

Appendix E: Parental Support Policy for County Councillors

Introduction

Lancashire County Council aims to ensure as far as possible that Councillors are supported should they wish to temporarily reduce or suspend their workload due to pregnancy or becoming a new parent.

recognises that supporting councillors at this time contributes towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of local authority councillors. It will also assist with retaining experienced councillors – particularly women – and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.

Lancashire County Council also recognises the importance of ensuring that mechanisms are in place to enable members of the public to be represented during periods when a councillor has taken a supported break from council duties.

Lancashire County Council encourages all groups represented on the council to provide appropriate support to their members who wish to take a supported break from council duties, including arranging for replacements at meetings and making arrangements to handle casework on behalf of a Councillor.

Pregnancy

The Council will endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments to support a councillor to continue to perform their duties during pregnancy. This could include:

- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan completed where required
- Appropriate facilities to support the councillor to attend meetings e.g. cushions and back supports for seats
- Change of seat position at Council meetings to allow easy of mobility and easy access in and out of the meeting
- Access to a suitable breakout room for comfort breaks

Councillors are encouraged to discuss their requirements, on a confidential basis, with officers to enable appropriate support to be provided.

Supported Breaks

The council supports all members wishing to take a supported parental break from council duties following the birth or adoption (through an approved adoption agency) of a child for a period of 12 months from the expected date of birth or adoption. This applies equally to both parents and to nominated carers of a child.

Any Councillor who takes a supported parental break retains their legal duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the council within a six-month period.

Obligations of the Councillor

Councillors who wish to take advantage of the measures set out in this policy must inform Democratic Services as soon as possible, on a confidential basis as appropriate, of their pregnancy and/or intention to take a supported break. As soon as possible, Councillors should also inform Democratic Services of the date of birth or adoption.

The Councillor 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 their supported break.

The Councillor should also supply Democratic Services with contact details, if different from those already held, to ensure that the Councillor can be kept informed of important issues.

Support from the council

The council will provide appropriate support, including but not limited to:

- Access to a suitable breakout room for comfort breaks.
- Availability of breastfeeding facilities.
- Change of seat position at Council meetings to allow easy of mobility and easy access in and out of the meeting.
- Removal from distribution lists for meetings and committees during the supported break.
- A single point of contact in the council to ensure contact is maintained.

Role of Groups

All groups are encouraged to provide appropriate support to expectant and new mothers, fathers and nominated carers, to ensure the full opportunity for the councillor in question to reduce or withdraw from duties. Groups should in particular make arrangements for support with casework and identifying replacements for meetings.

Basic Allowance

All Members shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full whilst on a supported break.

Resigning from Office and Elections

If a Member decides not to return at the end of their supported break they must notify the council at the earliest possible opportunity. All allowances will cease from the effective resignation date.

If an election is held during the councillor's supported break 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 date when they would technically leave office.