

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY FOR COUNCILLORS

The County Council wishes to encourage women to be represented at all levels of politics.

The purpose of this Policy is to confirm the Council's commitment to establishing an environment that encourages anyone eligible to stand for election to the Council to feel that they are able to do so.

Within this policy, Parental Leave refers to the period of absence taken by an elected councillor following the birth or adoption of a child.

- 1) Under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, councillors are required to attend at least one meeting of the Council in any six month period. This requirement still applies to councillors on Parental Leave.
- 2) The Council will ensure that councillors on Parental Leave are aware of this requirement and are provided with information on qualifying meetings and the process by which they may apply for dispensation.
- 3) The Council may exercise its right to waive the expulsion if non-presence relates to Parental Leave, constituting 'some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period' with prior agreement between the Councillor and the Council.
- 4) Absences from Council meetings during any period of Parental Leave will be noted as such, rather than being attributed to general absence.
- 5) Councillors are entitled to up to 52 weeks Parental Leave (subject to the statutory provisions in paragraphs 1) and 2) above). The requirements for notification of the intention to take leave and the date on which the leave will commence will reflect the Council's policy for paid employees.
- 6) Councillors shall be entitled to take 2 weeks Paternity Leave if they are the biological father or nominated carer of their partner/spouse following the birth of their child(ren). During this period councillors will continue to receive their basic allowance and any special responsibility allowances without deduction.
- 7) Where councillors have made Shared Parental Leave arrangements, the Council will make every effort to replicate such arrangements in terms of leave from Council.
- 8) Councillors on Parental Leave will continue to receive their Basic Allowance without deduction.
- 9) Councillors on Parental Leave will continue to receive any Special Responsibility Allowances to which they are entitled.
- 10) The Council will facilitate any arrangements made by relevant councillors which allow for the case work of a Councillor on Parental Leave to be completed by a Division colleague or another councillor of the relevant Political Group.

- 11) When the Council reviews its Members' Allowances Scheme it will encourage the Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to ensure adequate provision exists relating to Parental Leave, including any Dependents' Carers' Allowance available during the period of leave and upon returning to their role. Council will have due regard to these recommendations when approving the Members' Allowances Scheme.
- 12) The Council will ensure that councillors have access to adequate IT provision to allow them to work from home while on Parental Leave and upon returning to their role.
- 13) Councillors are able to access the County Council's Employee Assistance Programme, more details are available here - <https://askhr.suffolk.gov.uk/corporate/health-wellbeing/occupational-health/What-Is-EAP>

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