

COUNCIL – 21 JULY 2021

Motions on Notice by Members

(1) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13, Councillor C A Vinson will move:

“This Council notes:

- That the average age of a Dover district resident in 2016 was 43.3 years old, and the average age of local authority councillors across the country in 2018 was 59.4 years old.
- That just 22% (7 of the 32) Dover district councillors elected in May 2019 were female, compared to 50.8% of the district’s population, and that analysis of the 2021 local elections by the Fawcett Society found that only 33% of the candidates were female.
- That the role of a councillor should be open to all, regardless of their background.
- That clarifying the Council’s arrangements for parental leave is a step towards encouraging a wider range of people to become councillors, and is also a step to encourage existing councillors who may want to start a family to remain as councillors;
- That parental leave must apply to parents regardless of their gender, and that it should also cover adoption leave to support those parents who choose to adopt.
- That Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 already permits the Council to approve a leave of absence for any member such that they would not cease to be a councillor if they did not attend meetings of the Council for a period of six-months or more.

This Council resolves:

- To encourage a broad range of candidates to stand for election, regardless of background, and particularly from groups that might be reluctant to do so – such as candidates who are younger, female or have family and/or caring responsibilities

- To ensure that councillors that are new or adoptive parents, as well as councillors with older children and other caring commitments are supported as appropriate
- To ensure that the Council's Constitution clearly sets out the process by which members can seek a leave of absence, which should reflect not only the formal legislative permission required for periods longer than six-months, but also the Council's own process to support new and adoptive parents seeking a period of leave of shorter duration
- That pending formal changes to the Constitution, the Council look favourably upon ad hoc requests for parental or adoption leave
- That requests for parental or adoption leave should not be unreasonably refused
- That councillors have a responsibility to their constituents to ensure that their ward casework is covered for any period of absence, which may require support from other elected representatives in multi-member wards, or their political group as appropriate
- That the Council's website should be updated to show when a member is taking a period of absence, alongside details of any arrangements they have made to allow for constituency work in their ward to be covered"

(2) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13, Councillor H M Williams will move:

"This council believes that the £20 extra allowance for Universal Credit, should be kept past September.

We move that the leader write on behalf of the council, before the summer recess of parliament, to request that this increase be kept.

Background to the motion

In January 2021, the council approved my motion to write to the government requesting that they extend the £20 weekly increase in Universal Credit. I am proposing a similar motion now, because this increase is due to end in September, and the number of claimants in Dover have increased so much. The £20 increase has been a lifeline during the pandemic.

Looking at the statistics, these show that In April, we had just under 11,500 claimants, this being a 65% increase since March 2020. This means 16.5% of the DDC population are claimants, which is a high proportion for Dover. Further rises in unemployment, and therefore UC claimants, are expected as furlough ends this autumn. As the cost of living is rising, we know many local families are struggling to pay for rent, utilities and food. They need this extra money.

Indeed, the problem is widely recognised, and 6 former work and pensions Secretaries, including Amber Rudd and Sir Iain Duncan Smith wrote to Rishi Sunak during the weekend of 4/5 July arguing for the uplift to be retained. Many other senior Conservative MPs are criticising this decision, which will push many people below the poverty line.

I hope this council will back my motion.”