

Motion on Notice: Introduction of family friendly schemes to support elected members

Motion to Council

West Suffolk Council is requested to note the following, that:

- a. The community has a right to be represented by a diversity of councillors and residents should have a diversity of councillors for whom to vote.
- b. Data released by the [Fawcett Society](#) shows that only 34 per cent of councillors elected in the bumper May 2021 local elections are women, meaning that only 35 per cent of councillors overall are women.
- c. The Local Government Association's [national census of local authority councillors 2022](#) states that only 16 percent of councillors nationally are under 45 years of age.
- d. Research shows that nationally about a third of elected councillors are women ([BBC News, 8 September 2021](#)) and in 2018, the average age of a councillor was 59.
- e. West Suffolk Council does not have a formal parental leave policy for councillors but the [Members' Allowances Scheme](#) does provide for carers and dependents allowances.
- f. The role of a councillor should be open to all, regardless of background, and introducing a parental leave policy and other family friendly policies is a step towards encouraging a wider range of people to become councillors, and is also a step to encourage existing councillors who may wish to start a family to remain as councillors.
- g. Parental leave must apply to parents regardless of their gender, and should cover adoption leave to support those parents who choose to adopt, including adoption through a surrogate.
- h. Parental leave is only part of the picture and other family friendly policies such as support for carers, remote/hybrid meetings, and becoming a breastfeeding-friendly council would further ensure a greater diversity of councillors. And also that family friendly policies are in themselves only a small part of the wider need for policies which encourage truly diverse representation.

It is proposed to Council that:

1. It ensures that councillors with children and other caring commitments are supported, as appropriate. *continues over....*

2. Requests the Constitution Review Group to explore options and produce a draft family friendly framework to cover the issues set out in (f) to (h) above.
3. As part of the work set out in (2) above, the draft family friendly framework be considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel to inform their deliberations when undertaking their annual review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in autumn 2024.
4. The resulting family friendly framework be presented to Council for adoption, including levels of remuneration that may be recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel for incorporation into the Members' Allowances Scheme with effect from 1 February 2025.