

Minutes of: **EMPLOYMENT PANEL**

Date of Meeting: 20 July 2026

Present: Councillor S Thorpe (in the Chair)
Councillors T Tariq, D Green, D Hill, K Hussain, A Quinn and
A Arif

Also in attendance: Jess Hall, People Operations Service Manager
Catherine King, People, Policy & Organisational Development
Manager
Claire Kirke, People Policy Specialist
Tim Normanton, Interim Assistant Director of People and
Inclusion
Kate Waterhouse, Executive Director, Strategy and
Transformation.

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M Walsh and Councillor L Smith

EP.8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence are noted above.

EP.9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

EP.10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion explained that Minute EP.5 – Workforce Policy review - Recruitment Policy and Redeployment Policy, it stated, ‘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’.

It was stated that this should be replaced with ‘may’.

Members agreed that subject to the above amendment, the notes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

EP.11 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion presented a report outlining a suite of new and revised employment policies and procedures for consideration by the Employment Panel.

The Panel was advised that the proposed changes had been developed to ensure the Council's employment framework remained legally compliant, reflected current working

practices, supported employee wellbeing and inclusion, and incorporated legislative and organisational developments where appropriate.

The following documents were presented:

- New Leave Policy
- New Flexible Retirement Policy
- Updated Salary Loans Procedure
- Revised Time Off for Reservists Policy
- Updated Facilities Time Policy
- New Dignity at Work Policy
- Revised Grievance Procedure
- Revised Flexible Working Policy, updated following comments received at the June 2026 Employment Panel meeting
- Briefing Note regarding Equality Staff Networks

The Panel received details of the key amendments contained within each document, including the consolidation of various leave arrangements into a single Leave Policy; the introduction of a standalone Flexible Retirement Policy; amendments to the Salary Loans Procedure to limit applications to one loan within a rolling 18-month period; updates to the Time Off for Reservists and Facilities Time Policies to reflect current legislative and policy requirements; the introduction of a new Dignity at Work Policy; consequential amendments to the Grievance Procedure; and revisions to the Flexible Working Policy following regulatory changes and feedback previously received from Members.

The Panel also considered the briefing note relating to Equality Staff Networks and the proposal to provide protected time to support network activity and leadership responsibilities.

Members of the Employment Panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, and the following points were made:-

- Councillor Green referred to requests for leave of 3 weeks' or more and asked how many requests were received.

It was explained that this information was not readily available. However, all leave requests are considered in accordance with the operational requirements of the relevant service area, and approval from Senior Management is required before any leave can be authorised.

- Councillor Tariq referred to the Flexible Working Policy and support given to employees requesting this. He also stated that confusion in relation to pensions can be something that employees may need assistance with relation to flexible working.

It was explained that the Council was committed to flexible working and also supporting protected characteristics within the workforce. Advice and support was given in relation to every application.

- Councillor Thorpe stated that flexible working arrangements can be very positive if done well. He asked if there was any data available on how many applications were made and how many were successful.

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion stated that there were a broad range of flexible working options available and all requests would be considered in line with the needs of the relevant service. The Interim Assistant Director advised that he would provide the requested information with regards to flexible working requests to the Panel.

- Councillor Tariq referred to the Equality Staff Networks and explained that he had seen these groups go through many changes since their implementation. Councillor Tariq stated that he supported the work of the groups and raising their visibility and impact was very important particularly when holding the employers to account.

He asked how the work of the groups could be evaluated by the Employment Panel.

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion suggested that a report in relation to the workplan for the networks would be presented to the Employment Panel at its meeting in November and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager invited to attend the meeting to set out the work and progress.

It was agreed:

1. That the Employment Panel approves:

1. The new Leave Policy;
2. The new Flexible Retirement Policy;
3. The updated Salary Loans Procedure;
4. The revised Time Off for Reservists Policy;
5. The updated Facilities Time Policy;
6. The new Dignity at Work Policy;
7. The revised Grievance Procedure;
8. The revised Flexible Working Policy; and
9. The Equality Staff Networks Briefing Note, including the proposed allocation of protected time for network members and network leads.

2. That the above documents be submitted to the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee on 21 July 2026 for endorsement and, subject to endorsement, be published on the Council's intranet and communicated to staff.

3. That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager be invited to attend a future meeting of the Employment Panel to set out the work and progress of the Equality Staff Networks.

EP.8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence are noted above.

EP.9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

EP.10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion explained that Minute EP.5 – Workforce Policy review - Recruitment Policy and Redeployment Policy, it stated, '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'.

It was stated that this should be replaced with 'may'.

Members agreed that subject to the above amendment, the notes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

EP.11 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion presented a report outlining a suite of new and revised employment policies and procedures for consideration by the Employment Panel.

The Panel was advised that the proposed changes had been developed to ensure the Council's employment framework remained legally compliant, reflected current working practices, supported employee wellbeing and inclusion, and incorporated legislative and organisational developments where appropriate.

The following documents were presented:

- New Leave Policy
- New Flexible Retirement Policy
- Updated Salary Loans Procedure
- Revised Time Off for Reservists Policy
- Updated Facilities Time Policy
- New Dignity at Work Policy

- Revised Grievance Procedure
- Revised Flexible Working Policy, updated following comments received at the June 2026 Employment Panel meeting
- Briefing Note regarding Equality Staff Networks

The Panel received details of the key amendments contained within each document, including the consolidation of various leave arrangements into a single Leave Policy; the introduction of a standalone Flexible Retirement Policy; amendments to the Salary Loans Procedure to limit applications to one loan within a rolling 18-month period; updates to the Time Off for Reservists and Facilities Time Policies to reflect current legislative and policy requirements; the introduction of a new Dignity at Work Policy; consequential amendments to the Grievance Procedure; and revisions to the Flexible Working Policy following regulatory changes and feedback previously received from Members.

The Panel also considered the briefing note relating to Equality Staff Networks and the proposal to provide protected time to support network activity and leadership responsibilities.

Members of the Employment Panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, and the following points were made:-

- Councillor Green referred to requests for leave of 3 weeks' or more and asked how many requests were received.

It was explained that this information was not readily available. However, all leave requests are considered in accordance with the operational requirements of the relevant service area, and approval from Senior Management is required before any leave can be authorised.

- Councillor Tariq referred to the Flexible Working Policy and support given to employees requesting this. He also stated that confusion in relation to pensions can be something that employees may need assistance with relation to flexible working.

It was explained that the Council was committed to flexible working and also supporting protected characteristics within the workforce. Advice and support was given in relation to every application.

- Councillor Thorpe stated that flexible working arrangements can be very positive if done well. He asked if there was any data available on how many applications were made and how many were successful.

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion stated that there were a broad range of flexible working options available and all requests would be considered in line with the needs of the relevant service. The Interim Assistant Director advised that he would enquire to determine if it was possible to provide the requested information with regards to flexible working requests to the Panel.

- Councillor Tariq referred to the Equality Staff Networks and explained that he had seen these groups go through many changes since their implementation. Councillor Tariq stated that he supported the work of the groups and raising their visibility and impact was very important particularly when holding the employers to account.

He asked how the work of the groups could be evaluated by the Employment Panel.

The Interim Assistant Director of People and Inclusion suggested that a report in relation to the workplan for the networks would be presented to the Employment Panel at a future meeting and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager be invited to attend the meeting to set out the work and progress.

It was agreed:

1. That the Employment Panel approves:

10. The new Leave Policy;
11. The new Flexible Retirement Policy;
12. The updated Salary Loans Procedure;
13. The revised Time Off for Reservists Policy;
14. The updated Facilities Time Policy;
15. The new Dignity at Work Policy;
16. The revised Grievance Procedure;
17. The revised Flexible Working Policy; and
18. The Equality Staff Networks Briefing Note, including the proposed allocation of protected time for network members and network leads.

2. That the above documents be submitted to the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee on 21 July 2026 for endorsement and, subject to endorsement, be published on the Council's intranet and communicated to staff.

3. That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager be invited to attend a future meeting of the Employment Panel to set out the work and progress of the Equality Staff Networks.

EP.12 EMPLOYMENT PANEL TRAINING

Tim Normanton delivered a training session in relation to Employment Panel hearings.

EP.13 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR S THORPE
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm)