

Unis
Classification
Open

Item No.

Meeting:	Employment Panel
Meeting date:	24 th November 2025
Title of report:	Workforce Policy Review
Report by:	Cllr. Richard Gold, Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Communications & Corporate Affairs
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:

1. A revised Code of Conduct, which is part of the Council's Constitution
2. A refreshed Facilities Time Agreement, which forms Appendix K of Local Conditions of Service
3. A revised Capability Procedure
4. An updated Grievance Procedure
5. Revisions to appeals and hearing procedures
6. An updated Social Media Policy
7. An updated Chief Officer Job Evaluation Scheme and Guidance document

The documents will then go for endorsement to the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee on 17th December 2025 and subject to approval will then be published on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Code of Conduct

Background

The Employee Code of Conduct sets out the standards, values, and expectations for all employees of Bury Council. It ensures that staff act with honesty, transparency, impartiality, and respect in all dealings with the public, elected members, partners, and colleagues.

The current Code was last fully published in 2019, with a minor amendment in November 2024. This 2025 update represents a significant revision to reflect best practice, statutory guidance, and the Council's values. It consolidates and replaces several standalone documents, including:

- Additional Employment – Employee Declaration Form
- Declaration of Intent – Consultation
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Working with Close Relatives

The updated Code forms part of employees' contractual terms and conditions. Breaches may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Policy Headlines

The proposed Code of Conduct will cover:

- **Scope:** Applies to all Bury Council employees, agency workers, and volunteers (except locally managed schools).
- **Core Principles:** Based on the Nolan Principles – Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership.
- **Political Neutrality:** Employees must act impartially and avoid political bias in their work.
- **Disclosure of Information:** Clear rules on confidentiality, data protection, and lawful sharing of information.
- **Relationships:** Guidance on professional boundaries with councillors, contractors, and service users.
- **Additional Employment:** Employees must declare secondary employment to avoid conflicts of interest and comply with Working Time Regulations.
- **Consultation:** Reinforces commitment to meaningful engagement with trade unions and staff.

- **Gifts, Hospitality & Conflicts of Interest:** Mandatory declaration of offers and interests; strict limits on acceptance of gifts and hospitality.
- **Related Party Transactions:** Annual declaration for senior officers to ensure financial transparency.
- **Use of Council Resources:** Prohibits misuse of property, finances, and intellectual property.
- **Recruitment & Employment Decisions:** Emphasises fairness, equality, and avoidance of nepotism.
- **Conduct Outside Work:** Employees must uphold Council values and avoid behaviour that could damage its reputation.
- **Safeguarding:** Mandatory responsibility for protecting children and vulnerable adults.
- **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion:** Zero tolerance for discrimination; commitment to additional inclusion characteristics.
- **Whistleblowing & Raising Concerns:** Clear routes for reporting wrongdoing or malpractice.
- **Health & Safety:** Reinforces legal duties and personal responsibility for safety.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** Supports Council's carbon-neutral target by 2038.
- **Leadership:** Sets expectations for managers and leaders to model ethical behaviour.
- **Disciplinary & Grievance:** Breaches may lead to disciplinary action; grievances handled under Council procedure.

2. Facilities Time Agreement

Background

The Facilities Time Agreement forms Appendix K of Local Conditions of Service. It is an agreement between Bury Council and the Bury Branch of Unison, which 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 and for the recording and publishing of required data.

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 agreement was last reviewed in July 2018.

Policy Headlines

In agreement with Unison and Legal, the document has been:

- Generally reviewed and the language updated
- Amended to clarify the circumstances in which employees can take time off for trade union duties and activities, and what they are entitled to

3. Capability Procedure

Background

The capability policy had been in place for many years and with the structural changes across the council it became extremely difficult to operationalise.

Policy Headlines

The proposed policy is a significant rewrite, taking into account best practice and guidance, plus feedback from managers. The key changes include:

- The formal stages of the procedure will be conducted as meetings rather than hearings and led by the employees' line manager
- A hearing will be conducted at stage 4, by a Senior Manager who will have the opportunity to review and ensure all appropriate support has been provided to the employee.
- There is scope for a discussion to take place regarding redeployment at any stage of the procedure rather than just the latter stage.
- There are 4 formal stages to the procedure instead of 3.

4. Grievance Resolution Procedure

Background

The Grievance Procedure was last updated in November 2024, but further changes have been necessitated to clarify challenges that managers and staff members have faced when using it.

Policy Headlines

The main changes to the document are to clearly structure the procedure. There are now 3 clear stages for someone who has concerns about a matter:

- Stage 1 is the discussion with the staff members line manager, or managers manager which was previously termed informal.
- Stage 2, is where there is a more formal meeting and potentially an investigation into the matters.
- Stage 3 is the appeal.

5. Appeals and Hearing Procedures

Background

The Council currently has the following policies and procedures relating to hearings and appeals:

- Employment Appeal Procedure – last updated August 2017
- Hearing Procedure – last updated January 2016
- Local Conditions of Service Section 7: Official Conduct – last updated April 2017.

These documents cover hearings and appeals relating to the Disciplinary Procedure, Grievance Procedure, Capability Procedure and Managing Attendance Policy.

Since they were developed, an appeals process has been incorporated into the Disciplinary Procedure (July 2024), Grievance Procedure (July 2024) and Managing Attendance Policy (September 2024), and via this report it is proposed that the same happens to the Capability Procedure.

Policy Headlines

It is therefore proposed that:

- The current Employment Appeal Form is retained unchanged as it ensures that appellants provide all the information we need.
- The separate Employment Appeal Procedure and Hearing Procedure be withdrawn – as all of the relevant points are covered in the individual procedures.
- The Local Conditions of Service (section 7) would be amended to reflect this
- The following wording, based on Employment Panel guidance, is added into the Appeals section of the Disciplinary Procedure, Grievance Procedure, Capability Procedure and Managing Attendance Policy:
 - *Following acknowledgement of receipt of the appeal, the Chair of the Appeal Panel plus their HR representative **may** agree in advance with the appellant and their representative whether the appeal:*
 - *Hears all of the evidence and submissions made to the original hearing (appeal based on findings being unfair)*
 - *Focuses on the issues surrounding the decision (appeal based on the penalty being unfair) – there is no reconsidering all of the evidence, but the management representative may briefly summarise the case.*
 - *Focuses on any new evidence (as this is the reason for the appeal) – it may be considered alongside all the other evidence or may be the main focus – the management representative may briefly summarise the case.*
 - *Focuses on the issues surrounding the procedure (appeal based on procedure not being used correctly) – management representative may briefly summarise the case.*
 - *The Chair of the Appeal Panel may request for the Employee to provide further information regarding the reason for their appeal, if insufficient information is provided within their 'Employment Appeal Form'. The appeal hearing date will not be set until such information has been provided.*

These changes have been discussed fully with the trade union and Legal.

6. Social Media Policy

Background

This policy provides a framework for the responsible use of social media by council employees, elected members, contractors, and volunteers. It aims to:

- Promote effective, lawful, and respectful communication.
- Protect the council's reputation and integrity.
- Ensure compliance with legal obligations and best practice.

The Policy was last reviewed in August 2016.

Policy Headlines

The principles within this policy remain the same, however it has needed a comprehensive review to reflect developments in technology, changes to data protection legislation and to Council documents and practices.

It has been written in association with members of the Communications, Information Governance and IT teams.

7. Chief Officer Job Evaluation Scheme and Guidance

Background

- In Spring 2023, the Council began to use the LGA Scheme to evaluate Chief Officer jobs rather than the Hay Group job evaluation scheme.
- In order to implement this change, the LGA were commissioned to independently re-evaluate 50% of the roles that had originally been scored under Hay, using the LGA scheme. They all came out at the same grade. Therefore, the change was made to the LGA scheme for all Chief Officer posts with effect from May 2023 without any employees' grades being affected.
- The November 2024 Equal Pay Audit noted that the job evaluation processes would benefit from being more robustly formalised, particularly regarding appeals and defining the scheme boundaries between roles that are graded under the Council's NJC scheme and the LGA one
- In March 2025, the Employment Panel agreed to move to a 5 band pay structure, with generic job descriptions at each level. This was to be achieved with support from the LGA.

Proposed Changes

- A new Chief Officer job evaluation scheme and process document has been developed to formalise and update all elements, including local conventions, appeals and a process for defining scheme boundaries.
- A new 5 grade pay structure has been developed, moving from this original model:

Grade	Min JE Points	Max JE Points
Band H	1350	-
<i>Band G</i>	<i>1220</i>	<i>1349</i>

Band F	1100	1219
<i>Band E</i>	<i>990</i>	<i>1099</i>
Band D	890	989
<i>Band C</i>	<i>800</i>	<i>889</i>
Band B	720	799
Band A	650	719

To this proposed pay scale:

Grade	Min JE Points	Max JE Points
Band E (former H)	1311	-
Band D (former F)	1066	1310
Band C (former D)	866	1065
Band B	720	865
Band A	650	719

This has been achieved by reducing from 8 grades to 5 and then applying a 70/30 split when sharing out the scoring range of the abolished grades. This is on the basis that we see significant increases in responsibility when moving between the more senior grade levels, with boundaries reset based on LGA advice.

- Generic job descriptions have been developed for the following levels:
 - Band C = Assistant Director
 - Band D = Director
 - Band E = Executive Director
 - These have been developed based upon advice from the LGA and they have moderated the scores. The generic JDs can be used for all new roles. Existing Chief Officers will remain on their current JDs. No Chief Officers will require an amendment to their grade or salary when implemented.
- Plans now need to be developed to consider all 'Head of' roles in the Council. There are currently 40 staff with this job title across Grade 17 (1), SM1 (11), SM2 (11), CO Band A (13) and CO Band B (4). The aim is to create 2 generic 'Head of' level posts at CO Band A and CO Band B, and stop using that in the title of roles below Chief Officer grade. The impact on staff needs to be fully explored, and subject to consultation.

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, managers, the EDI Manager 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:

Catherine King
HR Business Manager
c.king@bury.gov.uk

Tim Normanton
Assistant Director of Human Resources
t.normanton@bury.gov.uk

Background papers:

Appendix 1a: Code of Conduct
Appendix 1b: Code of Conduct EqIA
Appendix 2a: Facilities Time Agreement
Appendix 2b: Facilities Time Agreement EqIA
Appendix 3a: Capability Procedure
Appendix 3b: Capability Procedure EqIA
Appendix 4a: Grievance Resolution Procedure
Appendix 4b: Grievance Resolution Procedure EqIA
Appendix 5a: Social Media Policy
Appendix 5b: Social Media Policy EqIA
Appendix 6a: Chief Officer Job Evaluation Scheme and Guidance
Appendix 6b: Chief Officer Job Evaluation Scheme and Guidance EqIA