

## **Parental Leave Policy for Councillors and Carers' Allowance Scheme**

**18 December 2019**

### **Report of the Director of Corporate Services**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To approve a Parental Leave Policy for Councillor and to amend the Carers' Allowance Scheme for Councillors (Appendix A of the Councillor Allowances Scheme in the Constitution).

**This report is public**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the Council adopt the proposed Parental Leave Policy for Councillors as set out in Appendix 1.**
- (2) That the Council amend the existing Carers' Allowance Scheme as set out in Appendix 2.**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council aims to be a modern and family friendly organisation placing an important emphasis on equality and diversity. As such, it regularly reviews human resources and Member policies to ensure that they meet legislative and good practice requirements.
- 1.2 A review of policies for supporting Members with carer responsibilities has resulted in the following recommended changes:
  - The introduction of a Parental Leave Policy for Members
  - A slight amendment to the existing Carers' Allowances Scheme to change the age defined for a child to 15 from 14 for the purposes of applying the scheme.

#### **2.0 Proposal Details**

*Parental Leave Policy*

- 2.1 The Council does not currently have a defined Parental Leave Policy for Members. Legislation provides that Members can be absent from Council meeting for up to six months and retain their status as a Councillor. It is felt insufficient to rely on this provision to cover parental leave and so a specific policy is proposed in order to provide better clarity. The policy should also assist to promote increased diversity and increase the appeal of the role to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded for it.
- 2.2 The proposed policy is included at **Appendix 1**. It has been assessed as meeting the requirements of employment law and good practice in supporting individuals in respect of parental leave. The policy provides more clarity with respect to eligibility and relevant processes than is currently available from the six month rule set out in legislation.

#### *Carers' Allowance Scheme*

- 2.3 The Council's constitution currently includes a Carers' Allowance Scheme, as an appendix to the Councillors Allowances Scheme, which applies to Members. A review of the policy against good practice requirement has recommended one minor adjustment in respect of the age by which dependent relatives are defined. The current policy defines dependent children as being 14 and under and it is recommended that this is changed to 15 and under. In all other respects the policy would remain unchanged.
- 2.4 A copy of the amended policy is included as **Appendix 2**.

### **3.0 Consultation**

- 3.1 The views of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) should be sought on any potential changes to Councillors' allowances. Whilst we have no quorate IRP at this time, the Constitution allows for minor amendments to be made following consultation with only the Chair. We have one remaining IRP members whose has looked at the proposals and is supportive of the changes representing good practice.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 Council is asked to approve the introduction of a specific Parental Leave Policy for Members and a slight amendment to the age by which children are defined in the Carers' Allowances Scheme. Taken together, these policies will enable the Council to show that it is following good practice with respect to equality and diversity and in supporting Councillors with parental and/or carers' responsibilities.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

The policies are intended to make the role of Councillor more accessible and appealing for parents and carers who might otherwise feel excluded from standing for council.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The policies comply with employment law.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications arising from the changes to policy are minimal and will be met from the existing budget for Democratic Representation.

**OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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