

## For publication

### Member development, support and parental leave policy (GV050)

<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	19.03.24
<b>Cabinet portfolio:</b>	Governance
<b>Directorate:</b>	Corporate
<b>For publication</b>	

#### 1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To present for approval the council's member development, support and parental leave policy 2024 – 2028.

#### 2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the member development, support and parental leave policy is approved and implemented.
- 2.2 That the member development, support and parental leave policy is reviewed every four years to coincide with the findings of the independent remuneration panel and approval of the members allowance scheme.
- 2.3 That the cabinet member for Governance is given delegated authority to approve minor amendments to the member development, support and parental leave policy in between the formal review periods.

#### 3.0 Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 This policy sets out Chesterfield Borough Council's commitment to providing support and development for elected members. Improved support and development can contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age, gender and background of local authority members. It will also assist with retaining experienced members and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.

#### 4.0 Report details

#### 4.1 Background

The member development, support and parental leave policy brings together three existing policies and practice into a single document to provide comprehensive and cohesive support for elected members.

#### 4.2 Member development

The expectations on elected members are higher than they have ever been. To be effective in their role, they need to have skills and experience around governance, local representation, community engagement, and be knowledgeable about the services we provide. Every elected member has a responsibility to ensure their skills are regularly updated and the Council needs to effectively support them in achieving this.

#### 4.3 This policy sets out:

- Our key principles for member development
- Identification of development needs
- The variety of learning and development opportunities available to members and how to access them
- Non-compliance with mandatory learning and development

#### 4.4 Best practice and learning from the Local Government Association, East Midlands Councils and our member development group have helped to shape this policy.

#### 4.4 Member support

This policy sets out the support available for members with a disability/ disabilities or during periods of ill-health, and the roles and responsibilities of members and officers. The policy includes:

- Reasonable adjustments for members and how to identify and access any support needs
- How to access support schemes including 'Access to work'
- Arrangements for periods of absence due to ill health including allowance and cover arrangements
- Support available for members experiencing ill health
- Dependant carers allowance arrangements
- How to access confidential advice and counselling services

#### 4.5 Alongside legislative requirements via the Equality Act 2010, best practice and learning from the Local Government Association, East Midlands Councils and our member development group have helped to shape this policy. The Council's independent remuneration panel also considered and made recommendations around members ill health cover and allowance arrangements and dependant carers' allowances.

#### 4.6 Parental leave

This Policy sets out members' entitlement to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave. Leave periods, notification, cover and allowance arrangements are considered.

- 4.7 There is at present no legal right to parental leave of any kind for anyone in elected public office. This applies to MPs as well as members. These policy proposals can therefore only currently be implemented on a voluntary basis. Our policy has been modelled on the Local Government Association's Women's Taskforce Parental Leave Policy. It aims to make it easier for prospective parents and the Council alike to plan for members taking parental leave.

## **5.0 Alternative options**

- 5.1 These policies were due for review this year, so the opportunity was taken to combine the policies into one comprehensive member development, support and parental leave policy. We could, however, choose to refresh the three policies separately.

## **6.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money**

- 6.1 The funding for member development and support activity are included within existing budgets. Allowances including those for parental leave absence and ill health have been included in the members allowance scheme approved by Council in December 2023 for implementation from April 2024.

## **7.0 Implications for consideration – Legal**

- 7.1 Councils are required by the Equality Act 2010 to make "reasonable adjustments" to accommodate the needs of elected members who have a disability who would otherwise be placed at a disadvantage compared to a non-disabled elected members.
- 7.2 The Council's Members' Allowances Scheme must be reviewed on a periodic basis, as required by the Local Government Act 2000 and The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Council appointed an independent remuneration panel in September 2023 to conduct a review of members allowances and has a legal duty under the above regulations to have regard to the panel's recommendations. The panel's recommendations which included consideration of allowances for parental leave and ill health absence and dependant carers allowance, were considered by Full Council in December 2023.

## **8.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources**

- 8.1 There are no specific impacts relating to human resources. All support arrangements are currently in place and resourced.

## 9.0 Implications for consideration – Council plan

9.1 The role of Elected Member is key to ensuring the community’s needs, aspirations and views are taken into account during the development of the Council Plan. Elected members approve the Council Plan at Full Council and regularly monitor and challenge progress via Cabinet and Scrutiny Select Committees. The member development, support and parental leave policy supports this activity.

## 10.0 Implications for consideration – Climate change

10.1 There are no specific implications around Climate Change.

## 11.0 Implications for consideration – Equality and diversity

11.1 Equality analysis of the member development, support and parental leave policy indicates positive impacts for protected characteristics including age, sex, maternity and disability. Improved support and development for elected members can contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age, gender and background of local authority members. It will also assist with retaining experienced members and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.

## 12.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management

Failure to provide reasonable adjustments for elected members.	M	M	The policy clarifies the responsibilities of the Council to provide reasonable adjustments. It also encourages members to have early conversations with staff on a confidential basis to make us aware of any disability or health issues so that we can work with the member to develop a suitable package of reasonable adjustments.	L	L
Unexpected financial pressures due to higher than expected allowance provisions use.	M	M	Access to the ill health allowance provision is linked to illness exemption being applied by Cabinet. This decision can also consider the financial implications and in year pressures.	M	L

### Decision information

<b>Key decision number</b>	<b>Non key decision</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>All</b>

## Document information

<b>Report author</b>
Donna Reddish – Service Director Corporate
<b>Background documents</b> These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.
None
<b>Appendices to the report</b>
Appendix 1 – Members development, support and parental leave policy