

19th March 2019

Policy, Projects and Resources

Draft Parental Leave Policy for Elected Members

Report of: *Jacqueline Van Mellaerts – Interim Chief Finance Officer*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 There is at present no legal right to parental leave of any kind for people in elected public office. This applies to MP's as well as councillors. Therefore, councils may only take action on a voluntary basis.
- 1.2 The Council currently does not have a Parental Leave Policy for Elected Members.
- 1.3 This report aims to provide a mechanism to enable draft proposals be put into place for elected members including
- 6 months paid in full of all allowances as relevant to the individual
 - Group leaders to decide 'cover' arrangements during period of leave
- 1.4 Any policy would need to be reviewed to ensure it meets with the Council's existing Human Resources policies and legal requirements.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That a cross party meeting of group leaders takes place to confirm the proposals, which will be put forward to the Independent Remuneration Panel for consideration with adoption at Annual Council in May 2019.**
- 2.2 That the draft policy is reviewed to ensure it meets with the Council's existing Human Resources policies and legal requirements, with details to be discussed and agreed at the Cross Party meeting.**

3 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 Members are required to attend at least one meeting of the authority in any six-month period. This requirement still applies to Members on Parental Leave.
- 3.2 Currently any member who is unable to attend committee meetings for a period of time can seek dispensation from the Council's Chief Executive for permission not to attend.
- 3.3 The Fawcett Society have been working with the Local Government Information Unit to assess whether local government has been working well for women. The three reports published over the course of the yearlong Commission have found that female members/prospective members with caring responsibilities, are disproportionately impacted in local government.
- 3.4 According to the analysis by the Fawcett Society:
- Just 4% of local councils in England currently have a formal Parental Leave policy in place for elected representatives.
 - It identified that one third of female councillors of child-bearing age found a lack of maternity leave to be a barrier to fulfilling their role.
 - Fewer than 1 in 5 council leaders are women.
 - From 1997 to 2017 female councillor representation only rose by from 27 per cent to 32 per cent whilst the female proportion of the House of Commons rose 14 percentage points to 32 per cent.
 - 28% of women and 18% of men report childcare as a barrier.

4 Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To enable a formal Parental Leave Policy to be place for elected members.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 None at this stage.

6 References to Corporate Plan

- 6.1 None.

7 Implications

Financial Implications

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- 7.1 There may be financial implications arising from the cross-party meeting, depending on the impact of Members allowances and special responsibility allowances. This will however be taken into consideration when reporting to the Independent Remuneration Panel. There are however no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

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- 7.2 There are no legal rights of any kind for people in elected public office.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 7.3 None at this stage.

- 8 **Background Papers** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

- 8.1 None

9 Appendices to this report

- 9.1 None.

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