



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Response by the Portfolio Holder:

Thank you for your question of 24 July. I am pleased that the Council has been able to positively support women and all employees who have children, so that no one has been disadvantaged throughout the coronavirus pandemic. I have always supported the promotion of family friendly policies for the workforce and as you will know the Council has a comprehensive set of employment related policies which are accessible on the Council's intranet.

Since lockdown commenced during March, I know that many families have had to cope with additional worries about the pandemic. In particular employees with children will have been coping with multiple concerns, for example, disrupted education, family isolation and the potential of a reduction in household income, which will have been amplified in the case of single parents. The ability of employees to deal with these challenges and the stress involved, whilst also working at home in many cases cannot be under estimated.

I recognise that the experience over the past 5 months will have been hard for many of our employees. This is why I am extremely proud to lead the Council and to have seen our employees, whilst facing some or all of these challenges, continuing to deliver critical and much needed services to the people of Powys, particularly for our most vulnerable residents. I am pleased that they have been supported by a wide range of steps, all of which have been introduced to ensure that no employee suffers a disadvantage as a consequence of the pandemic.

Specific examples of where the Council has supported women and in fact all employees caring for children at home include:

- Relaxing the flexible working policy allowing employees to carry over additional hours from the normal 10 to 100 hours and widen the core hours of the policy to 24 hours. This meant that employees could work more flexibly at home so that, for example, quality time could be spent home-schooling or undertaking other caring responsibilities for others in the same household who were shielding.
- Introducing a risk based assessment to support the well-being of employees and mitigate risk wherever possible. This was particularly important in front line services providing care, support and personal services to vulnerable citizens.
- Continuing to pay employees who could not work from home, who, for example, were shielding and have to remain at home until 16 August.
- Continuing to pay employees self-isolating for 7 or 14 days because they or a member of their household had COVID-19 symptoms.

- By enabling and supporting c2000 employees to work from home, which for many helped with their work-life balance, wellbeing and enabled them to look after their children.
- Topping up the pay of furloughed employees to 100% of normal pay. This supported over 200 employees who occupied posts which were funded by income. Had the Council not taken a decision to do this, the Government would have covered only 80% of their normal pay.
- Supporting key workers by enabling them to access schooling for primary and early years.
- Answering hundreds of queries from employees and managers in a timely way, so that any anxieties and worries could be resolved.
- Providing redeployment opportunities to employees who, for whatever reason, were unable to work as normal because of the virus. The Council redeployed many employees with 260 employees still redeployed today.
- Promoting the Council's 24/7 employee assistance programme (i.e. help-line), giving employees access to seek help, support and crisis at any time, in regards to many matter such as financial, health, stress and relationship issues.

I hope that sharing these examples provides you with reassurance that the Council has sought to do everything it can to ensure that no employee suffers a disadvantage as a consequence of the pandemic.