

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

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| <b>Date of Meeting:</b>     | 6 October 2022                                     |
| <b>Report Title:</b>        | Parental Leave Policy for Councillors              |
| <b>Report of:</b>           | David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance |
| <b>Report Reference No:</b> | CP/52/22-23  |
| <b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>    | All  |

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. To consider a proposed parental leave policy for Councillors.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The report invites the Committee to consider the recommendations of the former Constitution Committee, following its consideration of a motion with an attached draft policy on 15 July 2019 that was referred to them by Full Council on 21 February 2019.
- 2.2 The draft policy has been shared with the current Constitution Working Group in respect of a proposed parental leave policy for Councillors.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 That the Committee recommend to Council that the proposed parental leave policy be adopted (Appendix 1).

### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1. The former Constitution Committee determined that a parental leave policy for Councillors “*should be considered in greater detail as the review of the Council’s governance arrangements progressed*”. The committee system has been operational for over a year and, as data relating to the first annual review of the committee system was considered by Council in April 2022, consideration of a proposed policy can now take place.
- 4.2. Prior to the introduction of the committee system form of governance, the Constitution Committee had considered and broadly endorsed the

principle of adopting the parental leave policy, referred to it by Council, following a notice of motion.

- 4.3. The original motion and draft policy at Appendix 1 has been revised to use gender neutral language and ensure clarity on Members responsibility to comply with the requirements of Section 85, Local Government Act 1972 which provides for the vacation of office where a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of the last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority unless previously authorised by Full Council.

## 5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Do nothing: this does not support the policy objective of encouraging new people to consider standing for election as a Councillor.
- 5.2. Recommend the adoption of a policy without provision for payment of a special responsibility allowance.

## 6. Background

- 6.1. On 15 July 2019, the Constitution Committee considered a Notice of Motion which had been submitted to Council on 21 February 2019 [Notices of Motion \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk) relating to a proposed parental leave policy for Councillors, published by the LGA Labour Group. The Committee noted, and broadly endorsed, the principles contained in the motion with a view to considering the matter in greater detail, as the review of the Council's governance arrangements progressed (Minute 8 15 July 2019 refers).
- 6.2. The objective of the adoption of a parental leave policy is to encourage a broader spectrum of people to consider standing for election and participating in the democratic process. The adoption of such a policy is seen by many as important, in that it removes barriers or the perception of barriers from those who may wish to become parents and who would also be interested in participation in the democratic process.
- 6.3. Many Councils have adopted parental leave policies. Some have adopted the Local Government Association Labour Group's model [Parental leave policy for councils | Local Government Association](#) or variations of this. The appended draft policy is supported by the Constitution Working Group, and has been amended to reflect improvements drawn from policies adopted by other authorities and updated to ensure the policy is gender neutral etc.
- 6.4. The Member taking parental leave will need consider what ward responsibilities they are able to support and to arrange with their political group, other ward members or with neighbouring ward members, appropriate cover for their ward duties, correspondence, public engagement or local surgeries and notifications.

## **7. Consultation and Engagement**

- 7.1** The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) previously had sight of the LGA model Parental Leave Policy and wholeheartedly supported the premise upon which the report is based. The recommended policy does not contain any proposal which would change or alter the current value of any allowance and does not create any new remunerated special responsibility allowance. The policy only extends to the basic allowance and/or any special responsibility allowance to a Member who is on parental leave. This concept was supported by the IRP. The IRP will be asked to consider this in more detail at the next review of the wider scheme and the authority must have regard to the recommendations of the IRP before any further amendments its scheme.
- 7.2** The former Constitution Committee indicated their general support for the proposal ([minutes of Meeting held on 15 July 2019](#)) and the Constitution Working Group has also confirmed its support.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Legal**

- 8.1.1.** No direct legal implications have been identified but any legal implications of further reports will be identified in those reports.

### **8.2. Finance**

- 8.2.1.** The approval of a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors might result in additional costs having to be met through the payments of a parental leave Special Responsibility Allowance dependent on the policy adopted but these are not likely to be material and will be managed within the existing budget.

### **8.3. Policy**

- 8.3.1** The review by the Corporate Policy Committee may recommend the introduction of a new policy for Councillors.

### **8.4. Equality**

- 8.4.1.** The proposed parental leave policy for Councillors states that the role of the Councillor should be open to all, regardless of their background. Introducing a parental leave policy would be an important step towards encouraging a wider range of people to become Councillors and may encourage existing Councillors who may want to start a family to remain as Councillors. The policy would apply to parents regardless of their gender and cover adoption leave to support those parents who choose to adopt.

**8.5. Human Resources**

8.5.1. No human resource implications have been identified.

**8.6. Risk Management**

8.6.1. No risk management implications have been identified.

**8.7. Rural Communities**

8.7.1. No rural communities' implications have been identified.

**8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

8.8.1. In the context of the recommendations of this report, no direct implications for children and young people/cared for children have been identified.

**8.9. Public Health**

8.9.1. No public health implications have been identified.

**8.10. Climate Change**

8.10.1. No climate change implications have been identified.

| <b>Access to Information</b> |   |
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| Contact Officer:             | Brian Reed<br>brian.reed@cheshireeast.gov.uk<br>01270 686 670                             |
| Appendices:                  | Appendix 1: Draft Parental Leave Policy   |
| Background Papers:           | Council Minutes: 22 July 2021<br><a href="#">minute extract.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a> |