

## Appendix 5 - Parental Leave Policy for Members (2020)

### **1. Principal / Aim of the Policy**

- 1.1 To provide a positive environment for elected members with family responsibilities so that our cross-section of elected members are representative of our community. Families are at the heart of Staffordshire County Council and as such wishes to champion an environment to support elected members.
- 1.2 This policy offers guiding principles for elected members to be able to continue to fulfil their role whilst benefiting from parental leave.

### **2. Leave Provisions of the Policy**

- 2.1 Maternity Leave Provisions: An elected member can take up to 52 weeks 'leave' away from their duties after the birth of their child in the child's first year.
- 2.2 Antenatal Appointments: All elected members will be supported in attending antenatal appointments whether for themselves or for their partners.
- 2.3 Still Birth: If still birth occurs before 24 weeks of pregnancy, members are not entitled to maternity leave however discretion given for shorter period of leave of absence. If still birth occurs after 24 weeks of pregnancy full maternity benefits and leave apply of up to 52 weeks following birth.
- 2.4 Breast Feeding Facilities: The promotion of breast-feeding is a priority in the UK. Exclusive breast-feeding for the first six months of life offers major health advantages to mothers and babies, so it is important that mothers are enabled to continue breast-feeding when they return to their duties.
- 2.5 Whilst on Maternity Leave, should a female elected member wish to attend any Council Meetings and need to be able to breast-feed their infant, they will not be precluded from entering the chambers and participating in proceedings. Similarly, if an elected member needs to bottle-feed their infant, again they will not be precluded from doing this.



- 2.6 Adoption Leave Provisions: An elected member can take up to 52 weeks leave away from their duties after the placement of their child in the first 12 months of the child's first year.
- 2.7 Paternity Leave / Maternity Support Leave Provisions: An elected member who is the Father / Significant other responsible for child & mother well-being at the time of the birth can take up to 2 weeks 'leave' away from their duties after the birth of their child.
- 2.8 Shared parental leave provisions: An elected member can take up to 50 weeks 'leave' away from their duties, less any time the mother of the newborn child has taken as maternity leave (minimum of 2 weeks must be taken by mother).
- 2.9 Parental leave provisions: An elected member can take up to 13 weeks leave from their duties, up to their child's 18th birthday. A member can only take a maximum of 4 weeks in any one year.

### **3. Basic Allowance & Special Responsibility Allowance During Parental Leave**

- 3.1 There will be no change to an elected member's allowance as a result of any time taken for any of the provisions of this policy.

### **4. Practical Guiding Principles for Parental Leave**

An accompanying paper sets out the procedure for an elected member who would like to take parental leave.

#### **4.1 Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)**

- 4.1.1 Basic and SRA will not be affected by an elected member taking parental leave. Replacement elected member / nomination undertaking the duties to be paid SRA if they are not currently in receipt of a SRA.
- 4.1.2 Where the Chair is on parental leave, the Vice Chair should cover duties.
- 4.1.3 Wherever possible duties should be spread across more than one other elected member.



## **4.2 Responding to Emails**

4.2.1 Elected members are responsible for putting on an out of office message redirecting queries to a designated /alternative member. However, if they still wish to respond to emails/ correspondence whilst taking parental leave, they are at liberty to undertake this activity.

## **4.3 Local Divisional Duties and Nomination Process**

4.3.1 Wherever possible, elected members who take parental leave will be able to nominate another member to deal with local issues in their division. It will be the responsibility of the elected member to hold discussions with their preferred nomination to arrange this. Where this hasn't been possible, the elected member taking parental leave will need to raise this with their relevant Political Group Leader.

4.3.2 Where an elected member has limited alternatives to nominate due to low political representation, the Leader / Deputy Leader will decide with the elected member the most appropriate way in which their divisional duties can be covered.

## **4.4 Attendance at Meetings**

4.4.1 There is a legal duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a 6-month period. However, an exception is where the Council Meeting agrees to a request for an extended leave of absence prior to the expiration of that 6-month period. Elected members who are taking long term parental leave (such as Maternity) may still attend such meetings if they wish to do so (see notes on breast-feeding).

## **4.5 Parental Bereavement Leave**

4.5.1 The new Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Act will give all employed parents a day-one right to 2 weeks' leave if they lose a child under the age of 18 or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy from April 2020. Employed parents will also be able to claim allowance for this period, subject to meeting eligibility criteria. This right will be extended to elected members.

