



Great Bedwyn Parish Council

Leave of Absence Policy

For Parish Councillors and Employed Staff

Policy Owner	Great Bedwyn Parish Council
Applies To	All employed staff and elected/co-opted Parish Councillors
Date Adopted	August 26
Review Date	August 28
Version	1.0
Approved By	Full Council. Minute ref 26/98

1. Introduction

Great Bedwyn Parish Council ("the Council") is committed to supporting the wellbeing of all parish councillors and employed staff. This policy sets out the types of leave available, the entitlements associated with each, and the procedures to be followed when requesting or reporting absence.

This policy applies equally to all employed staff (including the Parish Clerk and any other employees) and to elected or co-opted parish councillors. Where entitlements differ between staff and councillors, this is clearly indicated.

This policy should be read alongside the Council's other HR policies, including the Grievance and Disciplinary Policy and any relevant contracts of employment. The Council will have regard to current employment legislation and best practice guidance from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

2. Annual Leave (Staff Only)

2.1 Entitlement

All employees are entitled to paid annual leave in accordance with their contract of employment. The statutory minimum entitlement under the Working Time Regulations 1998

is 5.6 weeks per year (inclusive of bank and public holidays), pro-rated for part-time employees.

The Council may, at its discretion, offer a higher entitlement as set out in the individual contract of employment.

2.2 Procedure

- Annual leave requests should be submitted in writing (or by email) to the Chairman of the Council or the responsible member of the personnel committee with as much notice as possible.
- Leave requests will be considered in light of operational requirements and agreed in advance wherever possible.
- The leave year runs from 1 April to 31 March.

Note: This section does not apply to parish councillors, who are voluntary office holders and not employees of the Council.

3. Sickness Absence (Staff Only)

3.1 Entitlement

Employees who are absent due to illness or injury will receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in accordance with current HMRC rules, provided they meet the eligibility criteria. The Council may, at its discretion, pay above the SSP rate as set out in the employee's contract of employment.

3.2 Reporting Procedure

- Employees must notify the Chairman (or delegated person) as soon as possible on the first day of absence, and before their normal start time where practicable.
- For absences of up to seven calendar days, the employee must complete a self-certification form upon return.
- For absences of eight or more calendar days, a medical certificate (fit note) from a GP or other medical professional is required and must be submitted without delay.
- Continued fit notes must be provided to cover any extended period of absence.

3.3 Monitoring and Management

The Council will monitor sickness absence and may, where there are concerns about frequency or duration of absence, arrange a welfare meeting or refer the employee to an occupational health provider. This is a supportive measure and not disciplinary in nature. The Council will follow NALC guidance on managing sickness absence.

4. Maternity Leave (Staff Only)

4.1 Entitlement

Female employees are entitled to up to 52 weeks of maternity leave (26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave and 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave) regardless of length of service, in accordance with the Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999.

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is payable for up to 39 weeks, subject to the employee meeting the qualifying criteria (26 weeks' continuous service by the 15th week before the

expected week of childbirth and average weekly earnings at or above the Lower Earnings Limit). The Council will pay SMP at the rates prescribed by HMRC.

4.2 Notification

- The employee must inform the Council of the pregnancy and the intended start date of maternity leave no later than the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (or as soon as reasonably practicable).
- Medical evidence of the expected week of childbirth (MATB1 certificate) must be provided.

4.3 Keeping in Touch (KIT) Days

Employees may work up to 10 Keeping in Touch (KIT) days during maternity leave without bringing the leave period to an end. KIT days are by mutual agreement and will be paid at the employee's normal daily rate.

4.4 Return to Work

Employees wishing to return to work before the end of their maternity leave must give at least eight weeks' written notice. Employees have a right to return to the same job (or, if returning after Additional Maternity Leave, a suitable alternative if the same job is not reasonably practicable).

5. Paternity Leave (Staff Only)

5.1 Entitlement

Eligible employees (fathers, partners, or the spouse/civil partner of the mother or adopter) are entitled to up to two weeks' Ordinary Paternity Leave (OPL) following the birth or adoption of a child, provided they have 26 weeks' continuous service by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) is payable at the rate set by HMRC, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

5.2 Notification

The employee must inform the Council of their intention to take paternity leave no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (or as soon as reasonably practicable), specifying the start date and duration of leave.

5.3 Shared Parental Leave

Where eligible, employees may also be entitled to Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) in accordance with the Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014. Employees wishing to take SPL should notify the Council in writing and provide the required notices and declarations. The Council will provide further information on request.

6. Adoption Leave (Staff Only)

Employees who are the primary adopter of a child are entitled to up to 52 weeks' adoption leave (26 weeks' Ordinary and 26 weeks' Additional Adoption Leave) and Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP), subject to meeting qualifying criteria. Notification and procedural requirements

mirror those for maternity leave. Secondary adopters are entitled to paternity-equivalent leave.

Employees must provide the Council with a matching certificate from an adoption agency as soon as reasonably practicable.

7. Parental Leave (Staff Only)

Employees with at least one year's continuous service who are parents (or have parental responsibility) of a child under 18 are entitled to up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave per child. Leave may be taken in blocks of one week (or one day at a time for a disabled child) up to a maximum of four weeks in any one year, unless the Council agrees otherwise.

A minimum of 21 days' written notice must be given to the Council before taking parental leave. The Council may, in exceptional circumstances, postpone leave for up to six months where it would unduly disrupt operations, but not where the leave is requested immediately following birth or adoption.

8. Bereavement and Compassionate Leave

8.1 Bereavement Leave for Staff

The Council recognises the profound impact of bereavement. Employees are entitled to a period of paid bereavement leave following the death of a close family member or loved one. Entitlements are as follows:

Spouse, civil partner, or partner	Up to 5 days' paid leave
Parent or step-parent	Up to 5 days' paid leave
Child or step-child (non-bereaved parent)	Up to 5 days' paid leave
Sibling	Up to 3 days' paid leave
Grandparent	Up to 3 days' paid leave
Other close relative or friend	Up to 2 days' paid leave (at manager's discretion)

The Council may exercise discretion to grant additional paid or unpaid leave beyond these entitlements where circumstances warrant it.

8.2 Parental Bereavement Leave (Staff Only)

In accordance with the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018, employees who lose a child under the age of 18 or suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy are entitled to two weeks' Parental Bereavement Leave. Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay (SPBP) is payable subject to meeting qualifying criteria. This leave may be taken as a single block of two weeks or as two separate blocks of one week each, within 56 weeks of the child's death.

8.3 Compassionate Leave for Councillors

Councillors who are absent from Council meetings due to bereavement or serious family illness are encouraged to notify the Parish Clerk at the earliest opportunity. Such absence,

where communicated in advance or as soon as practicable, will generally be treated sympathetically and will not be counted as an unexcused absence for the purposes of the six-month disqualification rule under the Local Government Act 1972.

9. Carer's Leave

9.1 Statutory Carer's Leave (Staff Only)

In accordance with the Carer's Leave Act 2023 (which came into force on 6 April 2024), employees with caring responsibilities for a dependant with a long-term care need are entitled to up to one week (five working days) of unpaid carer's leave per rolling 12-month period from day one of employment.

A dependant with a long-term care need includes someone who:

- Has a physical or mental illness or injury that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months;
- Has a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010; or
- Requires care due to old age.

Employees do not need to provide evidence of their caring responsibilities but must give the Council advance notice of at least twice as many days as the amount of leave requested (or three days, whichever is greater). The Council may, in limited circumstances, postpone carer's leave (but not refuse it). Leave may be taken in half-day increments up to a maximum of one week per year.

9.2 Additional Informal Arrangements

The Council recognises that caring responsibilities can be unpredictable. Where an employee faces a caring emergency (e.g. a dependant's care arrangement breaking down at short notice), they may request emergency dependant leave as set out in Section 10 below. The Council will also consider flexible working requests from employees with caring responsibilities in line with the Council's flexible working procedures.

10. Emergency Dependant Leave (Staff Only)

Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, employees have the right to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with emergencies involving a dependant. This is intended for unforeseeable situations, such as:

- A dependant falling ill or being injured;
- Unexpected breakdown of care arrangements;
- Death of a dependant;
- An incident involving the employee's child at school.

There is no set limit to the amount of leave, but it must be reasonable in the circumstances (typically one or two days per incident). The employee must notify the Council as soon as possible of their absence and how long they expect to be away. This leave is distinct from carer's leave and is for genuinely unplanned situations.

11. Jury Service and Public Duties

11.1 Jury Service (Staff Only)

Employees summoned for jury service will be granted paid leave of absence for the duration of the service. The employee must notify the Council as soon as they receive a summons and provide a copy of the summons. The Council expects employees to claim any allowances available from HM Courts & Tribunals Service. Where jury service is likely to be long, the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, apply to defer it if the absence would seriously disrupt the Council's operations.

11.2 Public Duties (Staff Only)

The Council will grant reasonable unpaid time off to employees who hold public positions such as magistrate, school governor, member of a statutory tribunal, or local councillor in a different authority. The amount of time off and any pay arrangements will be discussed and agreed in advance.

11.3 Councillor Attendance at Meetings

Parish councillors have a duty to attend meetings of the Council and its committees. Where a councillor is unable to attend, they must notify the Parish Clerk in advance. A councillor who fails to attend any meeting of the Council for a period of six consecutive months will, unless the Council approves the reason for the absence, cease to be a member of the Council (Local Government Act 1972, Section 85). Councillors are expected to inform the Clerk in advance of any anticipated absence.

Councillors may ask the council to grant a dispensation which allows the Councillor a certain amount of pre-approved absence without the need to supply apologies to each meeting. The council will look at these requests sympathetically. They may be due to family circumstances, illness or injury or work pressures/issues.

How a dispensation works: *

The Act allows sense to prevail and absences to be approved. A council must act with the minimum standards of good administration required by public law — in short, they must act reasonably and approve non-attendance if it is for good reason. A reason or explanation must be known to the council so that it can exercise its power rationally. A reason for non-attendance can be approved in advance. [Local Government Lawyer](#)

There are also statutory excuses, including military service during war or emergency. [Local Government Lawyer](#)

The dispensation must be passed by the full council by resolution before the six-month window closes. In practice, councils have approved reasons such as illness, caring responsibilities, employment commitments, and (during COVID-19) public health concerns.

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12. Special Leave (Staff Only)

The Council may, at its absolute discretion, grant special paid or unpaid leave in circumstances not covered by statutory entitlements. Examples include:

- Marriage or civil partnership of the employee: up to 2 days' paid leave;
- Moving home: up to 1 day's paid leave (once per year);
- Medical or dental appointments that cannot be arranged outside working hours;
- Religious observance: the Council will endeavour to accommodate requests for leave for significant religious holidays or observance not covered by bank holidays, which may be taken from the employee's annual leave entitlement or as agreed unpaid leave;
- Volunteering: the Council may, in exceptional cases, agree to a period of unpaid leave or use of annual leave for voluntary work.

All special leave requests must be made in writing in advance and are subject to approval by the Council or the personnel committee.

13. Flexible Working (Staff Only)

Eligible employees have the right to request flexible working arrangements from day one of their employment, in accordance with the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023. Requests must be made in writing and the Council will consider each application reasonably and in good faith, balancing the operational needs of the Council against the employee's circumstances. The Council will respond to requests within two months. Flexible working may include changes to hours, start/finish times, or place of work.

14. Responsibilities

Parish Clerk / Employees	To notify absence promptly, follow correct procedures, and provide required documentation.
Chairman / Personnel Committee	To approve leave requests, monitor absence, apply policy consistently, and maintain confidentiality.
Full Council	To adopt and review this policy, and ensure statutory entitlements are met.
All Councillors	To notify the Clerk of anticipated absence from meetings in advance.

15. Confidentiality

All information relating to an individual's absence, health, or personal circumstances will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Council's obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

16. Equality and Inclusion

This policy applies equally to all staff and councillors regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. The Council will make reasonable adjustments to support individuals with disabilities or those with caring responsibilities. Any concerns about the application of this policy should be raised with the Chairman or, where the concern relates to the Chairman, with the Deputy Chairman or the full Council.

17. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if there are changes in employment legislation or guidance from NALC or SLCC. The Council will ensure the policy remains up to date with statutory requirements.

Adopted by Great Bedwyn Parish Council

Date Adopted	[Insert date]
Minute Reference	[Insert minute reference]
Next Review Date	[Insert review date]

Appendix A: Summary of Leave Entitlements

The table below provides a quick-reference summary. Entitlements are subject to meeting any qualifying criteria set out in the relevant section of this policy.

Type of Leave	Applies To	Paid / Unpaid	Duration / Notes
Annual Leave	Staff only	Paid	Min. 5.6 weeks p.a. (incl. bank hols)
Sickness Absence	Staff only	SSP / as per contract	As required with certification
Maternity Leave	Staff only	SMP for up to 39 weeks	Up to 52 weeks total
Paternity Leave	Staff only	SPP for up to 2 weeks	Up to 2 weeks
Shared Parental Leave	Staff only	ShPP where eligible	Up to 50 weeks shared
Adoption Leave	Staff only	SAP for up to 39 weeks	Up to 52 weeks total
Parental Leave	Staff only	Unpaid	Up to 18 weeks per child
Parental Bereavement Leave	Staff only	SPBP where eligible	2 weeks on loss of child under 18
Bereavement / Compassionate	Staff and Councillors	Paid (staff) / Discretionary	Up to 5 days depending on relationship

Carer's Leave	Staff only	Unpaid	Up to 1 week per year
Emergency Dependant Leave	Staff only	Unpaid	Reasonable time (usually 1-2 days)
Jury Service	Staff only	Paid	Duration of service
Special Leave	Staff only	Paid / Unpaid (discretionary)	At Council's discretion
Flexible Working	Staff only	N/A	Right to request from day one

This policy should be reviewed every 2 years and updated to reflect current legislation and NALC/SLCC guidance.