

# EXECUTIVE DECISION RECORD SHEET

**Name of Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Neil Harden  
**Portfolio:** Community and Regulatory Services  
**Date of Report:** 30/04/19

## Premature Births Pay and Leave

### **Recommendation made and reasons:**

1. To offer additional pay and leave to parents of premature babies.

### **Background**

The Smallest Things, registered charity was founded in 2014 to promote the good health of premature babies and their families. The aims of the charity include raising awareness of premature birth and the needs of the families following intensive care and promoting high quality care for mothers affected by postnatal depression and other symptoms associated with premature birth.

One in eight babies are born prematurely (prior to 37 weeks gestation). Babies are likely to remain in hospital until their due date following premature birth. There is a financial cost to having a premature baby, with parents spending on average an extra £2,256 over the course of their hospital stay. These costs can continue with subsequent re-admissions and numerous follow-up appointments. 60% of mothers feel that their maternity leave is too short following premature birth.

The Council wishes to support parents of babies born before the start of the 37<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. It is proposing to extend maternity leave and pay for the birth parent by the number of days their baby is born prior to their due date. It is also proposing to extend the Paternity leave and pay for those individuals entitled to it, by an additional two weeks.

The Premature Baby pay rate will be calculated on the same figure that the employee receives during their first 6 weeks of Maternity leave, i.e. 90% of average weekly earnings. This payment will only be made to those employees who qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay.

If an employee is not eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay but is eligible to receive Maternity Allowance, then the Premature Baby pay rate will be the equivalent of this figure for the Premature Baby leave period.

For a parent who would be entitled to Paternity leave, if their baby is born before 37 weeks, they will be entitled to an additional two weeks of Premature Baby leave and pay. The pay rate will be the equivalent of the Statutory Paternity Pay figure in place at that time.

### **Financial Analysis**

- Previous data identifies very few cases of babies born prior to 37 weeks. So the financial impact should be minimal.

### **Officers / Councillors / Ward Councillors / Stakeholders Consulted:**

Linda Roberts, Assistant Director Performance, People and Innovation,

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Matthew Rawdon, Group Manager People and Performance Corporate Management Team	
<b>Monitoring Officer/S151 Officer Comments:</b>	
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	No comments to add to the report.
<b>Deputy Section 151 Officer:</b>	The financial implications of this policy are projected to be insignificant, but the costs will be monitored to ensure that they can be funded from within existing budgets.
<p><b>Implications:</b></p> <p><b>Risk:</b> A number of London Boroughs have already introduced policies to support parents of premature births. The Smallest Things Charity is campaigning to ask the Government to extend maternity leave and pay in these circumstances.</p> <p>Whilst there is no real risk, such an introduction will provide immense support to parents of premature births, both financially and giving them time to be with their new born and their family.</p> <p><b>Value for Money:</b> Current maternity cases in recent years has shown only three premature births, so financially this is unlikely to be very costly for the Council. In terms of staff wellbeing, it is a very positive introduction and shows that the Council is current and proactive.</p>	
<p><b>Options Considered and reasons for rejection:</b></p> <p>The payment of Statutory Maternity pay only for the additional weeks was considered. However, based on the fact that the first 6 weeks of Maternity leave are normally paid at 90% of average earnings, it was felt more appropriate to be consistent with current policy around payment in the early weeks of Maternity leave. The enhanced pay period will be used up very quickly with a premature birth and additional pay at this level will support the parents during this period.</p> <p>The enhancement of Paternity pay was considered, but in light of the fact that currently the Council pay one week's full pay and the second week at Statutory Paternity Pay, it was not felt necessary to enhance the further 2 weeks. This provision still allows parents who qualify for Paternity leave to receive 4 week's leave, with three of these weeks being paid at Statutory Paternity Pay.</p>	
<b>Portfolio Holders Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

<b>Details of any interests declared and any dispensations given by the Standards Committee:</b>
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Date Decision Record Sheet received from portfolio holder: 17/04/19
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Date of Expiry of Call-In Period: 08/05/19
Date any Call-In received or decision implemented: