

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>TO:</b> Council	<b>REPORT NUMBER:</b> <b>MC/22/45</b>
<b>FROM:</b> Leader of the Council	<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b> 20 March 2023
<b>OFFICER:</b> Jan Robinson, Corporate Manager Governance & Civic Office	<b>KEY DECISION REF NO.</b> N/A

### COUNCILLORS PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and approve the adoption of a Parental Leave Policy for councillors.

#### 2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 That Council considers whether to adopt a Parental Leave policy for councillors.

#### 3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Council approves the adoption of a Parental leave Policy for Councillors

#### REASON FOR DECISION

The policy will make public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded and contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of local authority councillors.

#### 4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 At its Council meeting on the 27th of October 2022, the Council considered the Independent Remuneration Panel report and agreed a recommendation to create a parental leave policy for councillors. A draft policy has been formulated and is attached at Appendix A for approval.
- 4.2 Currently there is no Parental Leave Policy in place for councillors, resulting in councillors not having any entitlement to maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave.
- 4.3 Whilst there is currently no legal entitlement for councillors to have paid parental leave of any kind, it is possible for councils to voluntarily adopt a policy. Doing so would lead to an improved provision for new parents and contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of local authority councillors making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise have felt excluded.

4.4 Many councils across England have adopted the Local Government Association's (LGA) model policy or amended versions of it. The Policy attached at Appendix A is based on the LGA model policy.

4.5 Key points from the policy are: -

- Any councillor who is the designated carer will be entitled to six months leave with the potential to extend this up to 52 weeks.
- Any councillor who takes parental leave retains their legal duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a six-month period unless an extended leave of absence is granted.
- Members to continue to receive their basic or special allowances whilst on parental leave.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, there will be costs associated with the parental leave policy should the councillor be in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and take time off for parental leave. The anticipated costs would be minimal.

## 6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There is no legal requirement for the Council to adopt a Parental Leave Policy. However, the introduction of such a policy would help the Council advance equality of opportunity for protected groups. The LGA had taken legal advice on the model policy.

## 7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No for Equality and Diversity:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to implement Parental Leave Policy	1	1	The implementation of a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors would remove barriers that may prevent prospective councillors from standing for public office.

## 8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Current elected Members and Senior Leadership Team will be consulted on the policy.

**9. EQUALITY ANALYSIS**

9.1 An initial equality impact assessment has been undertaken which indicates a positive impact.

**10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no environmental implications.

**11. APPENDICES**

Title	Location
(a) Parental Leave Policy	Attached
(b) EQIA assessment	Attached

**12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

IRP report and Minutes Council meeting 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**13. REPORT AUTHOUR**

13.1 Jan Robinson, Corporate Manager Governance and Civic Office