

Minutes of: **EMPLOYMENT PANEL**

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2025

Present: Councillor R Gold (in the Chair)
Councillors J Grimshaw, T Tariq, S Arif and D Vernon

Also in attendance: Nicole Howarth, HR and OD Business Partner
Catherine King, Hr Business Manager
Tim Normanton, Interim AD People & Inclusion
Kate Waterhouse, Executive Director, Strategy & Transformation

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor R Bernstein, Councillor C Cummins, Councillor M Walsh and Councillor L Smith

EP.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence are noted above.

EP.19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tariq declared a personal interest as Chair of North West Employers.

EP.20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EP.21 WORKFORCE POLICY REVIEW

The Interim Assistant Director of HR presented a report setting out proposals for a number of new, changed, reviewed and replaced policies.

The policies were set out in the report:-

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

It was explained that Trade Union colleagues had been fully engaged in the work.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Gold explained that Councillor Walsh had raised an issue with him regarding the Social Media Policy referring to Elected Members and had asked should they be included as they were not employees.

It was explained that although elected members were not employees they were still included within this policy due to the nature of their roles and the information they were provided with.

- Councillor Tariq referred to the Employee Code of Conduct and zero tolerance and stated that the council and its employees should be leading by example in relation to this.

It was explained that all members of staff are expected to follow the standards set out within the code of conduct and the updated Code of Conduct will be on the website, there will be communication to all employees advising of updates to the code. It was also explained that all new hires are signposted to the code when they commence employment.

- Councillor Vernon referred to 14.3 of the report referring to employment of relatives and this having to be reported to the relevant committee.

It was reported that the relevant committee would be the Employment Panel and a report would be presented if required.

- Councillor Vernon referred to the disciplinary and grievance procedure and asked how often these were used.

It was explained that this information was recorded and can be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

- Councillor Vernon referred to grievances and learning from them and asked if information, resolutions and outcomes etc. was cascaded down.

The Interim AD of People and Inclusion explained that regular case reviews were part of the process where outcomes and learning was discussed which is fed back to management but can also be fed into policy.

It was agreed:

1. That the Employment Panel agrees:

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

2. That the documents will then go for endorsement to the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee on 17th December 2025 and Council on 21st January 2026 subject to approval will then be published on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff.

EP.22 2026/2027 PAY SPINE REVIEW

The Interim AD of People and Inclusion presented a briefing note explaining the requirement to remove SCP2 from the Council's pay spine following agreement of the NJC 2025-26 pay award. It includes a proposal for how this could be implemented and sets out the implications of doing so.

Furthermore, it sets out the implications for the Council following the October 2025 increase in the Real Living Wage, including a proposal for implementation and details of the financial impact.

Included within the briefing note was the Council's current pay spine and the projected pay spine with the affected SCP point grades identified.

It was agreed:

1. To implement the proposed changes to the Council's pay spine as set out above with effect from 1 April 2026
2. To note the Council's budget forecasts have been updated to assume a 3% increase for the 2026-27 pay award
3. To review the Council's ongoing commitment to be a Real Living Wage Employer
4. To review the pay spine in full, at a later date, alongside national changes

EP.23 DRAFT PEOPLE STRATEGY

The Assistant Director gave a presentation setting out the Draft People Strategy which set out where the council wanted to be over the next 3 to 5 year period.

The presentation included:

Workforce Data

Bury/GM Labour market
LGA local government context

Staff Survey - Overall positive responses – 7 in 10 colleagues recommend Bury Council as a great place to work

Plan to continue work on leadership & management development, communications and culture

Management Development Programme feedback

- Managers are implementing and evidencing skills learned from programme.
- Positive and receptive teams, encouraging ideas with open communication.

Focus for next phase management development is to expand to include leadership and improve:

Listening and understanding colleagues - using mentoring and coaching approach to balance challenge and support for people

Adult-to-adult relationships – enabling creativity

Building trust - creating psychological safety for colleagues

Acting with humility – empowering others

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Gold referred to the fact that the council employs over 2500 employees so it was important to make sure that they felt engaged and empowered and 7 out of 10 stating it is a good place to work was indicative of that.
- Councillor Gold referred to completed employee reviews and stated that it was good that the number completed was above average, but it would be good to get to 100%
- Councillor Tariq referred to recruitment and the demographics of the workforce. He stated that there had not been progress in relation to diversity of the workforce particularly in top and middle management. Councillor Tariq asked what positive steps does the organisation take to welcome applicants from under represented groups.

Tim explained that work was ongoing to ensure successful recruitment. The dual challenge was to improve the diversity in the workforce to reflect the population that we serve and to also understand better who we employ as 63% of the Bury workforce are Bury residents.

It was suggested that the Employment Panel receive an update in relation to recruitment at a future meeting of the Panel.

- Councillor Vernon asked what priorities were put on carer progression within the workplace.

Tim reported that more could be done in relation to this and it was something that is being reviewed. It was currently be looked at departmental workforce planning.

A Management Development Programme had recently been undertaken that had been completed by 400 colleagues and had provided all that attended the skills to support and grow their teams.

A leadership programme was due to be rolled out in the new year and there were a number of apprenticeship options through the apprenticeship levy.

- Councillor Gold asked if there was internal communication/notices for jobs.

It was explained that there was an internal comms for jobs and that we would employ internally where possible.

- Councillor Tariq referred to the recent staff survey and asked for key highlights.

Tim reported that Health and Adult Care had come out as the exemplar in terms of staff engagement with very positive feedback.

45% of the workforce had completed and it was felt that this was due to how the survey was communicated and the layout and contents. It was also explained that the Communications team had had a lot of input into promoting the survey and providing a number of access options.

It was explained that a leadership conference was due to be held to review that data and plan ahead.

It was agreed:

That the update be noted.

EP.24 STAFF SHOUT OUT ON TEAMS

Councillor Tariq stated that it wasn't urgent, but he had a question related to the 'staff shoutout' facility on the Teams Channel and explained that he wasn't sure whether elected members should use it to highlight good work/support.

Kate Waterhouse stated that it could be used by Councillors.

COUNCILLOR R GOLD
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.05 pm)