

Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers - Cabinet Agenda 16 October 2025

Report Title: Parental Leave Policy for Councillors

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Councillor K Dickson:

I am reviewing the report on parental leave ahead of your Cabinet meeting. I welcome this policy, but I wonder if I could clarify some of the points in appendix 1.

1.1 states that parental leave is calculated from the due date. As less than 5% of babies are born on their due date, I would suggest that parental leave should start on the day after the birth of the baby (assuming that no pregnant person, nor their support would be expected to attend meetings or casework during labour)

1.2 I am confused by this part of the policy. A premature birth is defined as a birth taking place before 37 weeks of pregnancy. I feel that the policy should reflect this definition and there should be an allowance when babies are born at 36+6 weeks and below. It should also be recognised that even in a term birth, if there are complications, there may be times when extra support is needed during the first 4 weeks of a post-natal period (neo-natal care) this would benefit from an extension to parental leave. I would suggest that in such a case, that the Councillor should communicate clearly with their group leader and the role of the group leader would be to ensure that the Councillor's roles are covered and the parental leave should be extended by the amount of time that neonatal care is required.

Whilst not strictly parental leave, can there be reference to allowances that should be made for nursing councillors returning to work. e.g. facilities for babies to be bought into meetings and being able to take timely breaks during meetings.

[Response:](#)

[The overall aim of the Policy, at this time, was provide guidance as an enabling point for Councillors but also ensure solid foundations are in place to support anyone who may have use for the Policy.](#)

In respect of 1.1 on reflection we feel this should be amended to say that the leave will start on the day the Councillor commences maternity leave.

In respect of 1.2 we are of the view the policy is acceptable at the moment and broadly in line with WDC policy. However, I do feel that Appendix 2 should be amended so that this section:

“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”

Is replaced by this section

“The Group Leader should keep the Civic & Committee Services Manager informed of: (a) any specific individual circumstances that may lead to a deviation from this procedure; and (b) how/when the Councillor will be returning to their role and the expectations around this”

This change would also pick up the point around nursing mothers and allow for due consideration and support for the individual at the time, without the policy becoming overly prescriptive to each situation.