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:

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION: