

Minutes of: EMPLOYMENT PANEL

Date of Meeting: 25 June 2026

Present: Councillor Thorpe
Councillors M Walsh, T Tariq, D Green, D Hill, K Hussain,
A Quinn, S Thorpe and A Arif

Also in attendance: Tim Normanton - Assistant Director of HR, Kate Waterhouse – Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation, Catherine King – People, Policy and Organisational Development Manager, Kelly Barnett – Democratic Services

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor L Smith

EP.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence are noted above.

EP.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

EP.3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 3 February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EP.4 APPOINTMENT OF CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION

The Employment Panel considered the appointment of a Corporate Parenting Champion for the 2026/27 municipal year.

It was agreed:

1. Councillor A Arif be appointed as the Corporate Parenting Champion for the Employment Panel Committee.

EP.5 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW

Tim Normanton presented a report detailing proposed revisions to a number of workforce policies.

Consultation Procedure

The Employment Panel considered revisions to the Consultation Procedure.

Members were advised that the procedure had not been reviewed for some time and required updating to reflect recent legislative changes. Tim Normanton outlined the

introduction of a three-tier approach to consultation, including a new streamlined procedure for smaller-scale changes affecting up to nineteen employees.

The revised procedure also reflected changes arising from the Employment Rights Act 2025 and proposed consultation periods aligned more closely with statutory requirements whilst retaining flexibility for more complex reviews.

Councillor Walsh expressed concern that tracked changes had not been provided with any of the policy reviews, making it difficult to identify all amendments. Tim Normanton advised that previous tracked changed versions of policy reviews had proved difficult to follow and that key amendments had therefore been highlighted within the accompanying report. Members were advised that the changes had been reviewed by the Council's employment solicitor and discussed with UNISON. In response, Councillor Walsh declared that she would abstain from voting on any unclear policies presented for review.

In a response to a question around engagement with Employee groups, Catherine King advised that sessions had been arranged with employee groups to discuss revised policies and gather employee feedback in relation to any issues that they may be facing.

In response to a question around the Local Authority having an Employee Handbook, Catherine King explained that there is a handbook which sets out the local conditions of services and that staff members do use this.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Consultation Procedure be approved.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Trade Union Consultation Framework

The Employment Panel considered amendments to the Trade Union Consultation Framework.

Tim Normanton advised that the amendments reflected current working practices and meeting arrangements, facilitating more effective engagement with UNISON and increasing the frequency of the Health and Safety Committee.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Trade Union Consultation Framework be approved.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Family Leave Policy

The Employment Panel considered proposed amendments to the Family Leave Policy.

Members were advised that the principal amendments reflected national pension regulation changes affecting periods of unpaid leave. Tim Normanton also highlighted the extension of maternity support leave arrangements to allow leave to be taken within 52 weeks of birth, aligning the policy with paternity leave provisions.

In response to a Member's question regarding the pension scheme, Tim Normanton confirmed that the changes related to the Local Government Pension Scheme and its current career average arrangements.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Family Leave Policy be approved.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Fixed Term Contracts Policy

The revised Fixed Term Contracts Policy was presented to The Employment Panel.

Members were advised that the existing policy had not been comprehensively reviewed since 2013 and that the proposed revisions improved clarity and alignment with the Recruitment and Redeployment Policies.

In discussing recruitment challenges, a member raised questions relating to market supplements and recruitment difficulties across the authority. Tim Normanton advised that those matters were addressed separately through the Market Supplement Policy and were not directly connected to fixed-term employment arrangements. Recruitment to posts on a fix term contract is not something that is done frequently.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Fixed Term Contracts Policy be approved.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Flexible Working Policy

The Employment Panel considered proposed changes to the Flexible Working Policy.

Tim Normanton explained that the policy has been amended to reflect pension contributions which applies to the purchasing of annual leave and periods of unpaid leave; and that requests of careers breaks when people are off long-term sick will not be approved.

Members discussed the revised wording relating to career breaks and long-term sickness absence. A Member expressed concern that the policy stated career breaks "should not" be used in such circumstances rather than "must not", creating potential ambiguity. Catherine King advised that flexibility had been retained to accommodate exceptional circumstances, particularly where employees had significant caring responsibilities.

In response to a member's question around having a policy outlining carers leave, Catherine King explained that you can take carers leave in different ways and this can be done through the special leave policy and family related policies.

Following discussion, Members agreed that the wording needed changing around carer breaks and sickness absence and it was suggested that the policy be brought back to the next meeting to consider.

It was agreed:

1. That consideration of the Flexible Working Policy be deferred pending further review and clarification.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Local Conditions of Service – Section 1: Appointments, Transfers and Leavers

Members considered revisions to Section 1 of the Local Conditions of Service.

Tim Normanton advised that the amendments improved consistency with other workforce policies, removed outdated provisions and strengthened links to current guidance and procedures.

It was agreed:

1. That the amendments to Local Conditions of Service – Section 1 be approved.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Local Conditions of Service – Section 4: Hours and Leave

The Employment Panel considered revisions to Section 4 relating to hours and leave.

Tim Normanton outlined recent national developments relating to term-time working and annual leave entitlement calculations. Members were advised that the revised policy clarified arrangements for employees working less than 38 weeks per year and proposed a proportionate annual leave approach for part-year workers.

It was agreed:

1. That the amendments to Local Conditions of Service – Section 4 be approved.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Market Supplement Policy

Tim Normanton presented the revised Market Supplement Policy.

It was explained that market supplements provided a mechanism for addressing recruitment and retention difficulties. Examples were provided of specialist roles where external market rates significantly exceeded evaluated salaries.

Members discussed recruitment and retention challenges, succession planning, pension implications and competition from neighbouring authorities. In response, Tim Normanton explained that the Market Supplement was time limited by the fact the market is regularly changing and must be tested against the market every 2 years. There is a risk for the candidate that the supplement is time limited, and it would be up to the candidate if they wanted to take this risk when applying for a position. Tim Normanton confirmed that this policy applies to all employees, and it is a long-standing policy that has been agreed by the Trade Unions.

The Chair commented that, whilst not perfect, market supplements remained an important tool to help attract and retain appropriately skilled staff.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Market Supplement Policy be approved.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

Recruitment Policy and Redeployment Policy

The Employment Panel considered the revised Recruitment Policy alongside associated amendments to the Redeployment Policy.

Tim Normanton explained that in relation to the recruitment policy, concerns were raised by a former employee who was subject to redundancy, around the need for strengthened links between recruitment and redeployment arrangements. Tim Normanton confirmed that all vacancies will be advertised on the Greater Jobs recruitment platform and reinforced the requirement to prioritise redeployees before progressing external recruitment.

A discussion took place regarding the effectiveness of redeployment arrangements and the need for evidence demonstrating positive outcomes.

In response to members questions around advertising roles on Greater Jobs and discretion on suitability for a redeployee, Tim Normanton outlined the process for approving a vacancy and explained that the vacancy will be circulated to redeployees to consider first, prior to the formal recruitment process, where all jobs are advertised on the Greater Jobs website. Prior to this policy there were a mix of internal only and external vacancies. HR can make a judgement as to whether a role may be suitable for someone but ultimately, it is up to the employee to decide whether a role is suitable for them and advised of the employment law being complex around suitability.

A member requested more meaningful performance information and evidence in relation to redeployment activity, noting that The Employment Panel should be able to assess whether policy changes were delivering tangible improvements. In response, Tim Normanton advised that seven employees had been successfully redeployed during the previous eighteen months. Whilst historical recording had limitations, new monitoring arrangements had now been implemented and improved data would be available in future. It was also advised that some people who had been made redundant, did not want to engage with the redeployment process.

The Chair requested that information regarding redeployment outcomes and measures of success be brought back to the Employment Panel on a six-monthly basis.

Members discussed the importance of workforce planning, internal development opportunities and organisational culture.

Members also discussed the provision of training to support employees entering redeployment arrangements. Tim Normanton confirmed that reasonable training and development opportunities would continue to be considered where appropriate.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Recruitment Policy be approved.
2. That the revised Redeployment Policy be approved.
3. That reports regarding redeployment activity and outcomes to be considered through the Employment Panel on a 6 monthly basis.
4. The Chair to update the former employee who raised concerns around the redundancy policy and the recruitment policy not aligning, of the discussions surrounding the revised policies.

Vote 6 approved, 1 abstention

Secondments Policy

The Employment Panel considered the revised Secondments Policy.

Tim Normanton advised that the amendments clarified responsibilities for managers, employees and HR and provided greater clarity in relation to secondment arrangements and returning to substantive posts.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Secondments Policy be approved.

Vote 6 approved, 1 abstention

Sponsorship Policy

The Employment Panel considered revisions to the Sponsorship Policy.

Tim Normanton advised that changes to immigration rules had significantly reduced the number of roles eligible for sponsorship. The proposed policy therefore retained the Council's sponsorship licence but ceased the issue of new Certificates of Sponsorship, whilst continuing to support existing sponsored employees where appropriate.

Members discussed workforce planning, skills shortages and the importance of investing in local talent through apprenticeships, graduate programmes and training opportunities.

It was agreed:

1. That the revised Sponsorship Policy be approved.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

EP.6 EMPLOYMENT PANEL TRAINING

Tim Normanton delivered a training session around the recruitment of Chief Officers. Due to time constraints, it was agreed that the training around the Employment Appeal Hearings will be delivered at a later date.

EP.7 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR THORPE
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.00 pm)