

MATERNITY & PATERNITY PAY ENHANCEMENT



REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

For Approval

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members approval to enhance Cleveland Fire Brigade's maternity and paternity pay provisions as attached as Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That as recommended by the Executive Leadership Team at its meeting on 21 April 2026, Members consider and approve either the following enhancements to the Brigade's maternity and paternity provision detailed at Appendix 1:
- enhancement to 12 months full maternity pay, as set out in Sections 4.1 and 7.1 (Option A).
 - enhancement to 2 weeks full paternity pay, as set out in Sections 4.3 and 7.3 (Option C).
 - Or, an alternative proposal (Option B) to provide 39 weeks (9 months) full maternity pay, as set out in Sections 4.2 and 7.2.
- 2.2 That Members approve a review period of 3-years to monitor the cultural and financial impact on the Brigade and the impact on recruitment and retention of female staff.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The FBU national women's committee highlighted major differences in maternity support across UK fire and rescue services. As part of its commitment to equality, the union launched the "Equality Matters" campaign in May 2023 to make equality central to all union activity.
- 3.2 The "Fight for 52" campaign is a key part of this effort, aiming to improve maternity rights by promoting 52 weeks of full maternity pay, while also addressing issues such as workplace hazards, inclusion, recruitment, and retention.

- 3.3 In May 2023, the FBU wrote to UK fire employers calling for improved maternity provisions across the fire and rescue service. Employers were urged to tackle the under-representation of women by improving maternity provisions to help recruit and retain female staff.
- 3.4 It also highlighted the health risks firefighting-related contaminants pose to pregnant women, unborn children, and newborns, referencing NHS breastfeeding guidance. In addition, the FBU called for better support for primary carers working in a demanding shift-based profession.
- 3.5 Cleveland Fire Brigade currently provide 26-weeks full maternity pay followed by Statutory Maternity Pay and 1-week full paternity pay followed by 1 week Statutory, as outlined in Section 3 of Appendix 1.

4. **RATIONALE**

- 4.1 The following has been considered in making these recommendations:
- Attraction and retention- the provision of 12-months full maternity leave creates a competitive benefits package to attract skilled applicants and improves retention of current personnel.
 - Employee wellbeing and engagement- extended maternity provision demonstrates the Brigade's commitment to staff wellbeing.
 - EDI- enhanced maternity pay directly improves financial security and healthier periods of leave to women in a male-dominated profession, who are often adversely affected financially and in career progression after having children.
 - Reputation and employer brand- introduction of 12-months full maternity pay would position the Brigade as a leading employer nationally, reflecting the organisation's values.
 - Workforce health and operational readiness- enhanced maternity pay allows mothers the time needed to properly recover before returning to the physically demanding role of a firefighter.
 - Alignment with national and sector priorities- the proposal supports the FBU's Equality Matters campaign and aligns with national public sector priorities to improve gender equality and family-friendly employment.
- 4.2 Several other FRS nationally have implemented or piloted extended maternity pay and have demonstrated its feasibility.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

- 5.1 Financial modelling indicated that an enhanced maternity provision to 12-months full pay would, on average, have an additional cost of £34,812 to the Brigade, and enhanced paternity provision would have an additional cost of £1,024, on average.
- 5.2 If the alternative option of 9-months full maternity pay is agreed, the average additional annual cost to the Brigade would be £19,562.

- 5.3 Based on data over the last 3 years, corporate maternity cases average 0.67 per year, and 1 operational case. Paternity cases average 2 annually across the workforce.

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