity and without undue financial loss.

3. SUPPORT FOR DISABLED COUNCILLORS POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires political parties not to discriminate either directly or indirectly against disabled Members or candidates.
- 1.2 The Equality Act 2010 also applies to councils, and also sets out a Public Sector Equality Duty for the council with regards to protected characteristics.
- 1.3 Therefore both the Council and political parties have legal requirements to ensure that they make reasonable adjustments for Councillors.
- 1.4 The Council is committed to supporting disabled people who are elected to the Council and will assist with any disability-related costs of being a councillor, for example, paying for sign language interpreters, or paying extra travel or accommodation costs. The Head of Democratic Services will work with disabled Members to overcome any barriers encountered as a result of their disability and will make sure they may be fully involved.
- 1.5 The Chief Executive will have the discretion to make payments for expenses incurred by disabled Members on travel within the borough in addition to the amount included in the Basic Allowance, where the Member would have a particular difficulty in carrying out an approved duty.
- 1.6 The Head of Democratic Services will arrange for specialist ICT equipment to be provided where this is deemed necessary and ICT training tailored to suit individual needs will be provided.
- 1.7 The Council will make “reasonable adjustments” to accommodate the needs of disabled councillors, covering both physical and hidden disabilities, who would otherwise be placed at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled councillors and wherever possible will ensure that the needs of disabled councillors are accommodated, for example, meeting rooms and group offices will be fully accessible so that disabled councillors are able to play a full and effective part in the running of the Council.
- 1.8 The Head of Democratic Services will also ensure that a ‘Personal Evacuation Plan’ is in place for any councillor who may have mobility difficulties in such circumstances.

4. COUNCILLORS WHO ARE CARERS POLICY STATEMENT

It is important to support Councillors who are carers to carry out their full range of duties. The Council is committed to ensuring that no councillor should be prevented from or disadvantaged in providing care support to any dependent.

There are already allowances and allocated budgets associated with caring costs. The Independent Remuneration Panel will recommend the rates at which these should be paid.

- 1.1 The Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings shall usually be approved no later than the end of February in the preceding municipal year in order to allow carers to plan. There will be a range of meeting times within the Calendar of Council and Committee Meeting to accommodate the differing needs of councillors and to allow as many as possible to participate in duties both in the Town Hall and their ward.
- 1.2 Subject to the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of Members' Allowances, the Council will pay a fee per hour for the cost of adult care.
- 1.3 Subject to the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of Members' Allowances, the Council will make payment on claims for the care of children.
- 1.4 Notwithstanding the above provisions in respect of carers, the Council will welcome the attendance of dependents at meetings of committees and the practice of infant feeding during meetings will be supported. Facilities are available at meeting venues to support infant feeding.
 - 1.4.1 A Councillor should not be disadvantaged for looking after dependents. There is a presumption that where a parent needs to look after a child (e.g. breastfeeding), that child would be allowed to attend with the parent.
 - 1.4.2 That parent is responsible for the behaviour of the child in the meeting, and where relevant, ensuring the child fulfils the requirements of confidentiality.
 - 1.4.3. Where the above is not adhered to, or there are difficulties then it will be at the Chair's discretion to resolve.