

Minutes of: **EMPLOYMENT PANEL**

Date of Meeting: 26 June 2025

Present: Councillor R Gold (in the Chair)
 Councillors J Grimshaw, M Walsh, T Tariq, L Smith and
 I Gartside

Also in attendance: Tim Normanton, Catherine King and Chloe Ashworth.

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor R Bernstein, Councillor C Cummins and
 Councillor I Rizvi

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 12th March 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EP.4 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW

Tim Normanton, Interim Assistant Director of Human Resources presented the policies within the agenda pack to the Employment Panel which will be going to Corporate JCC for review.

Zero Tolerance Policy

This Policy was developed in response to increased violence/aggression toward staff. This matter originated from concerns raised in Health and Safety JCC meetings.

Objectives:

- Define unacceptable public behaviour.
- Empower staff to disengage from abusive interactions.
- Provide escalation framework and organisational support.
- Reinforce commitment to staff safety and wellbeing.
- Staff now explicitly supported in ending abusive calls or escalating incidents.

Cllr Gold advised that Councillors use a code word as a signal to police operators. Members made a proposal to create a similar code for council officers to indicate seriousness.

Workforce Policy Review

This policy has been updated to reflect unauthorised Absence & Pay Suspension. Historically, the Council continued to pay for staff if absent without leave and if they did not engage with the Council.

With the new Protocol if no response from absent employee is obtained, pay is suspended after escalation. Following this process may result in the transition to the disciplinary process where applicable. The policy includes safeguards for fairness and due process. The aim of the policy is to encourage engagement and prevent system misuse.

Councillor Smith sought assurance that this policy aligns with gross misconduct procedures.

It was agreed:

1. Tim Normanton agreed to discuss with Chief Superintendent Oliver regarding a code word for Officers at the next Corporate JCC Meeting.
2. All members endorsed the proposed policies as set out in the agenda pack.

EP.5 MEMBER TRAINING

The purpose of the Session was to support new members of the Employment Panel. The session was led by Tim Normanton, covering roles, responsibilities, and procedures. The slides have been circulated with the minutes for reference.

The key topics covered were as follows:

1. Employment Appeals
 - Types of Appeals: Dismissal and Grievance.
 - Panel Composition: 3-member sub-panel from a 9-member panel.
 - Legal Representation: Generally not allowed unless professional status is at risk.
 - Hearing Process: Structured, evidence-based, and impartial.
 - Finality: Panel decision is final within internal procedures; however, that can be further challenge via Employment Tribunal.
2. Employment Rights Bill (2025)
 - Key Change: Removal of 2-year qualifying period for unfair dismissal claims.
 - Impact: No immediate changes to Council policy, but future updates may be needed.
3. Chief Officer Recruitment
 - Roles Covered: Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Executive Directors, Deputy Chief Officers.
 - Panel Composition: Politically balanced, includes Portfolio Holder.
 - Process: Officer-led initial stages, member-led final interviews.
 - Chair's Role: Central in managing and leading the recruitment process.
4. Interviewing and Bias Awareness
 - Structured Questions: Ensure fairness and consistency.
 - Follow-Up Questions: Allowed if relevant and fair.
 - Avoid unconscious Bias
 - Equalities Obligations: Avoid inappropriate questions; ensure inclusive practices.
 - Reasonable Adjustments: Legal duty to accommodate candidates with disabilities.
5. Panel Governance and Culture
 - Member-Led Principle: Emphasis on councillor accountability and balanced decision-making.
6. Stakeholder Engagement
 - Stakeholder Panels: Provide qualitative feedback.
 - Diversity and Balance: Important to moderate varied perspectives.

- Technical Expertise: Subject matter experts should be involved in relevant roles.

It was agreed that:

1. Slides will be distributed to all panel members.

EP.6 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR R GOLD
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.05 pm and ended at 8.23 pm)