

## Leave Policy for Councillors

### Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy sets out councillor entitlement to permitted leave.
- 1.2 The objective of the policy is to give some key guiding principles which are given their widest possible application to ensure that councillors are able to take appropriate leave and that reasonable and adequate arrangements are in place to provide cover for portfolio-holders and others in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) during any period of leave taken.
- 1.3 Permitted leave includes, but is not limited to, maternity, paternity, shared parental adoption, bereavement, carers, compassionate and long-term sick leave. For the purposes of the policy the term 'permitted leave' shall be used to cover all instances and describes a period of up to 6 months. The legislative framework in relation to councillor attendance at Council meetings is not affected by this policy and absence of 6 months or more remains as set out in section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 (see 5.1 and 5.2 below).
- 1.4 Having a policy that entitles councillors to take permitted leave will contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of local authority councillors. It will also assist with retaining experienced councillors and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.
- 1.5 There is at present no legal right to permitted leave in this policy for people in elected public office. This applies to MPs as well as councillors and has been the subject of lengthy debate. This policy can therefore only currently be implemented on a voluntary basis. By adopting it, Cambridge City Councillors agree that it should be applied to support councillors equally regardless of being from one political party or none.

### Permitted Leave Periods

- 2.1 A councillor due to give birth or adopting a child, may take up to 6 months leave following or starting around the time of birth/adoption/caring responsibilities. Any parent can take up to six months either concurrently or staggered, within one year of birth/adoption/caring. This provision also applies to any councillor

whose child is not carried to term or is stillborn. The same principles will apply to parents who suffer the bereavement of a child.

- 2.2 Other permitted leave may also be taken for a period of up to six months.

#### Notification of leave, and of return

- 3.1 The period of leave should be agreed between the councillor requesting leave and their group leader and Chief Executive (or Chief Executive if an Independent Councillor). The group leader or councillor should notify the Chief Executive of cover arrangements. The councillor should keep the group leader and Chief Executive informed of their intentions, giving normally at least one month's notice of their intended return date, including whether the period of absence should be extended to cover a longer period of time than first anticipated.
- 3.2 Permitted leave will be reflected in attendance records as 'absent with reason'.

#### Communication by councillor while on leave

- 4.1 It is for the individual councillor to decide whether/to what extent to continue to respond to correspondence or arrange for a councillor colleague to cover. While councillors would normally put an 'out of office' automated message on their council email, the main expectation is that they are clear how long they intend to be absent and the extent to which they will engage as well as who shall be contacted in their absence.

#### Leave of 6 months or more

- 5.1 Absence of six months or more fall outside this Policy. Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that any councillor failing to attend any meetings of the authority for 6 consecutive months shall automatically cease to be a councillor unless their reason for not attending was due to a reason approved by the authority (at a Full Council meeting) before the expiry of that period.
- 5.2 Written application must be made to the Chief Executive for a leave period of six months or more. The application should be made taking into account the calendar of Full Council meetings at which the application must be considered.

## Councillor Allowances

- 6.1 Taking permitted leave will not trigger any change to the councillor's basic or special responsibility allowances.
- 6.2 Where a replacement is appointed to cover the period of absence that councillor shall receive an SRA on a pro rata basis for the period of the temporary appointment.
- 6.3 Allowances cease on either resigning as a councillor or if not re-elected if the election is during the period of permitted leave.

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