Neonatal care leave and pay noted – Recommendation to City Administration Committee.

3 There was submitted and noted a report by the Head of Human Resources regarding recommendations for the implementation of paid leave for Council employees with sick or premature babies in neonatal care ahead of the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 coming into effect in April 2025, advising

(1) that neonatal care was the specialist medical care babies under 28 days of age received in hospital shortly after birth and that the inflexibility of current parental leave legislation made it difficult for many families when their baby would have to remain in hospital for weeks or months;

(2) that the financial impact of having a baby in neonatal care was also significant with more than half of families reported their finances as a barrier to being involved in their baby's care;

(3) the Smallest Things charity, who supported premature babies and their families, had reported that the average stay in neonatal care cost families in excess of £2,994 due to the costs involved and that many parents were forced to return to work earlier than intended and that 80% of parents said that their mental health had worsened;

(4) of the Neonatal (Leave and Pay) Act 2023, expected to be implemented in April 2025, that would support parents of babies who were admitted to hospital up to the age of 28 days and remain there for a continued period of 7 days or more;

(5) of the UK Government's consultation on the Bill and the campaign that urged the UK Government to adjust its implementation timeline to bring it in earlier and for employers to provide support above and beyond the new statutory requirements by signing up to the "Employer with Heart" Charter 2.0;

(6) of good practice in other Councils, this Council's current position and a proposal that the Council sign up to the Employer with Heart Charter 2.0 to make a public commitment to best practice and set a good example that other organisations would follow; and

(7) of the implications for the Council.

After consideration the committee

(a) noted the report; and

(b) agreed to recommend to the City Administration Committee approval of the enhancement of the Council's Employment Conditions of Service – Leave to include additional paid leave for employees with babies in neonatal care.