AGENDA FOR

EMPLOYMENT PANEL

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To: All Members of Employment Panel

Councillors : M Walsh, T Tariq, L Smith, D Green, D Hill, K Hussain, A Quinn, S Thorpe (Chair) and A Arif

Dear Member/Colleague

Employment Panel

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Employment Panel which will be held as follows:-

Date:	Tuesday, 10 November 2026
Place:	Microsoft Teams
Time:	7.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
Notes:	

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Employment Panel are asked whether they have an interest in any of the matters on the agenda and, if so, to formally declare that interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING *(Pages 3 - 6)*

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2026 are attached for approval and accuracy.

4 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW *(Pages 7 - 36)*

Report and appendices attached.

5 REDEPLOYMENT ACTIVITY UPDATE *(Pages 37 - 42)*

Report attached.

6 VOLUNTARY EXIT SCHEME *(Pages 43 - 54)*

Report and appendix attached.

7 URGENT BUSINESS

Agenda Item 3

Minutes of: **EMPLOYMENT PANEL**

Date of Meeting: 23 September 2026

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

Also in attendance: Kate Waterhouse – Exec Director of Transformation and Strategy
Sue Williams – Assistant Director of People and Inclusion
Nicole Howarth – Strategic Lead, HR
Jacqui Dennis – Exec Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Kelly Barnett – Joint Elections and Democratic Services Officer

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

Apologies for Absence: None received.

The Chair welcomed Sue Williams, the new Assistant Director of People and Inclusion to the meeting and Sue Williams introduced herself.

EP.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence are noted above.

EP.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tariq declared an interest in all items considered due to his role as Chair of the North West Employers.

EP.3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 20 July 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EP.4 ANTI-RACIST ORGANISATION STRATEGY

The Panel considered a report presenting the proposed Anti-Racist Organisation Strategy.

Sue Williams introduced the report and strategy and explained that the strategy aligned with work being undertaken by other Greater Manchester local authorities. The purpose of the strategy was to ensure that the Council remained an inclusive organisation and took a proactive approach to tackling racism and promoting equality within the workforce.

Members heard that a workforce that felt psychologically and physically safe was essential to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. It was noted that a representative and inclusive workforce would also strengthen relationships with local communities and encourage residents to engage confidently with Council services.

Councillor Walsh expressed strong support for the strategy but felt there should be explicit recognition of Christianity and Christian communities within the document and commented that all faith communities should be reflected appropriately.

Councillor Tariq welcomed the report and suggested that reference should be made to the Public Sector Equality Duty. He also referred to the North West Employers Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Charter and encouraged the Council to consider engagement with that framework. Councillor Tariq emphasised the importance of ensuring the strategy delivered tangible and measurable actions rather than broad statements of intent.

In response, Sue Williams advised that the strategy formed only one part of a wider programme of inclusion work and highlighted that there is a robust response to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. She suggested that a future report could be brought back to the Committee outlining the broader inclusion framework.

Councillor Quinn highlighted concerns regarding rising hostility and discrimination experienced by Jewish communities nationally and locally. He stressed the importance of education and community understanding, noting the impact such issues could have on people's feelings of safety.

Councillor Khalid echoed comments regarding the importance of recognising all faith communities and ensuring that Council policies reflected the needs and concerns of those communities.

Councillor Thorpe acknowledged the challenges faced by Jewish communities and supported the points raised.

Kate Waterhouse advised that there was separate work underway relating to community cohesion, including activity led through VCFA partners and the use of recovery funding. Members were reassured that community cohesion issues were being considered through appropriate forums.

Councillor Walsh reiterated the importance of ensuring all faith communities were explicitly recognised and offered to engage further with partners regarding representation of Christian communities.

Councillor Smith reminded the Committee that the Employment Panel should be specifically looking at the strategy through the Council's role as an employer and suggested that the policy should be considered primarily through that workforce lens.

Sue Williams confirmed that a key objective of the strategy was to ensure the Council's workforce became increasingly reflective of the communities it served. She advised that workforce data was being collected and analysed to understand recruitment and progression trends.

Councillor Arif asked whether future reports would be brought to the Committee to monitor progress against the strategy. Sue Williams confirmed that regular updates, including workforce data and outcomes, would be provided.

In summarising the discussion, Members acknowledged broad support for the strategy and recognised its potential benefits in strengthening recruitment, retention and inclusion within the workforce. It was agreed that further information on the wider inclusion agenda and supporting workforce data would be brought back to a future meeting.

The Employment Panel agreed:

1. To note the content of the new 2-Year Anti-Racism Organisation Strategy.

2. That further information regarding the wider equality, diversity and inclusion framework, together with workforce data and progress updates, be reported to a future committee meeting.

EP.5 ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ALL-AGE COMMISSIONING FUNCTION

The Committee considered a report regarding the establishment of an All-Age Commissioning Function.

Members were advised that the proposal arose from a wider organisational review and had previously been considered through various Council governance processes. The report sought support for the implementation of recommendations and outlined temporary arrangements for a two year period.

It was explained that the proposed model would bring greater alignment across commissioning activity, achieve efficiencies and support improved outcomes through a more integrated approach. Members were informed that some elements of the proposal fell within delegated officer powers but that the matter had been brought to the Committee due to its importance and the changes to the operational model.

Councillor Thorpe referred to work undertaken by Impower and noted that one of the recommendations had been to develop stronger links between children's and adult services commissioning. He highlighted the importance of improving capability and managing growing demand pressures across both service areas.

Councillor Tariq welcomed the proposals and noted the significant achievements already delivered through commissioning arrangements in adult social care, particularly in relation to efficiencies and savings. He welcomed the fact that the proposal did not create an entirely new role and believed the arrangements would deliver benefits across a range of service areas.

The Employment Panel agreed to:

1. Support the establishment of a new All Age Commissioning function within the Council.
2. Note the temporary expansion of responsibilities for a period of up to 24 months to allow the current Director of Adult Social Services and Community Commissioning to develop this function.
3. Support an honorarium payment in accordance with Council policy for the duration of these additional responsibilities.
4. Support consequential interim arrangements to ensure continued operational leadership of Adult Social Care services.
5. Note that a full review of the operating model and leadership arrangements will be undertaken following implementation.

EP.6 POST REDESIGNATION LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Panel considered a report regarding the redesignation of the Head of Legal Services post to an Assistant Director role.

Members were advised that following the departure of the previous postholder, a recruitment exercise had been undertaken but had not resulted in a successful appointment. Benchmarking had subsequently been completed across Greater Manchester and other local authorities, which demonstrated that the salary level offered was not reflective of the current market.

The proposal therefore sought to redesignate the role to Assistant Director level in recognition of the breadth and complexity of responsibilities and to improve recruitment prospects.

Jacqui Dennis informed the Panel that market testing and benchmarking had been undertaken and that advice received indicated that the Council's offer was not competitive. She outlined the significant scope of services within the directorate, including legal services, democratic services, registrations, information governance, complaints, safeguarding and performance. She highlighted the increasing demands associated with governance, improvement activity, housing services work and major corporate projects.

Councillor Green sought clarification that the previous recruitment campaign had failed to secure appointable candidates and that the redesignation was intended to attract candidates with the required skills and experience. Officers confirmed this was the case.
Councillor Walsh supported the proposal and commented that salary levels played an important role in attracting suitably qualified applicants.

Jacqui Dennis advised that members of the appointment panel had determined that none of the candidates interviewed during the previous recruitment exercise met the required standard. Recruitment agencies subsequently confirmed that the salary level was below market expectations.

Councillor Hill asked about the risks associated with the vacancy remaining unfilled and what mitigations were currently in place. In response, Jacqui Dennis explained that responsibilities had been redistributed across the department, temporary support had been secured to assist with complex legal matters, and she had personally taken on additional responsibilities to ensure continuity of service.

The Employment Panel agreed to:

1. Approve the redesignation of the vacant Head of Legal post to Assistant Director of Law & Governance, reflecting the strategic breadth of responsibilities and market expectations for senior legal leadership roles.

EP.7 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR S THORPE
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 7.50 pm)

Agenda Item 4

Bury Council

Classification	Item No.
Open	

Meeting:	Employment Panel
Meeting date:	10th November 2026
Title of report:	Workforce Policy Review
Report by:	Cllr. Sean Thorpe, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services
Decision Type:	
Ward(s) to which report relates	All

Executive Summary:

A key component of the Council's HR improvement and modernisation programme is the review of core HR systems, processes and policies to ensure they are fit for purpose, reflective of modern HR practice and align with the organisational culture described by the LET'S values.

This report sets out proposals for a number of new, changed, reviewed and replaced policies. Trade Union colleagues have been fully engaged in this work.

Recommendation(s)

That the Employment Panel agrees updates to the following documents:

1. Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy
2. Facilities Time Policy

The documents will then go for endorsement to the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee on 16th December 2026 and subject to approval will then be published on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. <u>Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy</u>

Background

The Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy was last updated in June 2023. The Council is committed to providing a healthy, safe and inclusive working environment for employees, elected members, contractors, agency workers, visitors, members of the public and any other individuals working on, visiting, or using Council premises or vehicles. This policy sets out the Council's approach to smoking and vaping in the workplace, including the arrangements, restrictions and support available to employees. The policy also supports the Council's responsibilities under relevant health and safety and smoke-free workplace legislation.

Policy Headlines
The policy has been reviewed and revised to modernise the language, wording and references, in order to improve clarity and strengthen guidance relating to smoking and vaping in the workplace.

The policy also provides clearer information on the support available to employees who wish to stop smoking, vaping or using tobacco products, by means of a separate sub-section rather than being embedded into the 'Detailed Guidance'.

Within the current policy, it states that employees will be provided with an annual health check, if they are exposed to second-hand smoke within a client's home. This does not happen, therefore it has been removed from policy. Health and Safety have been contacted to ensure that services know how to manage these situations via the relevant risk assessment, and employees can be referred for a health assessment via Optima at any time.

2. Facilities Time Policy

Background
The Facilities Time Policy forms Appendix K of Local Conditions of Service. It sets out the facilities time arrangements for trade union representatives who are employed by the Council. It also acts as a guide for managing arrangements for time off for trade union duties and activities. It aims to support effective industrial relations by enabling trade union representatives to carry out their duties efficiently while balancing the operational needs of the Council. The Policy was last updated in July 2026 when the need to publish facilities time data was removed.

Policy Headlines
The policy has had to have further minor changes made to ensure compliance with the Employment Rights Act 2025 changes that are due to come into force on 30 October 2026. These include:

- Adding in recognition for the role of union equality representatives
- Updating provisions on workplace and digital access
- Adding that employees have a right to be informed that they can join a trade union
- Updating legislative references

Community impact/links with Community Strategy

A modern and effective employee policy framework is essential to ensuring the effective operation of the organisation and, in turn the delivery of our commitment to the Community Strategy.

Equality Impact and considerations:

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

(a) *eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*

(b) *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*

(c) *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

Equality Analysis	Please provide a written explanation of the outcome(s) of either conducting an initial or full EA.

No negative impact identified.

Assessment of Risk:

The following risks apply to the decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Trade Union objection to policy changes	Prior discussions have taken place with Unison

Consultation:

All of the above proposed changes have been shared with the Trade Unions, and where appropriate there have been consultations with HR colleagues and the Legal Team.

Legal Implications:

There are no immediate legal implications

Financial Implications:

There are no immediate financial implications

Report Author and Contact Details:

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Background papers:

Appendix 1: Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy
Appendix 2: Facilities Time Policy

Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy

December 2026

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1. Aim

~~Bury Council recognises the adverse impact on health caused by direct and second-hand smoking in the workplace and are supportive of the Government's commitment to eradicating the harmful effects of tobacco smoking and second-hand smoke which now includes the provision to make enclosed public places and workplaces smoke-free.~~

~~This Policy details the restrictions and arrangements/facilities around smoking and vaping at work, together with support available for employees.~~

Bury Council recognises the adverse health effects of smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke, and supports national initiatives aimed at reducing smoking-related harm.

This policy sets out the Council's arrangements, expectations and restrictions relating to smoking and vaping in the workplace, together with information on the support available to employees who wish to stop smoking, vaping, or reduce their tobacco use.

2. Definition

~~The word 'smoking' throughout this Policy includes the use of all types of tobacco/herbal tobacco, cigarettes pipes and cigars.~~

~~The word 'vaping' throughout this policy means the use of any type of electronic cigarette device.~~

~~The use of electronic cigarettes is to be regarded in the same way as tobacco cigarettes (i.e. they are not permitted to be used in any work-related setting).~~

For the purposes of this policy, 'smoking' includes the use of all types of tobacco products, including any cigarettes, cigars and pipes.

'Vaping' refers to the use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and other electronic vaping devices.

Vaping is subject to the same restrictions as smoking and is not permitted in any work-related setting where smoking is prohibited.

Please note: Employees should note that the sale and supply of single use (disposable) vapes has been prohibited in the UK since 1 June 2025.

3. Scope

~~This Policy applies to employees, elected members, members of the public, contractors and others working, visiting or using Council premises or vehicles. It forms part of the Council's Health and Safety arrangements and is recommended to schools for adoption by each governing body. (Specific guidance is also available to support the development of school policies on vaping).~~

~~The Policy applies to all Council-run meetings which Council employees attend as part of their work.~~

~~The Policy relates to the actions of employees during the course of their work, irrespective of location.~~

~~This is a workforce policy and the Council makes no comment or judgement on the actions of individuals outside of working time in relation to smoking or vaping.~~

This policy applies to all employees, elected members, contractors, agency workers, visitors, members of the public and any other individuals working, visiting, or using Council premises or vehicles.

It forms part of the Council's Health and Safety framework and is recommended for adoption by schools and other educational settings.

The policy applies to all Council-operated meetings attended by employees as part of their duties, regardless of location.

The Policy relates to the actions of employees during the course of their work, irrespective of location.

This is a workplace policy and governs smoking and vaping activities undertaken in connection with work. The Council makes no comment or judgement about employees' smoking or vaping activities outside of working time.

4. ~~Principles~~ Principles and Legislative Framework

~~The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 gave employers a duty of care to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees and the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 specifically placed a duty on employers to ensure that non-smokers were not affected by tobacco in rest rooms or rest areas.~~

~~The Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006 requires all employers to provide smoke-free workplaces for employees.~~

~~The smoking ban applies in all enclosed or "substantially enclosed" public places and workplaces and vehicles used for work.~~

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others who may be affected by their activities. In addition, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require employers to provide a working environment that protects the health and wellbeing of employees.

The Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006 requires employers to provide smoke-free workplaces for employees.

The smoking ban applies to all enclosed or substantially enclosed public places and workplaces, including vehicles used for work purposes. The council enforces the same restrictions in relation to vaping.

This policy supports compliance with these legal requirements and sets out the Council's arrangements for managing smoking and vaping in the workplace.

5. Approach

~~Except where specifically described within this Policy, smoking/vaping is not permitted within any of the Council's buildings or in any part of the Council's premises, within the entrance area to Council owned buildings or on land adjacent to the building (car park, garden area, walkway etc.) where this forms part of the premises. These restrictions also include Civic Suites.~~

~~Similarly, except where specifically described within this Policy, smoking/vaping is not permitted during working time, irrespective of work location.~~

Smoking and vaping are not permitted in any Council building, Council-owned vehicle, or on Council premises, including entrance areas and doorways, car parks, gardens, walkways and other external areas that form part of the premises.

As a public-facing organisation, the Council recognises that employees, elected members and contractors play an important role in promoting positive health messages and creating environments where smoking and vaping are not normalised.

Maintaining smoke and vape free workplaces supports the Council's wider commitment to protecting health and wellbeing.

Unless otherwise specified and described within this policy, smoking and vaping are not permitted during working time, regardless of work location.

6. Detailed Guidance

6.1. Workplace Arrangements

~~No employee is allowed to smoke/vape during paid working time; this includes employees working outdoors and working from home. When on a smoking/vaping break, employees should not be easily identifiable as a Council employee; i.e. where appropriate they should ensure their uniform is covered when smoking/vaping.~~

~~It is not permitted for any employee on duty in any Council place of work to open any doors or windows for the purposes of smoking/vaping.~~

~~Smoking and vaping should be limited to breaks (including lunch breaks) and should be appropriately logged via the flexi-sheet system where relevant.~~

Employees must not smoke or vape during paid working time. This applies to all employees regardless of work location, including those working outdoors or working from home.

Smoking and vaping should be restricted to authorised breaks. Where applicable, time taken for smoking or vaping breaks must be recorded in accordance with local flexi-time arrangements.

Employees taking a smoking or vaping break should ensure they are not identifiable as Council employees. Where appropriate, Council uniforms, ID badges and other Council-branded clothing should be covered.

Employees must not open doors, windows or other access points to Council buildings for the purpose of smoking or vaping.

6.2. Short stay residences, sheltered housing and clients' homes

~~In the Council's short stay residences, residents aged over 18 are permitted to smoke/vape in a designated room. Designated areas will be provided with suitable extraction equipment to minimise the effect on staff working at those establishments and employees working within these premises will be offered an annual health check.~~

~~Within Sheltered Housing residents are allowed to smoke/vape in their own flats and will be encouraged to purchase and use a reasonable extractor. There will be no smoking/vaping in communal areas.~~

~~Employees who work within establishments during the night are not permitted to smoke/vape during working hours. It is acknowledged that for some employees this may present difficulties and the council will provide support to overcome this on an individual basis.~~

~~Employees are not allowed to smoke/vape in people's homes where they are working or visiting. This includes during any break in their work or at the end of the working day.~~

Residents aged 18 and over in Council-operated short stay residential settings may smoke or vape only in designated areas. Where designated indoor smoking or

vaping areas are provided, and appropriate ventilation or extraction measures will be in place to minimise exposure for employees.

Residents of sheltered housing are permitted to smoke or vape within their own accommodation. Residents are encouraged to use suitable ventilation or extraction measures where reasonably practicable. Smoking and vaping are not permitted in communal areas.

Employees working overnight within establishments are not permitted to smoke or vape during working time. The Council recognises that this may present challenges for some employees and will provide appropriate guidance and support where required and on an individual basis.

Employees must not smoke or vape in a client's or resident's home whilst undertaking work-related duties. This restriction applies throughout the visit, including during breaks and at the end of the working day.

6.3. Vehicles

~~The smoking/vaping ban applies to all Council vehicles.~~

~~Employees are asked to refrain from smoking/vaping in their own vehicles, when used on Council business and when carrying passengers.~~

Smoking and vaping are prohibited in all Council operated vehicles.

Employees using their own vehicles for Council business are expected to refrain from smoking or vaping whilst undertaking work-related journeys, particularly when carrying passengers on Council business.

6.4. Smoking/Vaping Breaks

~~No facilities for smoking/vaping will be provided within any of the Council's buildings, however, the Council does acknowledge that smoking is an addictive habit, and subject to service requirements and levels of cover, smokers/vapers will be permitted to leave their place of work for a smoking/vaping break. Employees; including those working outdoors; will need to seek approval before taking a smoking break and all will be treated as an unpaid authorised absence from the workplace.~~

~~Smoking/vaping breaks must be appropriately recorded and deducted from working time. In some social care establishments flexi-time does not apply and there may be no provision for official breaks. In these circumstances where there is a team agreement for unofficial breaks e.g. a tea break, the Manager should put a system in place that allows this to be controlled and reasonable, ensuring staffing levels are maintained. If such a system exists, those wishing to smoke/vape should do so during their unofficial break and not in addition to it.~~

~~In all cases where employees take official or unofficial smoking/vaping breaks they must fulfill their contractual hours.~~

~~The duration and frequency of smoking/vaping breaks must be agreed between the smoker/vaper and their manager, as acceptable levels will vary from service to service, and the number of smokers. In any event authorised absence from work will not be permitted for smoking/vaping within one hour of starting/finishing work or within one hour of starting/finishing a lunch break.~~

The Council does not provide smoking or vaping facilities within its buildings. However, the Council recognises that smoking is an addictive habit and, subject to service requirements, the maintenance of appropriate staffing levels and agreement from their Manager, employees may be permitted to leave their workplace to smoke or vape during authorised breaks. This also applies to employees working outdoors.

Employees must obtain their manager's approval before taking a smoking or vaping break. Time taken for smoking or vaping breaks will be treated as unpaid authorised absence and must be accurately recorded and deducted from working time where applicable.

In some social care settings, flexi-time arrangements do not apply and there may be no provision for formal breaks. In these circumstances, where arrangements allow informal breaks, managers should ensure that appropriate controls are in place to maintain adequate service delivery and staffing levels. Employees who wish to smoke or vape should do so during these agreed informal breaks and not in addition to them.

Employees are responsible for ensuring that any smoking or vaping breaks taken do not prevent them from fulfilling their contractual working hours. The frequency and duration of smoking and vaping breaks must be agreed between the employee and their manager, taking account of operational and service requirements. Acceptable arrangements may vary between services.

In all cases, authorised smoking or vaping breaks will not normally be permitted within one hour of the start or end of the working day, or within one hour of the start or end of a lunch break.

6.5. Designated Smoking/Vaping Areas

~~Designated smoking/vaping areas can be identified outside the confines of the actual building but within the grounds of the premises in the following cases where:~~

~~• a management assessment identifies a risk to the personal safety of employees if they leave the grounds of the Council premises where they work to have a smoking/vaping break~~
~~or~~
~~• where employees work in a social care setting and are taking an unofficial smoking/vaping break but are still on duty and must respond to any requests or notification to return to their duties~~

~~Designated smoking areas must be compliant with legislation, be out of view of the public, and be provided with a bin by the Council for disposal of any waste material.~~

~~Employees smoking/vaping within designated areas should ensure that waste is disposed of appropriately without littering.~~

Designated smoking and vaping areas may be available outside the confines of a Council building, but within the grounds of the premises, where a management risk assessment has identified a need.

This may include:

- where employees would be exposed to a risk to their personal safety if required to leave Council premises to smoke or vape; or
- where employees work in a social care setting, are taking an informal smoking or vaping break, and remain on duty and available to respond to service user needs or return to their duties when required.

Any designated smoking or vaping area must comply with relevant legislation, be located away from public view where reasonably practicable, and be equipped with appropriate waste disposal facilities.

In addition to health impacts, tobacco products and vaping devices can contribute to environmental harm through litter, plastic waste and pollution.

Employees using designated smoking or vaping areas are responsible for disposing of cigarette ends, vaping materials and other related waste appropriately and must not litter.

~~**Help with Smoking Cessation**~~

~~The Council will support employees wishing to give up smoking through Bury Live Well Service. The Live Well Service can be contacted via:~~
~~Live Well Website~~
~~Referral page~~
~~Telephone: 0161 253 7575~~

~~Where practicable, requests from employees to attend smoking cessation programs during working hours will be supported, subject to operational requirements and management approval.~~
~~Support is also available from GPs.~~

6.6. Pre-Existing Medical Conditions

~~It is important to identify members of staff who have a pre-existing medical condition that is made worse by exposure to tobacco smoke, such as asthma and cardio-vascular disease, and those who face additional risks e.g. pregnant women. In these cases particular care must be taken to prevent or minimise their exposure to tobacco smoke and medical advice should be sought.~~

The Council recognises that exposure to tobacco smoke or smoke from vaping may have a greater impact on some individuals, particularly those with pre-existing health

conditions such as asthma, respiratory conditions or cardiovascular disease, and those who may be at increased risk, including pregnant employees.

Where a health condition may be affected by exposure to tobacco smoke or smoke from vaping, reasonable steps should be taken to prevent or minimise exposure.

Where necessary, appropriate medical or occupational health advice should be sought to support the health, safety and wellbeing of the individual employee concerned.

6.7. Protection whilst working in or visiting other people's homes

~~Employees can be required to work in or visit people's homes in the course of their duties. As private dwellings are not covered by the legislation during these visits staff may be exposed to the harmful effects of passive tobacco smoke.~~

~~It is expected that a smoke free environment will be provided whilst a Council employee is visiting a private home in the course of their official duties. Therefore, smoking by the client or others who may live in the house/accommodation (including visitors) should not take place immediately before or during this time and clients should be informed of this requirement at their first contact or assessment. Standard appointment letters, forms and other relevant correspondence should ask that, in preparation for the visit, any smokers at the property should: -~~

- ~~Avoid smoking inside their home for at least one hour before their appointment time~~
- ~~Fully open windows and doors to ventilate the area where the employee will be working~~
- ~~And also that, during the visit, they should: -~~
- ~~Not smoke/vape or let anyone else smoke/vape in the area~~
- ~~Wherever possible ask others to go outside to smoke/vape whilst the employee is present~~
- ~~Clients should also be informed that the employee will decide whether to leave their home if these requests are not met.~~
- ~~If it is a statutory or essential service that must be provided, and the provisions outlined above are not met, the following alternative strategies should be explored: -~~
- ~~Where possible agree to meet at an alternative smoke/vape free venue~~
- ~~Encourage the client to limit their time smoking/vaping whilst the employee is in their home~~
- ~~Where exposure to continues, managers should limit the employee's exposure by restricting the amount of time they spend on visits~~

~~For staff contracted to work long shifts in service users' homes, a risk assessment should be carried out and the following steps taken to minimise the risk of secondhand smoke: -~~

- ~~Where possible to negotiate and designate a smoking/vaping room which can be used by the smoker/vaper when employees are present~~
- ~~Where possible the employee should leave the room if the service user smoking/vaping~~
- ~~If this is not possible employee may request increased ventilation in the room by opening a window/door~~
- ~~The service user should be asked to limit the number of times they smoke/vape whilst the employee is in their home~~
- ~~The service user to be asked to consider the purchase of a reasonable extractor~~

~~If exposure is still unacceptable, reducing the amount of time that any one employee spends there must be considered.~~

~~If 24 hour care is provided in a service users' home staff should be made aware before the appointment that the nature of the work may result in exposure to secondhand smoke and that steps will be taken to minimise this exposure.~~

~~If none of the above measures can be implemented then, as a last resort, consideration should be given to withdrawing employees from an unsuitable working environment.~~

~~The smoking/vaping status of a client should be recorded and issues involving the homes and cars of clients/service users who smoke/vape should be discussed and documented appropriately to ensure employees have prior warnings before future visits.~~

~~It must be ensured that Council employees who smoke/vape are treated in the same way as non-smokers when allocating client/service users who are smokers/vapers.~~

Employees may be required to work in or visit clients' homes as part of their duties.

As private residences are not covered by smoke-free workplace legislation, measures should be taken to minimise employees' exposure to second-hand smoke and vapour.

Clients should be asked not to smoke or vape for at least one hour before a planned visit, to ventilate the area where the employee will be working by opening windows and doors where possible, and not to smoke or vape during the visit. These requirements should be communicated at the earliest opportunity through assessments, appointment letters and other relevant correspondence.

Where smoking or vaping occurs during a visit, employees should request that it stops and, where appropriate, ask that anyone wishing to smoke or vape does so outside while the employee is present. Employees may withdraw from the property where these arrangements cannot be maintained, unless a statutory or essential service must be provided. Where exposure cannot be avoided, managers should ensure that a risk assessment and management discussion are undertaken with the

employee, and appropriate measures are implemented to minimise risks and support the employee.

Where essential services are being delivered and a smoke-free environment cannot be achieved, reasonable steps should be taken to reduce exposure. These may include:

- meeting the client at an alternative smoke-free location
- increasing ventilation within the property
- encouraging the client to limit smoking or vaping during the visit, and,
- restricting the duration of visits where reasonably practicable

Where employees provide regular, extended or overnight care within a client's home, a risk assessment must be completed and appropriate control measures identified.

Control measures may include:

- Increasing ventilation
- Leaving the immediate area while smoking or vaping takes place
- Agreeing a designated smoking or vaping area within the home of the client
- Limiting the frequency of smoking or vaping while employees are present
- If possible, reducing the duration of a visit, if appropriate

Where 24-hour care is provided, employees should be made aware in advance if exposure to second-hand smoke or vapour is likely and informed of the measures in place to minimise the risk.

If exposure cannot be adequately controlled despite reasonable adjustments, consideration should be given to whether the environment remains suitable for employees to work in and whether alternative arrangements, including the withdrawal of employees from the environment where appropriate, are required.

A client's smoking or vaping status, together with any identified risks and agreed control measures, should be recorded appropriately to support future visits and ensure employees are aware of any potential exposure before attending.

When allocating work or client visits, employees who smoke or vape are not treated differently from employees who do not smoke or vape.

6.8. Smoking or Vaping when working from home

~~As we support employees to work with agility, a greater number of staff are working from home far more than they did in the past. We encourage meetings take place via Teams to enable colleagues to stay in contact and feel connected.~~

~~When working at home, rules around smoking or vaping in work (as detailed within this document) still apply. When attending meetings via Teams, employees should maintain the same professional standards as they would if they were attending the~~

~~meeting face-to-face.Under no circumstances should employees attend meetings via Teams whilst smoking or vaping; employees must consider the professional nature of their interactions at all times, whether interactions take place virtually or face-to-face.~~

As part of the Council's agile working arrangements, employees may work from home and attend meetings virtually.

Employees are expected to maintain the same professional standards when working remotely as they would in a Council workplace.

The requirements of this policy apply equally when working from home. Employees must not smoke or vape whilst participating in work-related meetings, including virtual meetings held via Teams or other virtual platforms, and should ensure their conduct remains professional at all times.

7. Support to Stop Smoking, Vaping or using Toabacco Products

The Council promotes a supportive, non-judgemental approach to smoking cessation. Employees who smoke or vape are encouraged to access evidence-based support and will be supported to make positive health choices.
The Council recognises nicotine dependence as an addiction and encourages early access to specialist support services, please see Bury Live Well Service: **Quit smoking - Bury Council**.

Additional resources can be accessed via:

- Live Well website: Bury Live Well Service - Bury Council
- Live Well referral page: Referrals to Bury Live Well Service - Bury Council
- Telephone: 0161 253 7575

Where reasonably practicable, employees will be supported to attend smoking cessation appointments or programmes during working hours, subject to operational requirements and manager approval.

Employees may also wish to seek support from their GP or other appropriate health professionals.

8. ~~Evaluation and Measures of Success~~ Compliance and Monitoring

~~All managers are responsible for ensuring that the Council's approach to smoking/vaping at work as outlined in this Policy is adhered to and all employees can enjoy a smoke/vape free working environment. Complaints or requests in relation to this should be dealt with appropriately and notes should be retained.~~

~~Breaches of this policy will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.~~

~~Employees who raise genuine concerns about breaches of this policy will be supported. Staff are authorised to ask non-employees who breach the policy to leave the premises~~

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of this policy are implemented and that employees are able to work in a smoke and vape free environment. Any concerns, complaints or requests relating to this policy should be addressed appropriately and a record retained where necessary. Employees who raise genuine concerns about breaches of this policy will be supported.

Staff are authorised to remind visitors, contractors and other non-employees of the requirements within this policy, and may ask individuals who fail to comply to leave the premises where appropriate.

Breaches of this policy by employees may be addressed in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

This policy supports Bury's wider commitment to creating a smoke-free generation, protecting people from the harms of second-hand smoke and improving the health and wellbeing of residents, employees and communities across the borough.

Document Version Control

Document Version Control	
Issue Number	Date
0.01	<<Insert>>

This is a live document effective from the issue date. It supersedes any previous versions of this document, which are now withdrawn.

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Appendix K:
Facilities Time Agreement

~~July~~December 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 This agreement, between Bury Council and the Bury Branch of Unison, sets out the facilities time arrangements for trade union representatives who are employed by the Council. It also acts as a guide for managing arrangements for time off for trade union duties and activities.

1.2 It aims to support effective industrial relations by enabling trade union representatives to carry out their duties efficiently while balancing the operational needs of the Council.

~~1.2~~1.3 This agreement should be read in conjunction with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, the Employment Rights Act 2025 and any associated regulations or Codes of Practice.

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2. Definitions

2.1 The agreement relates to trade union representatives and union learning representatives who can be accredited or unaccredited. Accredited Representatives can be:

- A member of the Unison Executive Council or National/Regional Body of Unison or Annual Conference delegate for the period of the Conference
- Elected officers of the Branch, departmental representatives, shop stewards and appointed Safety representatives.

2.2 Trade Union Representative: An employee who has been elected or appointed, in accordance with the rules of an independent trade union (Unison), to represent all or some of the members within the workplace where the trade union is recognised for collective bargaining purposes.

2.3 Union Learning Representative: An employee who has been elected or appointed, in accordance with the rules of an independent trade union (Unison) to be a learning representative of the union in the workplace where the trade union is recognised.

~~2.3~~2.4 Union Equality Representative: An employee who has been elected or appointed in accordance with the rules of a recognised independent trade union to undertake equality-related duties within the workplace.

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~~2.4~~2.5 Facilities Time: Paid or unpaid time off during working hours granted by the employer to trade union representatives to carry out trade union duties or activities. This includes time for negotiations, representation, consultation, and training.

~~2.5~~2.6 Trade Union Duties: Duties carried out by trade union representatives that relate to industrial relations between the employer and employees. These are set out in detail in the ACAS Code of Practice for Trade Union Duties and Activities and include, but are not limited to:

- Negotiating, providing advice and accompanying/representing employees, in matters relating to terms and conditions of employment/policies/procedures, including:
  - disciplinary, capability, grievance, redeployment, managing attendance issues
  - allocation of work or duties
  - flexible working arrangements, hours/rotas and work-life balance issues
  - job evaluation and pay and grading
  - physical conditions in the workplace
- Consulting on organisational change/restructures and redundancies (as identified under s.188 of TULR(C)A) or TUPE transfers (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006)
- Attending meetings with management
- Preparing for and attending joint consultative committees
- Safety representatives carrying out their functions under Health and Safety Regulations
- Training to enable trade union duties to be carried out

~~2.6~~2.7 Trade Union Activities: Activities that trade union members or representatives may undertake to support the functioning of the union. These are generally unpaid unless otherwise agreed and include:

- Attending workplace meetings to discuss union matters e.g. Monthly meetings of the Unison Branch Executive
- Voting in union elections
- Participating in union conferences

3. Facilities to be provided

3.1 Whilst on secondment, Unison officers will be located at the Bury Branch of Unison, 17 Knowsley Street, Bury, which is wholly owned by Unison. Unison will ensure that the premises and ancillary equipment including desks, chairs, filing cabinets, telephones, photocopier, PC's etc. are maintained in a manner that provides a safe working environment. All of the above items are purchased by and maintained by the Branch except for the telephony system and any laptops already allocated to staff which ~~is~~ are provided by the Council.

3.2 Workplace stewards and representatives will be granted reasonable access to external telephones for the purpose of carrying out their duties.

3.3 Should accommodation be required in Council buildings, this will be provided subject to Unison giving adequate notice to enable rooms to be booked etc.

3.4 Free use of the Council's internal mail systems is permitted with any external post and use of the Council's photocopiers being chargeable to Unison.

3.5 Notice boards to display Unison information/notices can be erected in admin buildings by agreement.

3.6 Reasonable access will be given to the physical workplace, digital communication facilities and intranet systems, as appropriate and in accordance with statutory trade union access rights.

4. Trade Union information rights

4.1 The Council will provide workers with information regarding their right to join a trade union in accordance with statutory requirements and any Government guidance in force. This information will be provided to new starters and existing employees as required by legislation.

~~4.~~5. Union subscriptions – deductions of contributions at source (DOCAS)

~~5~~4.1 Unison subscriptions can be deducted from employees' salaries and paid to the trade union as an alternative to employees paying by direct debit in accordance with the jointly developed, agreed and signed service level agreement.

Employees who join Unison online by visiting Join UNISON | UNISON - the public service union will pay their subscription via direct debit, however, by emailing Unison@bury.gov.uk employees can join and arrange payment direct from their salary.

~~5.~~6. Time off for branch officers and trade union representatives

~~5~~6.1 The Council has agreed time off for unison branch officers equating to 2.5 full-time equivalent (fte) employees' working time. There is also an established post of Branch Secretary. The allocation and distribution of these hours will be wholly at the discretion of the Branch Secretary who will advise the Chief Executive annually of the names, designation, proportionate hours and the disbursement allocated to each branch officer.

~~5~~6.2 Time off for trade union duties: In addition to the above, reasonable time off during working hours will be granted to all branch officers and accredited trade union representatives to undertake their trade union duties. Where there is no option for the meeting to be held in normal working hours, or where it is in the benefit of the organisation that the meeting is carried out in the representative's normal non-working time, then TOIL may be granted with prior agreement.

~~5~~6.3 Both parties to this agreement accept the need to be flexible within this process and recognise their duties and obligations. The parties will seek to agree a mutually convenient time for the duties or activities, with minimum disruption to the service. If possible, the union will consider arranging workplace meetings towards the end of the working week or near break times.

~~5~~6.4 Time off for training: The Council will grant trade union representatives reasonable paid time-off during working hours to undertake training (including e-learning) relevant to the carrying out of their duties as a trade union representative as identified in this agreement.

~~5~~6.5 Time off for trade union activities: Reasonable time off during working hours for trade union activities will be granted to all branch officers and ~~accredited~~ trade union representatives, in accordance with statutory rights and the ACAS Code of Practice.

~~5~~6.6 Time off for union learning representatives: The Council will grant union learning representatives reasonable time off for training and to undertake their duties in relation to:

- analysing learning or training needs
- providing information, advice and guidance on learning and training
- preparing for and promoting learning and training
- consulting on activities or preparing to undertake activities

If a trade union representative or union learning representative undertakes training outside of his/her normal working hours, he/she will not be paid any additional hours.

6.7 Time off for union equality representatives: The Council will grant union equality representatives reasonable paid time off during working hours to undertake statutory equality representative duties and relevant training.

~~5~~6.~~7~~8 Reasonableness of requested time off: The determination of reasonableness will depend ultimately on the needs of the service at the time of the request and the union is aware that managers need to take this into account. Each application for time off will be assessed on its own merit; however, the Council will give consideration to:

- the nature and timing of the request
- the amount of time off previously granted or planned for the future
- the number of representatives or members seeking time off within a given period

~~5~~6.~~8~~ 9 Consideration will be given to the number of hours an employee is due to work in a week on both Council and trade union duties, e.g. training on trade union duties during normal working hours would be considered as part of the working week.

~~5~~6.~~9~~ 10 If reasonable time off cannot be agreed, this will be referred to the Branch Secretary and the Chief Executive for determination. If no decision is reached the matter shall be referred to the Joint Consultative Committee in the first instance.

~~5~~6.~~10~~11 Trade union representatives and union learning representatives must follow the procedure set out in Appendix 1 when informing their line manager

of their wish to take paid time off to carry out their duties away from their normal workplace.

~~6.~~7. Review

~~6~~7.1 The arrangements will be reviewed in 3 years' time in accordance with the usual policy review arrangements, or sooner if legislation changes.

Appendix 1: Process for requesting time off for trade union duties and activities

1. Day-to-day trade union activities should normally be agreed verbally or by email/in writing between the representative and their line manager as soon as practically possible. As much notice as possible should be given and representatives should state:
    - the reason for the request (while preserving personal confidentiality, for example for those individuals who are involved with discipline or grievance procedures)
    - the location of the activity and
    - the time and duration of the meeting or activity

2. The line manager will consider the request having due regard for the provisions of the Trade Union & Labour Relations Act and give a response as soon as possible to the employee. Time taken to respond may vary depending on the nature of the request and the demands of the service.

3. For more formal requests/requests for time off for training:
    - requests and responses should be sent by the employee to the Branch Secretary
    - the Branch Secretary will write to the People Policy and Organisational Development Manager formally asking for agreement

    Following liaison between HR and the service, the request will be formally agreed or any issues e.g. service capacity, will be discussed with the Branch Secretary.

4. Should it not be possible to resolve any issues, the request will be referred to the Chief Executive for consultation with the Branch Secretary for a decision.

5. The trade union representative will record their time off and send details to the Branch Secretary each month.

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Agenda Item 5

Classification Open	Item No.

Meeting:	Employment Panel
Meeting date:	10th November 2026
Title of report:	Redeployment Activity and Outcomes Update (April 2026 - September 2026)
Report by:	Sue Williams, Assistant Director of People, Inclusion and Culture
Decision Type:	Information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides Employment Panel with a six-month update on redeployment activity and outcomes covering the period April 2026 to September 2026.

The report also provides an overview of the implementation of the Council's updated Redeployment Policy, which came into effect in July 2026. The revised policy introduced a clear framework for managing redeployment cases, including eligibility criteria, priority categories, responsibilities, and processes to support employees who are at risk of losing their employment or whose current roles are no longer suitable.

Since April 2026, five employees have been placed on the Council's redeployment register. At the time of writing, all five cases remain active and no redeployments have been successfully concluded. Employees have been placed on the register as a result of organisational change, ill health and capability processes.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Employment Panel is requested to:

1. Note the redeployment activity and outcomes for the period April 2026 to September 2026.
2. Note the implementation of the updated Redeployment Policy introduced in July 2026.
3. Note the ongoing support arrangements in place for employees on the redeployment register.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Background

The Council is committed to supporting employees whose roles are at risk or who are unable to continue in their substantive role due to organisational change, ill health, capability, redundancy or other circumstances covered by the Redeployment Policy. The policy seeks to retain skills, experience and organisational knowledge wherever possible by providing employees with opportunities to secure suitable alternative employment within the organisation.

A revised Redeployment Policy was approved and implemented in July 2026. The policy outlines a formal redeployment register and established two priority categories:

- Priority 1: Employees who are under formal notice that their employment will end.
- Priority 2: Employees who are eligible for redeployment but are not under notice of dismissal.

The policy introduced structured arrangements including weekly vacancy notifications, regular review meetings, priority consideration for suitable vacancies and a four-week trial period for successful redeployment placements

Redeployment Activity

Between April 2026 and September 2026, five employees were placed on the Council's redeployment register.

The reasons for placement on the redeployment register are summarised below:

Reason for Redeployment	Number of Employees

Organisational Change Programmes	2
Ill Health	2
Capability	1
Total	5

The current priority status of employees on the register is:

Priority Status	Number of Employees
Priority 1 (under notice)	1
Priority 2 (not under notice)	4
Total	5

All employees receive support in accordance with the requirements of the Redeployment Policy, including access to weekly vacancy notifications and regular review discussions with HR and management representatives.

Outcomes

At the date of this report:

- Five employees remain on the redeployment register.
- No employees have secured redeployment into alternative positions during the reporting period.
- No redeployment cases have been closed.
- Active support and vacancy matching continue for all employees on the register.

The relatively low volume of cases reflects the targeted application of the policy and the Council's continued focus on retaining employees wherever possible through organisational change processes and employee support arrangements.

The People, Inclusion and Culture team will continue to monitor progress and work collaboratively with managers to identify suitable opportunities for individuals currently on the register.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

No alternative options have been considered as this report is presented for information and monitoring purposes.

COMMUNITY IMPACT / CONTRIBUTION TO THE BURY 2030 STRATEGY

The Council's commitment to supporting employees through redeployment contributes to organisational resilience and workforce sustainability. Retaining experienced employees where possible helps maintain service delivery and supports the Council's objective of being an inclusive and responsible employer.

EQUALITY IMPACT AND CONSIDERATIONS:

24. *Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:*

    A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

    (a) *eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*

    (b) *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*

    (c) *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

25. *The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services*.

The Redeployment Policy supports the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity by ensuring a fair, transparent and consistent process for employees whose employment circumstances have changed.

The policy provides support for employees experiencing ill health and ensures consideration of suitable alternative employment opportunities, including any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

The arrangements set out within the policy have been designed to ensure that redeployment opportunities are considered consistently and without discrimination.

ASSESSMENT OF RISK:

Failure to operate an effective redeployment process may increase the risk of avoidable redundancies, loss of organisational knowledge, employee relations issues and potential employment-related claims.

The revised Redeployment Policy provides a structured framework to mitigate these risks by ensuring employees are supported and considered for suitable alternative employment opportunities wherever possible.

CONSULTATION:

Individual redeployment cases continue to be managed in consultation with affected employees and, where appropriate, recognised Trade Union representatives.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Council will seek to redeploy employees who are at risk of dismissal due to redundancy or ill health wherever suitable opportunities exist, reflecting its legal obligations to consider alternatives to dismissal and, where applicable, to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Redeployment can reduce or avoid redundancy and recruitment costs, while retaining valuable skills, knowledge and experience within the organisation.

REPORT AUTHOR AND CONTACT DETAILS:

Nicole Howarth
People Advisory Service Manager

Sue Williams
Assistant Director of People, Inclusion & Culture

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Redeployment Register	A register of employees eligible for redeployment opportunities within the Council.
Priority 1	Employees under formal notice that their employment will end.
Priority 2	Employees eligible for redeployment but not under notice of dismissal.
Suitable Alternative Employment	A role identified as appropriate having regard to skills, experience, qualifications, pay and other relevant factors.

Agenda Item 6

Classification Open	Item No.

Meeting:	Employment Panel
Meeting date:	10th November 2026
Title of report:	Voluntary Exit Scheme
Report by:	Sue Williams – Assistant Director of People, Inclusion and Culture
Decision Type:	Decision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Employment Panel approval for the Council's Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) and to enable the progression of applications submitted under the scheme.

The Voluntary Exit Scheme forms part of the Council's wider savings programme and workforce planning arrangements, supporting the delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) while seeking to minimise the need for compulsory redundancies.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- Note that the draft 2027/28 Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 October 2026 and Cabinet on 14 October 2026, included notification that the Council had launched a Voluntary Exit Scheme as part of its wider savings programme and in an effort to avoid compulsory redundancies.

- Endorse the associated Voluntary Exit Scheme and authorise officers to progress applications received under the scheme in accordance with the approved scheme, noting the contribution this scheme will make to the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Background

The draft 2027/28 Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy were considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 October 2026 and Cabinet on 14 October 2026.

As part of those reports, Members were advised that the Council had launched an exercise to gauge the level of interest in a Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES). The scheme was introduced as part of the Council's wider savings programme and as a measure to help avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

The exercise invited expressions of interest from eligible employees across the organisation. To progress the applications submitted under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, the policy is now being presented to Employment Panel for approval and oversight in accordance with the Council's governance.

The Voluntary Exit Scheme provides a mechanism through which employees may apply to leave the organisation voluntarily in return for a severance payment, subject to business need, affordability and organisational requirements. Decisions will take account of:

- The operational impact on service delivery;
- The ability to maintain statutory and critical services;
- Workforce planning considerations;
- Financial affordability and value for money;
- The contribution of the application towards the Council's savings targets.

Approval of the policy will enable management to progress applications received under the scheme. The outcome of the scheme will be included in the Final Budget Report in February 2027

OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Alongside the Voluntary Exit Scheme, the Council is progressing a range of workforce measures including deletion of vacant posts, review of funding arrangements, organisational redesign and service restructuring

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COMMUNITY IMPACT / CONTRIBUTION TO THE BURY 2030 STRATEGY

A modern and effective employee policy framework is essential to ensuring the effective operation of the organisation and, in turn the delivery of our commitment to the Community Strategy.

EQUALITY IMPACT AND CONSIDERATIONS:

24. *Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:*

    A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

    (a) *eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*

    (b) *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*

    (c) *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

25. *The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services*.

No negative impact identified

ASSESSMENT OF RISK:

There is a risk that approval of applications could result in a loss of skills, knowledge and organisational capacity. This risk will be mitigated through a robust assessment process and review of the operational impact of each application.

There is a risk that savings targets are not achieved. The scheme forms one element of the Council's wider savings programme and will be considered alongside other budget proposals.

There is a risk of trade union objection which will be mitigated by Prior discussions have taken place with Unison

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CONSULTATION:

All of the above proposed changes have been shared with the Trade Unions, and where appropriate there have been consultations with HR colleagues and the Legal Team.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The scheme will be administered in accordance with relevant employment legislation, the Council's policies and contractual obligations.

Legal advice will be sought where required in relation to individual cases.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Voluntary Exit Scheme is intended to contribute towards the savings required through the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Any costs associated with individual voluntary exit applications will be assessed against the anticipated recurring savings to ensure that proposals represent value for money and support the Council's financial objectives.

No application will be approved unless there is a demonstrable financial benefit to the Council and sufficient funding is available to meet the costs of the exit.

REPORT AUTHOR AND CONTACT DETAILS:

Sue Williams

Assistant Director of People, Inclusion and Culture

sue.williams@bury.gov.uk

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

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Bury Council

Voluntary Exit Scheme

Draft and embargoed senior managers

September 2026

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Draft and embargoed senior managers

1. Aim

1.1 The Voluntary Exit Scheme 2026 (VES) aims to enable employees, by mutual agreement with the Council, to leave employment in return for a severance payment.

1.2 It is designed to support organisational change, reduce the need for compulsory redundancies, and create opportunities for redeployment of staff into vacant roles.

1.3 Under VES, there is no entitlement to redundancy payments or pension scheme redundancy benefits, as the employee is choosing to leave by agreement rather than being dismissed due to redundancy.

2. Scope and timescales

2.1 VES will be offered to all eligible employees from Monday 14 September 2026 and will close for applications on Sunday 27 September 2026.

2.2 Decisions will be made by a Corporate Panel based on service requirements and whether a business case can be demonstrated. This will include the ability to release monies from core funding.

2.3 Applications will be considered during October 2026, and decisions will be communicated by the end of October 2026.

3. VES terms and conditions

3.1 Employees will qualify for two weeks' gross basic (SCP value, pro rata as appropriate) pay for each completed year of continuous service up to a maximum of 12 months' salary (26 years' service) up to a limit of £30,000.

3.2 Settlement payments are based on your basic salary at time of application and do not include honoraria, acting up payments, or any other adjustments.

3.4 Payments up to £30,000 are tax free.

3.5 If you are on secondment, you can only express an interest in respect of your substantive role.

3.6 The scheme is available for a limited period; the effective date for leaving the Council will be 31 January 2027. Employees are expected to work their contractual notice and utilise all annual leave and banked leave.

Draft and embargoed for senior managers

3.7 The terms of the existing Flexible Retirement scheme will not change, and this scheme will run concurrently with the existing provision. If you have already had an application for flexible retirement approved those arrangements will still stand and you won't be able to apply under VES.

3.8 Under VES the reason for your employment ending will be on the grounds of "mutual termination" and employees will have to agree to and sign an Individual Settlement Agreement.

3.9 The scheme will only be available to those volunteering for mutual termination; it will not be available retrospectively in the event that an employee has been given notice of redundancy.

3.10 Expressions of interest will only be supported where there is a net saving to the Council within the 12-month period following the leaving date.

3.11 If your application is successful, you will not be able to gain new employment with the Council. It is Council Policy that former employees who leave the Council through any form of enhanced severance package will not be re-engaged in normal circumstances at any point and without the approval of the Assistant Director of People, Inclusion and Culture and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services. This includes engagement via Agency or a contract for services.

4. Process

4.1 Employees wishing to make an application for the scheme should complete an application form Voluntary Exit Scheme – Fill in form



For employees without a Bury Council email address, they should complete an application form using this link and QR code below. Voluntary Exit Scheme (No Council Email) – Fill in form

Draft for Discharged senior managers



4.2 Applications will then be considered by the Head of Service and a business case completed if they support the application.

4.3 Business cases will then be put before a panel, who will give final approval.

4.4 There will be no right of appeal.

5. Decision making criteria

Decisions will be based on business need including:

- Impact on front line service users and other customers
- Vacancies in the immediate team and wider service
- Ability to release savings from a revenue budget
- Ability to create digital solutions to ease the impact on wider team

Draft and embargoed senior managers

Draft and embargoed senior managers

Bury Council