REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

REVISION TO PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Report Reference	P-26-03
Meeting Date	1st June 2026
Agenda Item	9
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1.0 BACKGROUND

The Employment Rights Act 2025 introduced changes to entitlement to paternity leave and ordinary parental leave. Additionally, the Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave Regulations 2026 (made under the Employment Rights Act 1996) introduced changes to entitlement to bereavement leave in certain circumstances. These changes were brought into force from 6th April.

ACAS summarises the changes thusly:

- paternity leave became a 'day one right', allowing someone to give notice of leave from the first day of employment – from 18 February 2026, newly eligible employees have been able to give notice that they intend to take leave
- ordinary parental leave, or unpaid parental leave, became a day one right – previously someone must have worked for their employer for 1 year to be eligible
- the restriction on taking paternity leave after shared parental leave has been removed
- eligible fathers and partners are able to take up to 52 weeks of unpaid bereaved partner's paternity leave if the mother or primary adopter dies – they must take this leave within 52 weeks of the child's birth (including surrogacy), adoption placement, or entry to Great Britain for overseas adoptions

Additionally, changes were introduced in the Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 which have not been incorporated into policy; these affected the notice periods required and when the leave can be taken. Reference to entitlements under the Neonatal Care Leave and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 2025 are also proposed for inclusion in policy.

2.0 REQUIRED CHANGES TO POLICY

The council's policy in respect of leave is contained in the Staff Handbook.

2.1 ENTITLEMENT TO PATERNITY LEAVE AND PAY

The council's policy is based on the entitlements under the Green Book, legislation and own policy, providing two weeks' paid leave for staff with six months continuous service at the 15th week before childbirth.

The proposed amendment is to:

Delete *If you are the father/partner of an expectant mother with 26 weeks' continuous service at the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth you are entitled to*

two week's paternity/maternity support leave. Both weeks will be paid at your normal rate of pay. This must be taken in one go as either one week/two consecutive weeks and 28 days' notice of the start should be given to your line manager.

Insert *If you are the father/partner of an expectant mother, you are entitled to two week's paternity/maternity support leave. Both weeks will be paid at your normal rate of pay and may be taken as two single weeks or a two-week period.*

Leave can be taken at any point in the first year of after birth. You must inform the council of the intention to take leave 15 weeks' prior to the expected birth date and provide 28 days' notice of the planned leave dates.

2.2 ORDINARY PARENTAL LEAVE

The council's policy on ordinary parental leave did not have a qualifying period for the right, and as such no amendment to policy is required.

2.3 NEONATAL CARE LEAVE

Neonatal Care Leave entitles parents of a child who, within the first 28 days after birth, requires neonatal care. Statutory neonatal care leave pay is £194.32 per week (or 90% of weekly earnings whichever is lower). The following is proposed for insertion into the Staff Handbook:

If your baby is admitted to neonatal care within the first 28 days after birth, you may be entitled to Neonatal Care Leave. Leave can be taken after the child has been in neonatal care for at least 7 consecutive days and you will be entitled to one week of leave for each week the child is in neonatal care, up to twelve weeks of leave. Neonatal Care Leave is paid in line with the statutory rate.

2.4 BEREAVED PARENT LEAVE

The following is proposed to be inserted in the Staff Handbook:

If your partner dies during the first year after birth or adoption, and you have ongoing responsibility for bring up the child, you are entitled to up to 52 weeks unpaid leave, this must be taken within 52 weeks of the child's birth or adoption placement.

3.0 OTHER MINOR AMENDMENTS TO STAFF HANDBOOK

The following minor amendments will also be made to the Staff Handbook:

a) HMRC has amended the mileage rate from 45p to 55p; the Staff Handbook states the council reimburses at the HMRC rate and gives the 45p figure so this will be amended to 55p.
b) The various entitlements to leave for parents will be moved to a single section for east of navigation, this will include the above changes plus relocating the policy on maternity leave.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should consider approval of the revisions to the policy.