

Appendix 7

Parental, Carers and Special Leave Policy for Members

Aim of the Policy

1.1. The aim of this Policy is to place on record the Council's ongoing intention to provide a positive and accommodating environment for all Members, including those who have family and/or caring responsibilities. Ensuring that a range of people from across our society feel supported to stand for election is a key ambition for the Council. Only by supporting existing elected and co-opted members while also encouraging representation from under-represented groups will the Council attract and retain all those who wish to represent their community or communities, whatever their individual life circumstances.

1.2. This policy offers some key guiding principles, which are to be given their widest possible application in line with the aims and ambitions outlined above.

Context & application of this Policy

1.3 This Policy applies to all types of Leave that a member may wish to take as a result of their family-related responsibilities. This includes but is not limited to the following: parental leave (including maternal and paternal leave, adoptive leave and any leave taken by a person acting as the main carer for a child under the age of 18), carers' leave (including any leave taken to care for another individual of any age), bereavement leave (including that taken following the death of a partner, dependent or other key individual) and special leave (including compassionate leave and leave triggered by a complex family situation).

1.4 The term 'Leave' is used throughout this policy to describe a period of absence of less than 6 months which a member may take at their

discretion from their duties. The legislative framework in relation to member attendance at Council meetings is not affected by this policy and the requirement for authorisation of any absence of 6 months or more remains as set out at s85 of the Local Government Act 1972, as described at paragraph 3.4-3.6 below.

Member allowances, including Special Responsibility Allowances

1.5 The taking of Leave pursuant to this Policy will not trigger any change to a Member's ordinary Allowance or Special Responsibility Allowance, which will continue to be payable to members until such time as they cease to be a member or cease to hold their position of Special Responsibility.

Parental Leave, including adoption and antenatal leave

2.1. An elected Member who has given birth to or is (one of the) primary carer(s) of a child, including an adopted child, may take up to six months' Leave from their Member duties following or starting at around the time of the birth/ adoption/ otherwise assuming caring responsibilities for their child.

2.2. All Members will be supported in attending antenatal appointments and/or pre-adoption appointments where they aim to be (one of the) primary carer(s) of a child.

2.3. The parental Leave provisions in para 2.1 above will be applied equally to any Member whose child is not carried to term or is stillborn. The same principles will also be applied to parents who suffer the bereavement of a child.

Carers, Special and other Leave

2.4 Other Leave including (but not limited to) the types of Leave listed in para 1.3 may also be taken for a period of less than six months at the elected Member's discretion, having first notified their Group and the Monitoring Officer in advance of their intention to take Leave in accordance with para 3.2 below.

Notification of taking of Leave, and of return

3.1 Members are expected to alert both their Group (if they have one) and fellow ward members as well as the Monitoring Officer where they plan to take Leave of any duration exceeding one calendar month. They are expected to indicate an anticipated date of return at that time, and to keep both their Group and the Monitoring Officer informed of their intentions, including by notifying them should their period of absence be extended to cover a longer period of time than first anticipated.

Communication by members who are on Leave

3.2 It is for the individual member to decide whether/ to what extent to continue to respond to emails and correspondence whilst on Leave. While Members will normally be expected to put on an 'out of office' automated message redirecting queries to a designated /alternative member, the main expectation is that they are clear re how long they intend to be absent and the extent to which they will continue to engage, as well as who should be contacted in their absence.

Local Constituent Duties

3.3 Members who take Leave may nominate one or more other Member(s) to deal with local issues in their constituency. Where a Member is in a Group, they may ask another Group member; alternatively or where they are not in a Group then they may ask another Member, who may have been elected to the same ward. It will normally be the

responsibility of the Member taking Leave to arrange this and to notify the Monitoring Officer of the arrangement which has been made.

Leave of 6 months or more

3.4 Periods of absence of six months or more fall outside the limits of this Policy. Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that any member failing to attend any meetings of the authority for six consecutive months shall automatically cease to be a member unless their reason for not attending was due to a reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period.

3.5 Written application must be made to the Monitoring Officer of the Council by a member for Leave for a period of six months or more. Written application must be made at least two weeks before the six consecutive months expire.

3.6 Further details are available on application to the Monitoring Officer.

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