

Title: Parental Leave Policy for Councillors
 Lead Officer: Graham Leach – Head of Governance and Monitoring
 Officer & Lola Burrell – Committee Services Officer
 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Davison
 Wards of the District directly affected: All

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	29/9/2025	Ian Davison
Finance	29/9/2025	Andrew Rollins
Legal Services	30/9/2025	Linda Wylie
Chief Executive	29/9/2025	Chris Elliott
Deputy Chief Executive	29/9/2025	Darren Knight
Strategic Director	29/9/2025	David Elkington
Head of Service(s)	29/9/2025	Graham Leach
Section 151 Officer	29/9/2025	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	29/9/2025	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group	29/9/2025	
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	No - Recommendation to: Council on 22 October 2025	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	Yes, Forward Plan item 1615	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	

Summary

The report brings forward a parental leave policy for Councillors and seeks Cabinet support ahead of decision by Council to implement such a policy at Warwick District Council. The proposed parental leave policy for Councillors is intended to encourage greater diversity of Councillors and representation of residents' needs.

Recommendation

That Cabinet supports the parental leave policy for Councillors as laid out at Appendix 1 to the report and recommends to Council its adoption as an Annex to the Constitution.

1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 Committee Services facilitated a four-yearly review of Warwick District Council's (WDC) Members' Allowances Scheme and in the process of doing so, identified a gap in the allowances concerning parental leave for Councillors. Following this, research was undertaken regarding the legality of parental leave for Councillors and the provisions offered by other Councils.
- 1.2 The findings of the research identified that although Councillors are not legally entitled to parental leave, since they are not classified as employees, some Councils do offer such provisions.
- 1.3 The scope and reasoning behind this offering was consistent with increasing diversity through encouraging more females and younger people to become Councillors.
- 1.4 Research from the Fawcett Society carried out in 2021 demonstrated that a lack of a parental leave policy for Councillors was a contributing factor in less women pursuing local government careers.
- 1.5 Furthermore, Nottingham City Council passed a motion in July 2021 which noted that they had introduced a parental leave policy for Councillors with the intention of supporting younger elected members.
- 1.6 Improving the provisions for new parents should ensure that there is greater diversification of Councillors by lessening the existing barriers faced by women and younger Councillors. This supports WDC's aim of delivering a valued service by encouraging a high calibre of Councillors as a by-product of reducing barriers.
- 1.7 Moreover, guidance from Milton Keynes City Council identified that the introduction of a parental leave policy for Councillors supports the retention of Councillors. This aligns with WDC's aim to offer sustainable services by enabling greater continuity of Councillors despite their personal circumstances.
- 1.8 Therefore, introducing parental leave provisions for Councillors would likely encourage diversification, enabling a rich array of Councillors to be continually available which ultimately allows WDC to effectively represent its residents and support their needs.

- 1.9 Notably, only 26% of the 303 Councils who responded to the BBC's FOI request in 2021 had a formal parental leave policy in place for Councillors. In the West Midlands, a quarter of local authorities had a formal policy in place. Therefore, introducing a parental leave policy for Councillors would ensure that WDC are part of the limited collection of West Midlands Councils offering such provisions. This would allow Warwick District to maintain its ability to be a great place to live, work, and visit.
- 1.10 The Councils that offered parental leave for Councillors mostly did so by following the Local Government Association (LGA) model parental leave policy. This model acts as guidance and can be adapted to cover area specific preferences.
- 1.11 It is therefore recommended that WDC adopt the LGA model parental leave policy as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 1.12 Reasonable and adequate arrangements should be made to cover the work of the Councillor making use of the parental leave policy. This would be at the discretion of the Group Leader and in the instance of an independent Councillor at the discretion of the Chairman of the Council. As such, guidance is provided to Group Leaders and the Chairman of the Council at Appendix 2 to the report. Offering such arrangements ensures that the needs of residents continue to be met irrespective of introduction of this policy.

2 Alternative Options

- 2.1 In terms of alternative options available to Cabinet, they could choose to not adopt the proposed parental leave policy for Councillors. This is not deemed to be a viable option as the current lack of a parental leave policy creates gendered barriers for Councillors and therefore discourages heterogeneity.

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 The LGA advises that although there is no specific mention of parental leave for Councillors in the legislation that covers Members' Allowances, it is legally acceptable to put a policy in place.
- 3.2 It has not been deemed a priority to legislate parental leave for Councillors, but it has been supported by central government.
- 3.3 This change is deemed to have no effect to community safety.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 It is expected that this change could increase the costs associated with Members' allowances. This would be dependent on the Councillor who would be taking parental leave and the positions that they assumed.
- 4.2 There are no cash savings associated with implementing the change.

5 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation.
- 5.2 ***Delivering valued, sustainable services*** – The recommendation will assist in delivering valued services to our residents by improving Councillor retention and diversity. This would support continuity and resilience in governance as well as promote a progressive and family-friendly stance within WDC. A high calibre

of heterogenous Councillors would be more likely to be attracted to WDC based on said stance. In turn, this allows residents to be effectively represented.

5.3 **Low cost, low carbon energy across the district** - This matter will not have an impact on energy use or emissions in the district.

5.4 **Creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities of the future** – This will encourage a more inclusive, resilient, and representative Council. Therefore, WDC will be able to work closely with communities that is better represents and provide responsive and sustainable services that can be covered in the absence of a Councillor due to parental leave.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no environmental implications of the proposal in relation to the Council’s policies and Climate Emergency Action Plan.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

7.1 An initial screening assessment was undertaken on these proposals. This recognises the potential impact of this policy but the intention behind it was to mitigate the current position faced by Councillors and provide more certainty, which overall is considered a positive effect. As the policy is used appropriate action will be taken to ensure everyone who needs it has access to this type of leave, related to different characteristics/backgrounds.

8 Data Protection

8.1 There are no data protection implications.

9 Health and Wellbeing

9.1 The proposal should encourage positive health and wellbeing implications. Councillors are likely to feel supported by the introduction of parental leave provisions that encourage a healthier work-life balance. Allowing Councillors to exercise formal leave reduces the stigma around taking time off and the pressure associated with intense workloads. This should reduce instances of burnout and create a respect for Councillors personal time by encouraging clearer boundaries between personal and work life.

9.2 Health and wellbeing are also positively impacted by the improvements in diversity and inclusion which comes in tandem with offering parental leave provisions. WDC would become a more accessible work environment by being compatible with familial responsibilities. In turn, this would increase diversity of Councillors and have positive impacts such as promoting a sense of belonging.

10 Risk Assessment

10.1 Risks from proceeding with the recommendation:

Risk	Mitigation
Reduction in democratic representation – residents may feel underrepresented if their Ward Councillor were to parental leave	Allow for cross party working and support of duties from other District Councillors

Disruption to Council Business – particularly likely if the Councillor is a Chair of a Committee or a Portfolio Holder	Allow Vice-Chairs to deputise and appoint interim Portfolio Holders
Additional costs could arise from providing additional allowances to Councillors covering posts	Stop special responsibility allowances for Members taking parental leave but continue basic allowances

11 Consultation

11.1 Consultation is not considered necessary for this matter as it does not introduce any new restrictions on residents or third parties.

Background papers:

Equality Impact Initial Screening Assessment

Supporting documents:

[No parental leave 'a barrier' to local politics - BBC News](#)

[Parental Leave Policy for Councillors.pdf](#)

[LGA parental leave policy for councillors | Local Government Association](#)

Maternity and Paternity Leave for Councillors Research.



Parental Leave for Councillors

1. Leave Periods

1.1 Members giving birth are entitled to up to 6 months maternity leave from the due date, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required.

1.2 In addition, where the birth is premature, the Member is entitled to take leave during the period between the date of the birth and the due date in addition to the 6 months' period. In such cases any leave taken to cover prematurity of 28 days or less shall be deducted from any extension beyond the initial 6 months.

1.3 In exceptional circumstances, and only in cases of prematurity of 29 days or more, additional leave may be taken by agreement, and such exceptional leave shall not be deducted from the total 52 week entitlement.

1.4 Members shall be entitled to take a minimum of 2 weeks paternity leave if they are the biological father or nominated carer of their partner/spouse following the birth of their child(ren).

1.5 A Member who has made Shared parental leave arrangements through their employment is requested to advise the Council of these at the earliest possible opportunity. Every effort will be made to replicate such arrangements in terms of leave from Council.

1.6 Where both parents are Members, leave may be shared up to a maximum of 24 weeks for the first six months and 26 weeks for any leave agreed thereafter, up to a maximum of 50 weeks. Special and exceptional arrangements may be made in cases of prematurity.

1.7 A Member who adopts a child through an approved adoption agency shall be entitled to take up to six months adoption leave from the date of placement, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required.

1.8 Any Member who takes maternity, shared parental or adoption leave retains their legal duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a six month period unless the Council Meeting agrees to an extended leave of absence prior to the expiration of that six month period.

1.9 Any Member intending to take maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave will be responsible for ensuring that they comply with the relevant notice requirements of the Council, both in terms of the point at which the leave starts and the point at which they return.

1.10 Any Member intending to take maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave should confirm, as appropriate or relevant, with officers, ward colleagues or their political group, arrangements for covering casework and other ward responsibilities. An out of office message should be added to the Member's Warwick

District Council email account to avoid residents awaiting for a reply unnecessarily. These arrangements must be communicated with the Civic & Committee Services Manager.

1.11 Any Member taking leave should ensure that they respond to reasonable requests for information as promptly as possible, and that they keep officers and colleagues informed and updated in relation to intended dates of return and requests for extension of leave.

1.12 Still birth: if a still birth occurs after 24 weeks of pregnancy, full maternity and paternity benefits and leave as set out in this policy will apply. If still birth occurs before 24 weeks of pregnancy, discretion will be given for a shorter period of absence.

1.13 Parental bereavement leave: in line with the eligibility for paid employees under the Parental Bereavement (Leave) Regulations 2020, Members are entitled to two weeks bereavement leave if they lose a child under the age of 18, with continued entitlement to allowance as set out for parental leave in parts 2 and 3 below.

2. Basic Allowance

2.1 All Members shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full whilst on maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

3. Special Responsibility Allowances

3.1 Members entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) shall continue to receive their allowance in full in the case of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave.

3.2 Where a replacement is appointed to cover the period of absence, that person shall receive an SRA on a pro rata basis for the period of the temporary appointment.

3.3 The payment of Special Responsibility Allowances, whether to the primary SRA holder or a replacement, during a period of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave shall continue for a period of six months, or until the date of the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the date when the member taking leave is up for election (whichever is soonest). At such a point, the position will be reviewed, and will be subject to a possible extension for a further six month period.

3.4 Should a Member appointed to replace the Member on maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave already hold a remunerated position, the ordinary rules relating to payment of more than one Special Responsibility Allowances shall apply.

3.5 Unless the Member taking leave is removed from their post at an Annual General Meeting of the Council whilst on leave, or unless the Party to which they belong loses control of the Council during their leave period, they shall return at the end of their leave period to the same post, or to an alternative post with equivalent status and remuneration which they held before the leave began.

4. Resigning from Office and Elections

4.1 If a Member decides not to return at the end of their maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave they must notify the Council at the earliest possible opportunity. All allowances will cease from the effective resignation date.

4.2 If an election is held during the Member's maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave and they are not re-elected, or decide not to stand for re-election, their basic allowance and SRA if appropriate will cease from the designated date in line with other Councillors, normally the Monday after the election date, when they technically leave office.

5. Policy Ownership and Review

5.1 For clarification on the Policy and its application in the first instance please contact the Civic & Committee Services Manager. Any changes to the Policy require consideration by Cabinet and adoption by Council.

5.2. The Policy and its supporting document will be reviewed after 18months, or as considered appropriate if the need for changes is identified through its application.



Parental Leave for Councillors

Advice for Group Leaders

Group Leaders will need to provide a political point of contact, as their effective line manager to provide support for the Councillor on Parental leave.

When they become aware of a Councillor who is pregnant they should liaise with officers to complete a risk assessment and undertake regular reviews of the risk assessment throughout the pregnancy.

The should ensure they maintain in regular contact with the Councillor keeping them updated on key Council and ward matters.

The Group Leader would be expected to work with the Councillor in relation to setting expectations in terms of attendance to meetings and resident representation

They should agree the level of communications whilst on parental leave

Confirm approach on access to Council facilities during the period of leave, for example the Councillor may not attend formal meetings but may choose to continue with or support o ward or case work.

Ensure that support is provided as required to enable attendance at pregnancy related appointments

As the Councillor looks to return to their role of Councillor following a break the Group Leader should again manage this return providing clear expectations and keeping the Civic & Committee Services Manager informed.