

Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 18 September 2025.

PRESENT

Miss H. Butler CC (in the Chair)

Dr. J. Bloxham CC
Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC
Mr. G. Cooke CC
Mr. A. Innes CC
Mr. B. Lovegrove CC

Mr. P. Morris CC
Mr. P. Rudkin CC
Mr. C. A. Smith CC
Mrs D. Taylor CC

14. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2025 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

15. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

16. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

17. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

18. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Mr. B. Lovegrove CC declared a non-registerable interest in agenda item 9 as he was in receipt of a County Council pension.

19. Presentation of petitions under Standing Order 35.

There were no petitions.

20. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2024-25.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which presented an overview of Health, Safety and Wellbeing performance during the period

2024-2025. This included details of the Council's overall position on Health, Safety and Wellbeing. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- (i). In response to concern that mental health, work related stress or anxiety had been cited as a presenting issue in 82% of wellbeing cases, the Director assured members that the Wellbeing Service continued to deliver a range of support for employees which included advice and signposting, thirty minute talking sessions, and counselling programmes. Managers received training regarding managing stress at work in order to support employees within their teams. Employees could also be trained as an accredited Mental Health First Aider. The course taught individuals to recognise, understand, and respond to someone who was experiencing a mental health issue. Members were pleased that 85% of employees who had accessed wellbeing support were attending work whilst receiving that support. It was noted that the wellbeing service was crucial in supporting staff to continue to work and therefore contribute to service delivery.
- (ii). A question was raised regarding the support available for those staff who worked within services where trauma was prevalent, such as those in the Children and Families Services and Adults and Communities departments. These departments had reported the highest number of referrals to the Wellbeing Service. It was noted that supervision within those services was robust and that early intervention support was offered to staff who had reported wellbeing concerns or appeared to be struggling. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team would continue to encourage individuals to discuss mental health and would continue to support Departments and managers to promote the Wellbeing Service and other available interventions.
- (iii). It was noted that data relating to incidents which occurred at satellite sites, such as Children and Family Wellbeing Centres, continued to be collected and reported to departments as part of each quarterly and annual reporting processes.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of Health, Safety and Wellbeing performance during the period 2024-2025, be noted.

21. National Joint Council Pay Award, Chief Officer Pay Award and Chief Executive Pay Award 2025-26.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which outlined the action taken by the Chief Executive in order to implement the nationally negotiated National Joint Council (NJC), Joint National Council (JNC) for Chief Officers, and Joint National Council for Chief Executive's pay award for the period 2025 to 2026 for all employees. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- (i). A question was asked regarding the approval process relating to pay awards. The Director stated that the Employment Committee was responsible for approving the implementation of pay awards. However, as the three pay awards had been agreed at a national level between meetings of the Committee, the Chief Executive agreed,

following consultation with the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Committee, to exercise his delegated powers in the event of matters of urgency. This had allowed employees to receive the appropriate pay increase for basic pay and back pay in August, with the increase for some allowances being paid in September. The report was being presented to the Committee for members to note the delegated action which had been undertaken by the Chief Executive.

- (ii). It was noted that although the Council had adopted local rather than national pay scales, it remained part of the national pay bargaining relating to pay awards and was committed to applying NJC and JNC pay awards to employees on grades 2 to 22 inclusive. If the Council was to pull out of the national pay bargaining process, it would be required to develop its own bargaining process and negotiate with trade unions at a local level.
- (iii). The rates of pay which had been implemented would be applicable until 31st March 2026. If there were any changes to local government pay or other related pay at a national level, this would be included within pay negotiations for the period 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken in respect of the implementation of the National Joint Council (NJC) and Joint National Council (JNC) pay awards for employees on grades 2 to 22, be noted.

22. Review of Employer Discretions - Pension Regulations.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval for certain policy decisions afforded to the County Council as a scheme employer under the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- (i) The Director outlined that the review of employer discretions relating to Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contributions through a salary sacrifice scheme would enable individuals to make extra contributions towards their pension, whilst also allowing both individuals and employers to save on tax and National Insurance contributions. It was noted that additional voluntary contributions would not be matched by the employer.
- (ii) With regards to governance of the scheme, the Local Pension Committee was responsible for the management of the Leicestershire LGPS. The Committee's purpose was to safeguard and manage the assets held within the Fund. The Committee had a duty to determine the investment and funding strategy and all other relevant policies for the Fund and to deliver this in accordance with the best interests of Fund members.
- (iii) It was noted that an employee's pension would usually be payable from their Normal Pension Age which was linked to the State Pension Age. An employee could choose to retire and draw their pension at any time between age 55 and 75. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rules regarding pension savings outlined limits on the amount of pension savings an individual could make within a year and the lump sum which could be taken before extra tax would be payable. There was no

limit on the amount of pension contributions an individual could make. However, individuals would not be in receipt of tax relief on contributions exceeding their taxable pay paid into their pension within a tax year. There were no restrictions in individuals drawing their pension and subsequently commencing further employment with the Council.

- (iv) In response to a question asked regarding national influence on local pension scheme investments, the Director stated that the Government was undertaking a consultation which included a proposal to boost LGPS investment within localities and regions in the UK by requiring administering authorities to set out their approach to local investment within their investment strategies.
- (v) A question was asked relating to the timing of the proposal to allow payment of Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution via a salary sacrifice scheme and why it had not been proposed sooner. The Director agreed to provide members with this information to members following the meeting.
- (vi) It was suggested that it would be beneficial for members to receive an overview of the LGPS in order to provide a broader understanding of how the Scheme was managed and governed. The Director acknowledged this and agreed to provide all elected members with a briefing relating to the LGPS.

RESOLVED:

- (a). That the change to Leicestershire County Council's pension mandatory discretion under Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations, contained within Appendix 1 of the report, to allow payment of Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution via a Salary Sacrifice Scheme, be approved.
- (b). That non mandatory discretion under LGPS Regulations contained within Appendix 3 of the report, be noted.
- (c). That Leicestershire County Council's operational approach to Pensions Regulations, contained within Appendix 4 of the report, be noted.
- (d). That the Director of Corporate Resources be requested to provide the Committee with details relating to the timing of the proposal to allow payment of Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution via a Salary Sacrifice Scheme.
- (e). That the Director of Corporate Resources be requested to provide all elected members with a briefing relating to the LGPS.

23. Workforce Report 2025-26 - Quarter 1 Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on workforce information and performance measures for Quarter 1 of 2025/26. This included details relating to headcount, Full Time Equivalent (FTE), absence rates and reason, and reported Annual Performance Reviews (APR). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report, the Director stated that the recruitment process for a new Chief Executive had commenced. On 21 May 2025, John Sinnott had notified staff that he would be retiring at the end of November. The closing date for applications would be 19

October. A politically balanced Appointment Committee had been established and would be responsible for interviewing candidates for the role. Once a suitable candidate had been selected, the County Council would be asked to approve the appointment at its meeting on 3 December.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- (i). With regards to attendance management, the Director stated that return to work interviews continued to be conducted with staff by managers after any period of absence. Managers were responsible for applying the Council's Attendance Management Policy. The Policy provided a procedure framework for managers in order to support an employee where there were concerns regarding an employee's ability to carry out their role to a satisfactory level due to medical reasons. It was noted that managers were expected to apply the policy in a fair, consistent, and supportive manner, taking all reasonable steps to assist the employee in order to reach and maintain required levels of attendance and performance whilst balancing the need for service delivery. Where long-term illness impacted on an employee's ability to attend work and their ability to perform their role, it was expected that most cases would be resolved within 12 months. Where concerns continued, it could be necessary for the Council to consider terminating the employee's employment once the appropriate stage of the policy had been reached. The Director agreed to provide members with information relating to the number of employees dismissed due to poor attendance.
- (ii). The Children and Family Services Department had reported an increase of 48.18 FTE since the previous year, which was largely due to efforts to convert agency social workers to permanent positions. This came in response to new regulations which required agency workers to have three years of local authority employment. A question was raised regarding the cost of agency workers, across the Authority, compared to directly employed staff. The Director agreed to provide members with financial information relating to the cost of agency workers, following the meeting.
- (iii). A question was raised regarding the number of positions and departments which had been created over the previous three-year period. The Director agreed to provide the information to members, following the meeting.
- (iv). Concern was raised that some members of staff could continue to work at home whilst unwell. The Director acknowledged this concern but stated that some staff could feel able to complete certain tasks at home during sickness or following an injury. Managers were expected to have reasonable and supportive conversations with members of staff regarding this decision. It was noted that issues such as this would be part of a review of workforce related issues which was due to be undertaken by the Council.
- (v). A member asked a question in relation to a small number of hate incidents which had taken place at County Hall in recent years, specifically regarding whether any further incidents had been reported and whether the incidents had led to staff absence. The Director outlined that it was not possible to correlate absence to specific incidents and that no incidents had been reported over the previous 12 month period.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update on workforce information and performance measures for Quarter 1 of 2025 – 2026, including details relating to headcount, Full Time Equivalent (FTE), absence rates and reasons, and reported Annual Performance Reviews (APR), be noted.
- (b) That the Director of Corporate Resources be requested to provide the Committee with financial information relating to agency workers.
- (c) That the Director of Corporate Resources be requested to provide the Committee with information relating to the number of positions created over the previous three year period.

24. Organisational Change Policy and Procedure: Action Plans.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented the current Action Plans which contained provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress made with their implementation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the update of the current Action Plans which contain provision for compulsory redundancy and details of progress on their implementation, be noted.

25. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 4 December 2025.

26. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the remaining item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 4 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and that, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

27. Working Arrangements Policy and Guidance.

The Committee considered an exempt report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval to begin consultation on a new Working Arrangements Policy and guidance. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 15', is filed with these minutes.

The Director responded to questions regarding a proposed Working Arrangements Policy and guidance. In particular, proposed changes to the amount of time staff would be expected to work from a County Council base. It was noted that the proposed policy and guidance would aim to provide greater clarity and consistency in working arrangements across the Council, reflecting operational needs, employee expectations, and external influences. The proposed changes would be subject to consultation with staff and trade

unions. Following this, a phased implementation was anticipated, with departmental leads supporting transition and communication.

Members approved commencement of consultation on the Working Arrangements Policy, as outlined within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the commencement of consultation on the Working Arrangements Policy, as outlined within the report, be approved.

10.00 - 11.56 am
18 September 2025

CHAIRMAN