

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Democratic Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	23 November 2020
Title:	Changes to adoption absence for local authority members
Purpose of the Report:	To report on proposed changes and Welsh Government consultation
Author:	Head of Democratic Services

1.0 Background

1.1. The Welsh Government is committed to increasing diversity across all aspects of public life. This includes tackling the barriers which prevent an individual's active participation in local democracy through elected office.

1.2. The Welsh Ministers recognise the difficulties in balancing the demanding role of being a councillor with the personal responsibilities of caring for loved ones. The challenges of the role, the sensitivities of many of the activities undertaken and the increasing expectation of the public that councillors are 'on duty' 24 hours a day, seven days a week can prevent individuals from giving serious consideration to becoming a councillor.

1.3. Welsh Government have recently issued a consultation document on changes to adoption absence for members and views are requested by the 29 December 2020. The consultation document can be viewed here:

<https://gov.wales/adoption-absence-local-authority-councillors>

2.0 The current family absence arrangements

2.1. Part 2 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 ("the Measure") introduced entitlements to periods of family absence for members of county and county borough councils, during which a member is entitled to be absent from authority meetings.

2.2. The periods of absence introduced were as follows:

- Maternity absence 26 weeks
- Newborn absence 2 weeks
- Adopters absence 2 weeks
- New adoption absence 2 weeks
- Parental absence 3 months

2.3. With the exception of the maximum period for adopter's absence the regulations remain in step with the arrangements for Officers. However, the basic period of adopter's absence available to Officers is now 26 weeks and therefore the current 2

weeks adopter's absence available to members needs to be changed to 26 weeks to align with the broader Welsh Government policy.

For this reason Welsh Ministers intend to amend the 2013 regulations to increase the adopter's absence entitlement from 2 weeks to 26 weeks. This will result in the same levels of maternity and adopter's absence being available under the 2013 regulations.

2.4. In addition, associated changes to the regulations will:

- Create procedures for allowing a member of a local authority to vary the start date and duration of a period of adopter's absence.
- Provide that a period of adopter's absence may start on the day the child is placed with the member of a local authority for adoption or up to 14 days beforehand. A member of a local authority may choose on which of these days their adopter's absence will start.
- Create a procedure for a member of a local authority to bring their adopter's absence to an end
- Prevent multiple periods of adopter's absence being taken in respect of children adopted under the same arrangement.
- Allow individuals taking adopter's leave to continue some duties with the consent of the chair or presiding member of the local authority.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1. The Committee is requested to comment on proposed changes as outlined in the consultation document and authorise the Head of Democratic Services to respond accordingly in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

Huw Jones
Head of Democratic Services
09 November, 2020