

MOTION ADOPTED BY COUNCIL – 21 JULY 2021

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.