

Report to: Personnel Committee



Date of Meeting 15th April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Carers and Special Leave Policy

Report summary:

To seek Personnel Committee approval to a new Carers and Special Leave Policy, following introduction of the Carer's Leave Act. We have reviewed how this will be implemented at East Devon District Council and reviewed interdependencies with other policies, which has resulted in the creation of a combined Carers and Special Leave Policy. This policy was approved by ELT on Tuesday 25th March 2025.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

- To approve the new Carers and Special Leave Policy.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure the Council has a policy which meets legislation, alongside consideration of the Councils Strategic Priorities, commitment to the workforce and financial implications.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☒ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

The policy provides clarity and consistency in the Council's approach and has been developed to take account of equality, diversity and inclusion requirements. An Impact assessment (attached) has been completed.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; The policies provide clarity and consistency in the Council's approach and regular review will ensure it remains within legal and good practice requirements.

Links to background information Click here to enter links to background information; appendices online; and previous reports. These must link to an electronic document. Do not include any confidential or exempt information.

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
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Report in full

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The UK Carer's Leave Act was effective in the UK from April 2024 and provides employees with the right to one week of unpaid leave per year to care for someone with long term care need. This can include a family member or any other dependant who relies on the employee for support.
- 1.2 The Act aims to support employees in managing their work life balance while fulfilling essential caregiving duties and is available from the first day of employment.
- 1.3 There has been a delay in implementing a formal policy at EDDC for a variety of reasons. In this interim period HR have worked with managers, where needed, to ensure the new legislation is followed.

2.0 Current Position

- 2.1 At EDDC there is currently a provision for special care leave which is incorporated into the compassionate leave and special care leave policy. This is not a statutory provision, but the local agreement has provided for special care leave to be paid for up to three days and provides flexibility for employees to take time off for emergencies and is different to time off for dependants which is unpaid. The policy states that time off is for when a dependant requires special care due to very serious or terminal illness or where a dependant requires significant post-operative care and is unable to be left alone.
- 2.2 Whilst both leave provisions support caregiving, special care leave differs to the Carers Leave Act in that care leave specifically grants employees one week of unpaid leave annually and focuses on planned and foreseeable caregiving needs for a dependant or someone who relies on them for care such as an elderly neighbour.

3.0 Implementation of Carers Leave at EDDC

- 3.1 A new policy has been created which includes the provision for special care leave and is presented to Personnel Committee for consideration and approval.
- 3.2 ELT considered how to implement the new carers leave requirement, while balancing employee support and wellbeing, business need and budget restrictions. The outcome of which resulted in a new policy being drafted which includes;
- An entitlement to carers leave of five days, as per legislation but to go beyond legislation and provide the leave as paid.
 - Continue with an entitlement to special care leave of three days but for this to be unpaid.
- 3.3 These balance the factors highlighted at 3.1, while going beyond legislation, demonstrating the organisational commitment to staff and those with long term caring responsibilities.
- 3.4 The policy clearly sets out the parameters to entitlement and requesting leave.
- 3.5 The policy also outlines other types of provision available to employees to assist with caring responsibilities and achieve a work life balance.
- 3.6 UNISON are being consulted on this policy and their feedback will be shared with members at committee.
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Financial implications:

These changes will have a potential impact on budget. It is not possible to determine the number of carers in the organisation, but UK statistics estimate 9% of the UK workforce are balancing caring and work responsibilities, which translates to around 50 EDDC employees. Based on this percentage and using an average salary of the current workforce existing cost for special care leave would be estimated at £19,000, extending paid leave to 5 days could see potential increase in cost of £12,000.

Legal implications:

Carer's leave was introduced in April 2024, the aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance to managers and employees of their entitlement and to show our commitment to supporting carers as well as ensuring we are legally compliant.

