A meeting of the **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE** will be held in the **THE CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2026** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

1. **MINUTES** (Pages 7 - 16)

   To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd September 2026.

   Contact Officer: L Adams
   01480 388234

2. **MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

   To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

   Contact Officer: Democratic Services - 388169

3. **WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 2)** (Pages 17 - 38)

   To consider an update on HR matters impacting on the performance of the organisation.

   Contact Officer: L Harfield
   Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

4. **USE OF CONSULTANTS AND TEMPORARY STAFF** (Pages 39 - 48)

   Members are invited to comment on the report on the Use of Consultants and Temporary Staff and note its contents.

   Contact Officer: S Beard
   Head of Finance sandra.beard@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

5. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES UPDATE (Pages 49 - 70)

The Employment Committee are requested to endorse the Council's Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work (New) and Reserve Forces Training and Mobilisation (New) policies.

Contact Officer: L. Harfield
Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

6. REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

At the request of representatives of employees to consider a range of issues.

16 day of November 2026

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution

Filming, Photography and Recording (including Live Streaming) at Council Meetings

This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council.

Please contact Miss Lauren Adams, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388234/e-mail Lauren.Adams@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business**.**

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

Attending Council and Committee Meetings

Huntingdonshire District Council welcomes members of the public to attend meetings that are open to the public.

Members of the public may attend, film, photograph, and report on meetings that are open to the public. *

In some circumstances, a meeting may resolve to exclude the public and press to consider confidential or exempt information. Where this occurs, members of the public and press will be asked to leave the meeting room for that part of the meeting.

Most public meetings are webcast live, and recordings are available afterwards. This means you do not need to attend in person to follow proceedings.

The council permits public speaking at the Development Management Committee (planning) meetings.

View further information about **public speaking at Development Management Committees [PDF, 0.5MB]**

The council permits public questions at full council meetings. View further information about **submitting a question [PDF, 0.1MB]**.

Public access and seating

Meetings that are open to the public can be attended by anyone.
Seating in public areas is limited. Where demand exceeds the number of seats available, admission will be managed on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given in the following order:

1. People who live, work or own property within the Huntingdonshire District
2. Other interested members of the public.

This means that attendees within each priority group will be admitted in the order they arrive, subject to the number of seats available.

Reserved seating

Council Meetings - If you have registered in advance to ask a public question at a meeting of Full Council in accordance with the Council's **Constitution [PDF, 1.5MB]**, a seat will be reserved for you.

Development Management, Licensing and Other Regulatory Hearings - If you have registered to speak or make representations in relation to an application or matter being considered by the Committee, a seat will be reserved for you.

You do not need to arrive early to secure your place.

When seating is full

Once all public seats are occupied, no further admission will be possible.
Standing is not permitted in meeting rooms. Additional seating cannot normally be provided, except where required as a reasonable adjustment for accessibility needs, including carers or support workers.
For meetings of the Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee and other regulatory hearings, priority will be given to applicants, objectors, registered speakers and other parties directly involved in agenda items.

Arrival, sign-in and security

All visitors must sign in on arrival.

If attendance is expected to exceed capacity, you may be asked to provide evidence that you live, work or own property within the Huntingdonshire District so that seating priority can be allocated fairly. In these circumstances, we would request a photographic ID and evidence of your address or work premises
We recommend bringing only essential items.

Bags and personal belongings may be subject to security checks. Where necessary, security staff may also conduct further searches.

These arrangements apply equally to all public attending and are intended to help ensure meetings can take place safely and without disruption.

Any personal information collected as part of the sign-in process will be used only for meeting management and safety purposes in accordance with the **Council's Privacy Notice**. Information will be retained no longer than is necessary.

Items not permitted

- Placards, banners, flags or similar items
- Knives, scissors or other sharp objects
- Whistles, air horns, loudhailers or other noise-making devices
- Bottles or other containers containing liquids, except drinking water intended for personal use during the meeting
- Any item that security staff reasonably believe could compromise safety or disrupt the meeting.

If you wish to bring large or specialist equipment into the meeting, such as recording equipment, please contact **Democratic Services** in advance via email to help avoid delays when entering the meeting.

Behaviour at meetings

Everyone attending a meeting is expected to treat others with courtesy and respect. Any form of verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated. Anyone presenting such behaviour will be asked to leave immediately.

Accessibility

If you have any accessibility requirements, it would be helpful to contact **Democratic Services** before the meeting so we can fully support you.

Speaking at a meeting or asking a question

Members of the public may ask questions at meetings of Full Council.

Members of the public may also speak or make representations at meetings of the Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee, and other regulatory hearings where public participation arrangements apply.

Please note that this must be arranged in advance in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Feedback

If you have concerns about how these arrangements were applied at a meeting, please contact **Democratic Services**.

Legal framework

*Public access to meetings, and the right to film, photograph, record and report proceedings, are governed by legislation including the Local Government Act 1972, Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

This page is intentionally left blank

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE held in THE CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 23 September 2026.

PRESENT: Councillor A Blackwell – Chair.

Councillors L Ascroft, L Dewey-Beckett, J Francis, D Henly, D McIlwain, P Simpson and S Smith.

11. MINUTES

Subject to the deletion of £82,000 from the third line of the tenth paragraph of Minute No 6, to be replaced by £802,000, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th June 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

13. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 1)

The Committee received and noted a report on Human Resources (HR) matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period 1st April until 30th June 2026. The report included the latest position and trends relating to employee numbers, salary costs and sickness absence. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book.

The Committee heard that the workforce totalled 749 people, the fulltime equivalent working out at 694.73 Officers, which was an increase from the previous Quarter. The forecast outturn for 2026/27 was £39.745 million against a budget of £39.856 million, resulting in a projected underspend of £110,600. This position reflected an anticipated underspend of £1.51 million on employee salaries and an overspend of £1.4 million on contractors and agency workers, against a budget of £1.3 million.

It was confirmed that 41 Employees left the Council, which whilst an increase to 18.97%, remained below the LGA benchmark. There had been an increase in recruitment with 143 appointments made. Sickness had increased to 10.1 FTE, with long-term absence accounting for over 70%.

In response to a question on agency staffing levels, it was confirmed that agency worker numbers had reduced overall. The highest use of agency staff remained within Operational Services, primarily to cover

loader and driver roles. Long-term sickness absence had also contributed to agency staffing requirements in some areas. Agency use in office-based roles has decreased where recruitment to previously hard-to-fill posts has been successful, particularly for positions based at Pathfinder House.

In response to a question regarding sickness absence attributed to coughs, colds and flu, Officers confirmed that this category accounted for 21% of absences during the reporting period, compared to approximately 19% in the previous quarter. The increase was unusual when compared with historical trends. Analysis of the data had not identified a specific cause, and the rise could not be attributed to periods of hot weather. Councillor Simpson requested that further analysis be undertaken to better understand the reasons for the increase.

Councillor Henly queried the increase in average sickness absence from 7.9 days per full-time equivalent employee in 2023 to 10.1 days, alongside the increase in payroll costs over the same period. Officers advised that this was consistent with national trends and was not unique to the Council. The rise in payroll costs reflected a number of factors, including increased staffing levels, approved service growth, new initiatives, and cost of living pay increases. Examples of workforce growth included staffing required for new Council initiatives and facilities, such as Aquapark operations, as well as resources allocated to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) work. Staffing levels were determined through the budget-setting process and approved Council priorities. A more detailed breakdown of payroll growth, including the relative impact of workforce expansion and pay awards would be provided.

In response to questions regarding staff recruited for LGR work, Officers advised that the Government had paused, but not cancelled, the reorganisation programme and that timescales remained uncertain. Resources were currently being deployed on preparatory and "no regrets" activities, such as contract reviews and asset management work, which would remain beneficial regardless of any future reorganisation model. An active review of these roles was ongoing, with future decisions dependent on further clarity from Government.

Councillor Ascroft asked whether the Council was proactively exploring opportunities to increase entry-level apprenticeships for school leavers, noting national declines in apprenticeship availability and competition for such opportunities. Officers advised that the Council's apprenticeship programme had historically focused on upskilling existing employees, particularly through higher-level apprenticeships at Levels 6 and 7 and management development programmes. As these programmes concluded and apprenticeship funding became available, a strategy would be developed for expanding apprenticeship opportunities within the organisation, including routes for new entrants over the next 12 months.

In response to a question, Officers outlined the Council’s three-stage sickness management process. Additional measures were being introduced to help reduce long-term absence, including rehabilitation support through Active Lifestyles and One Leisure, targeted

interventions for musculoskeletal conditions, and access to the Work Well programme, which provide coaching, physiotherapy and return-to-work support. Some long-term absences related to serious health conditions, pregnancy, or delays in receiving medical treatment and were therefore less responsive to workplace interventions. Officers further highlighted that Huntingdonshire was one of 15 national pathfinder areas delivering the Work Well programme and that its approach had been recognised as national best practice.

Councillor Henly sought information on absences attributed to stress, anxiety and depression, including the proportion classified as long-term sickness absence and the effectiveness of interventions in reducing such cases. Officers advised that this category included absences related to personal circumstances, such as bereavement. A breakdown of cases resulting in long-term absence would require further analysis. In response to a query regarding workplace injuries, Officers agreed to explore whether absence data could be further categorised, subject to data protection considerations where case numbers were low.

It was queried how anonymised exit interview data would be reported in light of the annual staff turnover rate. Officers advised that the exit questionnaire and process had been revised to improve response rates and that sufficient data had now been collected to allow for meaningful analysis. A summary of the findings would be reviewed and circulated to Members. Exit interview trends could be incorporated into future Workforce Information Reports, subject to confidentiality requirements.

Councillor McIlwain stated that he had recently become aware of an employee who had been involved in a work-related vehicle accident and had sustained an injury. The Member was pleased to learn that the employee had returned to work shortly afterwards and asked that the Committee's thanks and appreciation be passed on to the employee for their commitment to the Council.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the information presented be received and noted.

14. WORKFORCE STRATEGY CLOSURE REPORT

By means of a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Kiran Hans, HR Coordinator – Project Delivery, provided the Committee with an update and the conclusion on the Workforce Strategy.

Members heard of the increased internal career progression, reduced recruitment agency costs, enhanced employee engagement through improved communications and one-to-one discussions, and improvements in employee wellbeing, including a reduction in work-related stress as a cause of sickness absence. It was further noted that the successful initiatives delivered through the strategy would be incorporated into ongoing HR activities to support future workforce priorities.

The Chair welcomed the successful delivery of the Workforce Strategy and noted the positive feedback received from employees throughout its implementation. She recognised the efforts of the HR team in delivering initiatives across the organisation in a way that accommodated different working patterns. It was commented that the Programme had been delivered within budget, had achieved positive outcomes, and that its successful initiatives would now be embedded into business-as-usual activities. The Chair thanked the HR team for their work in delivering the Strategy.

In response to a question relating to ongoing costs, Officers advised that the Workforce Strategy was a three to five-year programme and that remaining funds would continue to be used to support workforce initiatives as they became embedded within business-as-usual activities.

Responding to a query regarding reported improvements in employee health metrics, Officers advised that health kiosks had been introduced at Pathfinder House and Eastfield House to provide Staff with measures such as those relating to BMI and blood pressure. Employees identified as having potential health concerns were offered follow-up appointments with a nurse and, where necessary, referred to their GP. The health assessments were repeated six months later, allowing the Council to compare results and measure changes in employee health indicators over time.

Councillor Simpson queried the consistency of recruitment application trends across quarters and whether recruitment activity was timed to maximise candidate interest. Officers advised that application levels were influenced by both the type of role being recruited to and seasonal factors, with recruitment activity typically generating lower interest during the summer and the Christmas period. While most vacancies were advertised as they arose, a more strategic approach was taken for specialist or hard-to-fill roles to maximise candidate attraction.

The Committee also heard that the Council used targeted recruitment methods, including professional networks and direct candidate engagement, rather than relying solely on advertising. This approach had improved recruitment outcomes and attracted positive feedback from candidates regarding the recruitment process and the organisation's values.

Councillor Henly expressed concerns regarding the level of expenditure on workforce wellbeing initiatives in the context of increasing sickness absence and questioned whether sufficient value for money was being achieved for taxpayers. In response, Officers advised that a number of wellbeing initiatives had been delivered at little or no cost to the Council, including health kiosks and staff wellbeing webinars, which had been provided free of charge. Officers highlighted that care had been taken to ensure expenditure on workforce initiatives achieved value for money. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the information presented be received and noted.

15. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Committee received and noted a report by HR Coordinator – Project Delivery (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) , on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which had been developed from the Workforce Strategy and Action Plan.

Members were advised that the Strategy had benefitted from input from HR, managers and staff and provided a five-year framework to support employee wellbeing, particularly during organisational change and local government reorganisation. The Strategy focused on mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing and brought together existing support measures, including the Employee Assistance Programme, occupational health services, wellbeing initiatives, menopause support, buddy schemes and financial wellbeing support. Progress would be monitored through staff engagement, recruitment and retention, sickness absence, uptake of wellbeing initiatives, agency spend and workplace wellbeing data. It aimed to improve employee wellbeing, support organisational performance and help the Council remain an employer of choice.

The Chair sought clarification on whether any additional funding from the now-closed Workforce Strategy would be available to support the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It was confirmed that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy was an action arising from the Workforce Strategy. Funding allocated to the Workforce Strategy remained available to support wellbeing initiatives delivered through the Strategy as required.

Members queried whether the remaining balance of approximately £630,000 from the Workforce Strategy reserve could be returned to general reserves. Members were advised that the funding remained allocated to the Workforce Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Any decision to reallocate the reserve for another purpose would require Council approval. The reserve had been established by Council to support delivery of the Workforce Strategy and had demonstrated positive outcomes in recruitment and workforce performance. Remaining funding would support ongoing delivery on a business-as-usual basis.

Councillor Ascroft queried whether the measures of success for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy would be aligned with the Council's wider performance reporting framework and reflected within future performance reports. Officers advised that monitoring of the Strategy would be reported through the Employment Committee. However, the impact of the Strategy should also be reflected through wider organisational KPIs and performance measures reported across other committees.

Members queried the salary cost associated with the Strategy and were advised that it related to temporary resources established to deliver the Workforce Strategy. The management role would cease on completion of the programme, while the coordinator post had been incorporated into the permanent establishment and would continue to support delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Furthermore, it was agreed to seek further advice from Finance colleagues and

provide a written response setting out the costs and use of the reserve in greater detail. Councillor Francis commented that the figures presented appeared to show expenditure exceeding the identified savings and requested greater clarity on the overall financial benefits achieved through the programme. Councillor Henley requested that the written response include a clear comparison between the costs incurred and savings achieved to enable Members to assess the value of continuing the programme. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the information presented be received and noted.

16. WORKFORCE EQUALITY PROFILE REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which contained the annual summary of the profile of the workforce according to their protected characteristics as required by the Equality Act 2010. It covered the period to 31st March 2026. Equality monitoring data was provided voluntarily by employees and, as a result, the Council did not hold complete information for all members of Staff. Ongoing work continued to encourage data completion and raise awareness of the importance of providing this information.

Members were advised that the workforce remained broadly representative of the local community, with gender and disability profiles closely reflecting district demographics. The report also highlighted the need to improve data quality and employee disclosure rates in some areas. The Action Plan would continue to support inclusive employment practices and address areas for further improvement.

The Chair raised the ongoing issue of introducing a dyslexia-friendly font across the Council and asked whether progress was being made. Members were advised that work was ongoing to introduce a dyslexia-friendly font. However, implementation was dependent on the shared 3C ICT system and required coordination with the partner councils. Progress is being made and it was hoped the matter would be resolved in the near future.

Councillor McIlwain commented that some of the equality monitoring questions appeared intrusive and asked when the information was collected and whether there had been any negative feedback from employees. Members heard that equality monitoring information was collected during the recruitment and onboarding process and could be updated at any time through the employee self-service system. Employees were able to select "prefer not to say" if they did not wish to provide the information. No negative feedback had been received regarding the collection of this data.

Councillor Smith commented on the importance of increasing disclosure rates for equality monitoring data and asked how the Council could continue to encourage employees to provide information without making them feel pressured or uncomfortable. It was confirmed that communications to Staff explained why the data was collected and how it was used. Awareness campaigns,

supporting information and guidance on equality categories were provided to help employees make informed decisions about sharing their information.

Councillor Henly asked why information such as sexual orientation was collected. Members were advised that the Council was required to report workforce equality information under the Public Sector Equality Duty. While employees were not required to provide the information and may choose not to do so, the Council encouraged disclosure to help meet its reporting obligations and monitor workforce equality.

Councillor Simpson suggested that "prefer not to say" responses should be reported separately so that percentage figures were based only on the data disclosed by respondents, arguing that this may provide a clearer picture of workforce demographics. Members were advised that "prefer not to say" responses were currently included within the reported data, as they formed part of the overall workforce profile and must be reported. Officers agreed to consider whether future reporting could present this information differently.

Councillor Ascroft asked whether the same workforce dataset was used across all equality categories and suggested that maintaining a consistent dataset was important to ensure the information remained representative of the workforce. It was advised that employees may choose to provide information for some categories and not others. As a result, the number of responses can vary between characteristics such as disability, marital status and sexual orientation, meaning the datasets were not necessarily identical across all categories.

The Chair requested that future updates be provided on the pilot scheme relating to long-term fitness and wellbeing initiatives, suggesting that, in addition to gym membership, future updates could also include participation in Active Health activities and organised walks. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the information presented be received and noted.

17. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES UPDATE

By means of a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee was acquainted with the terms of policies relating to Shared Parental Leave (updated), Paternity Leave (Updated), Unpaid Parental Leave (updated), Probation Policy (updated), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (new) and the Recruitment and Selection Policy (updated).

Councillor Henley queried the proposal to reduce the probation period from six months to three months and
Members were advised that the current probation period created difficulties where performance or conduct issues arose close to the end of the probationary period, particularly in light of forthcoming employment rights legislation. Reducing the initial probation period to three months would allow greater flexibility to extend probation where necessary while ensuring issues were identified and managed earlier.

Councillor Henley further asked about the process followed where an employee took sick leave during their probation period and was advised that sickness absence during probation was managed through a separate probationary process. Employees would be subject to review meetings where absence triggers were reached, with the option to escalate matters to a final probation hearing where appropriate. In cases involving significant periods of absence, the process could be accelerated and a final probation hearing convened before the end of the probation period if required.

After a further question regarding Employee sickness, the Committee heard that, once an employee had passed their probation period, any sickness absence would be managed under the Council's normal sickness absence procedures rather than the probation process. Legal advice had been obtained that the proposed approach was considered the most appropriate and consistent way of responding to forthcoming employment rights changes.

Councillor Dewey-Beckett welcomed the enhanced parental support within the Policy, particularly the provisions relating to paternity leave and attendance at antenatal appointments. He expressed support for the Policy and suggested that further consideration could be given to increasing paid leave and support available to parents in the future.

Councillor Henley commented that, while Members had a responsibility to ensure value for money for residents, consideration should be given to the cost of enhanced employee benefits and policies, particularly in the context of pressures on council taxpayers. Councillor Ascroft observed that the Council also had a responsibility to be a compliant and supportive employer. Investing in workforce wellbeing, retention and employment practices could provide organisational and financial benefits. Maintaining an attractive workplace supported the recruitment and retention of staff required to deliver services effectively for residents. Councillor Smith endorsed these comments and drew attention to the fact that the Workforce Equality Profile highlighted improvements in recruitment and retention. Attracting and retaining employees reduced the need for ongoing recruitment and reliance on agency staff, which in turn provided financial benefits to the Council and residents while supporting effective service delivery. Councillor Henley acknowledged the importance of being a fair and compliant employer but reiterated the need to demonstrate value for money and ensure investment in workforce initiatives delivered measurable benefits for residents.

It was then

RESOLVED

that the Shared Parental Leave, Paternity Leave, Unpaid Parental Leave, Probation Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Recruitment and Selection policies be endorsed.

18. REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

It was noted that apologies had been received from the Representatives of Employees and that they had no issues to raise with the Committee.

Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 3

Employment Committee- 23 November 2026

Report by: Head of HR and OD

Lead Cllr: Cllr Claffey
Portfolio Holder for Workforce

Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
All	Open	No

Q2 26-27 Employment Committee Workforce Report

Executive Summary:

The Q2 2026/27 Workforce Report demonstrates employee headcount remaining at 749 and turnover broadly unchanged at 18.91%, remaining below the LGA benchmark, alongside continued strong recruitment activity and positive internal progression. Sickness absence remains a key area of focus, increasing slightly to 10.3 days per FTE, although there has been encouraging progress in reducing long-term absence, with long-term sickness days falling from 1,217 to 1,036 and the number of active long-term cases reducing. Short-term absence has increased, contributing to continued demand on HR support, with the overall HR caseload increasing to 125 cases, predominantly relating to absence management. The HR Team continues to focus on proactive absence management, strengthening recruitment pipelines and workforce capability, reducing reliance on agency and temporary staffing in critical service areas, and ensuring workforce planning supports Local Government Reorganisation.

Members are asked to note the contents of this report

Recommendations

1.1. Managing sickness absence and associated costs
1.2. Strengthening recruitment pipelines in hard-to-fill areas
1.3. Reducing reliance on temporary staffing
1.4. Ensuring workforce plans align with LGR developments

	Key Corporate Plan Priorities
1	*Doing our Core Work Well*

Report Author(s)

Head of HR and OD. Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 Employment Committee have requested regular updates on HR matters impacting on the performance of the organisation. This report contains information including staffing levels and sickness absence and updates Members on the latest position and trends.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 This report is presented at Employment Committee on a quarterly basis outlining
- Employee Profile.
- Sickness Absence
- HR Caseload
- Accident/Incident Reports

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 N/A.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.1 N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 N/A

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Doing our core work well

This report supports organisational review of key data to ensure we have the right staff who are supported with the right policies to deliver the Council's key Priorities. This allows HDC to continue to work towards being an employer of choice.

6.2 Financial Implications

This highlights two key challenges that HR is managing
- reliance on temporary staffing in critical service areas.
- long term sickness

6.3 Policy Implications

6.3.1 N/A

6.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

6.4.1 N/A

6.5 Community Impact

6.5.1 N/A

6.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

6.6.1 N/A

6.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

6.7.1 A full breakdown of Equalities data is provided in Section 4

6.8 Implications on Resources

6.8.1 N/A

6.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

6.9.1 Sickness and wellbeing of staff is being actively managed and supported. HR is leading a continued push to upskill/empower/enable managers to manage sickness within their teams, to reduce absence rates across the organisation and to implement wellbeing support in line with the Workforce Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

6.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.10.1 Data collation from this report contributes to the progression of the LGR Workforce Workstream.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 We actively monitor the retention rates in line with the risk register.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

8.1 N/A.

Workforce Report
Quarter Two 2026-27

Report Highlights

Report Section	Measure	Trend	Q1 2026/27	Q2 2026/27
1.1	Headcount	=	749	749
1.1	FTE	⬇	694.73	691.23
1.2	Variable Employees	⬆	399	445
1.4	High Earners	⬆	71	84
1.5	Leavers	=	41	41
1.6	Turnover	⬇	18.97%	18.91%
1.7	Employment Offers Made	⬇	143	115
2.0	Sickness Days Lost per FTE	⬆	10.1	10.3
2.3	Sickness Absence – Long-Term	⬇	70.47%	60.30%
3.0	HR Caseload		79	125
3.1	HR Caseload – Sickness Absence Management		57%	72%
			Q1 Forecast	Q2 Forecast
1.3	Pay bill – Total		£39.7m	£39.6m
1.3	Pay bill – Employees		£37.0m	£36.6m
1.3	Pay bill – Contract & Agency Staff		£2.7m	£2.9m

CONTENTS

1.0 Employee Profile 3

1.1 Headcount and FTE 3

1.2 Workforce by Contract Type 3

1.3 Paybill 4

1.4 High earners 5

1.5 Leavers 5

1.6 Turnover 6

1.7 Recruitment Metrics 6

1.8 RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES/SUCCESSES 8

1.9 Learning & Development and Employee Engagement 8

2.0 Sickness Absence 10

2.1 Trend of Working Days Lost Across HDC 10

2.2 Reasons For Sickness Absence 11

2.3 Sickness Absence Breakdown 12

3.0 HR Caseload 13

3.1 Breakdown of HR cases by Type 13

4.0 Equalities Data 14

4.1 Workforce by Age and Grade 14

4.2 Workforce by Gender 14

4.3 Employees by Grade and Gender 15

4.4 Workforce by Ethnicity 15

4.5 Disability Data 15

5.0 Accident / Incident Reports 16

5.1 OPERATIONS SERVICES 16

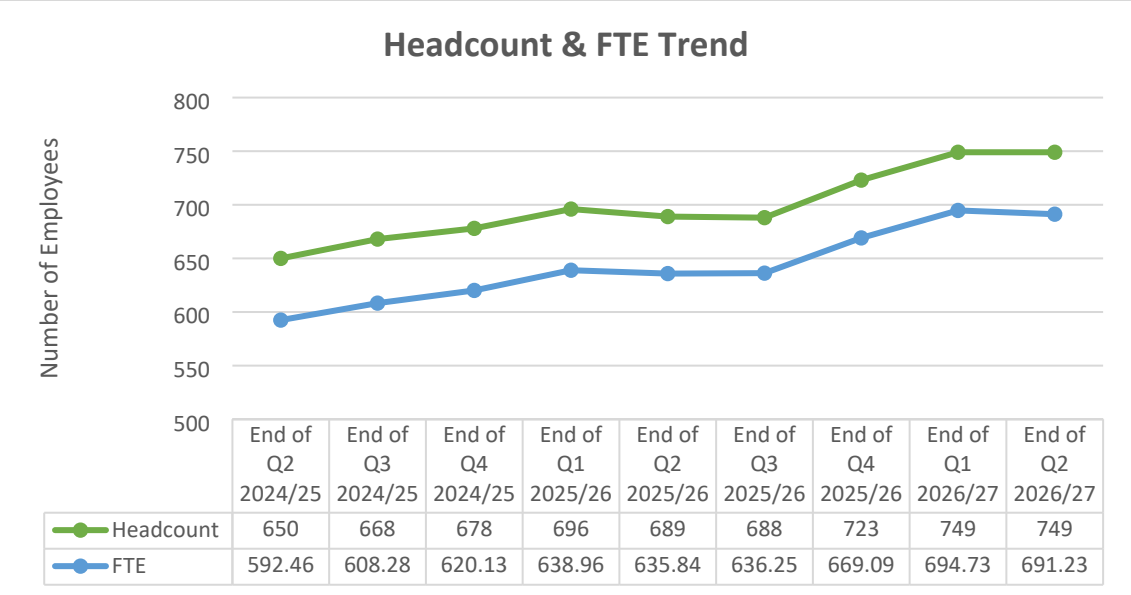
5.2 OFFICE-BASED PREMISES 16

1.0 EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Definition: Headcount is the number of employees working within the Council, counting primary roles only, and excluding casual roles.
A **full time equivalent** (referred to as FTE) is a measure of an employee's workload to make the position comparable across the workforce based on a 37-hour full-time working week. For example, an FTE of 0.5 indicates that the employee works half of a full-time working week (18.5 hours).

1.1 HEADCOUNT AND FTE

At the end of Quarter Two (30th September 2026), the total number of permanent and fixed term employees employed by Huntingdonshire District Council was 749 (excluding those employed on a variable or casual hour basis) with the number of full-time equivalent posts at 691.23



	End of Q2 2024/25	End of Q3 2024/25	End of Q4 2024/25	End of Q1 2025/26	End of Q2 2025/26	End of Q3 2025/26	End of Q4 2025/26	End of Q1 2026/27	End of Q2 2026/27
Headcount	650	668	678	696	689	688	723	749	749
FTE	592.46	608.28	620.13	638.96	635.84	636.25	669.09	694.73	691.23

1.2 WORKFORCE BY CONTRACT TYPE

Data on Variable employees is included in the below table. However, data on Variables are not included in the other areas of the workforce reporting. Variables are typically employed in multiple positions across Leisure services; though a small number of Variables are employed in in other services. At the end of Q2, HDC had 445 variable individuals employed in 964 posts. This is an increase in headcount from Q1.

The numbers in the table below may vary as they include employees with multiple contracts/ positions.

.

Employment Type	Q1 2026/27	Q2 2026/27
Fixed Term	39	39
Permanent	684	680
Apprentice	2	2
Secondment/Acting Up	24	28
Grand Total	**749**	**749**
Variable employees	399 (886)	445 (964)

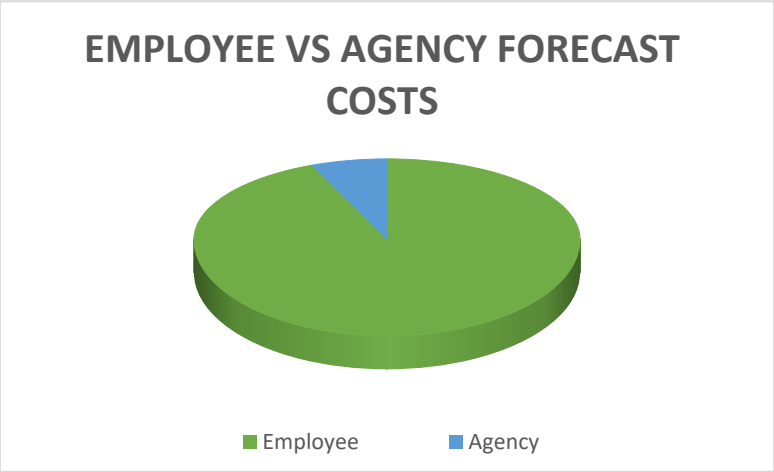


1.3 PAYBILL

The following table shows the employee pay costs over several years. At this stage of 2026/27 the forecast pay bill shows an underspend on all employee costs (staff, contractors and agency workers) of £335.2k. This arises from an underspend on employee salaries of £1.96m, but an overspend of £1.63m on contractors and agency workers against an agency budget of £1.31m.

The majority of our agency spend continues to be centred towards our ICT, Development Management and Operational Services teams.

Year	Employee Paybill Budget (£)	Employee Paybill Actual (£)	Employee Paybill Forecast (£)	FTE at end of Q4
2018/19	25,230,515	23,192,646		586.9
2019/20	24,871,268	23,941,696		580.5
2020/21	25,679,601	24,240,402		604.6
2021/22	25,377,310	25,421,307		656
2022/23	27,330,175	26,467,958		619
2023/24	27,848,427	27,157,627		649
2024/25	30,414,246	32,360,000		678
2025/26	35,988,670	35,811,085		723
2026/27	39,853,087		39,517,846	



1.4 HIGH EARNERS

Definition: High earners are classified as employees who are paid at £50,000 or above. This information is already published annually in line with the Government's commitment to improve transparency across the public sector and the target hasn't changed since it was introduced. The Councils pay policy distinguishes authorisation of salaries over £75,000 per annum.

At the end of Quarter Two, there were 84 employees paid at FTE salaries of £50,000 or above, representing 11.2% of the total workforce. 1.47% of the workforce are paid salaries over £75,000. The total number of employees classed as high earners has increased since the previous Quarter (71). This is primarily due to the application of the NJC pay award which was agreed and applied for staff in September 2026.

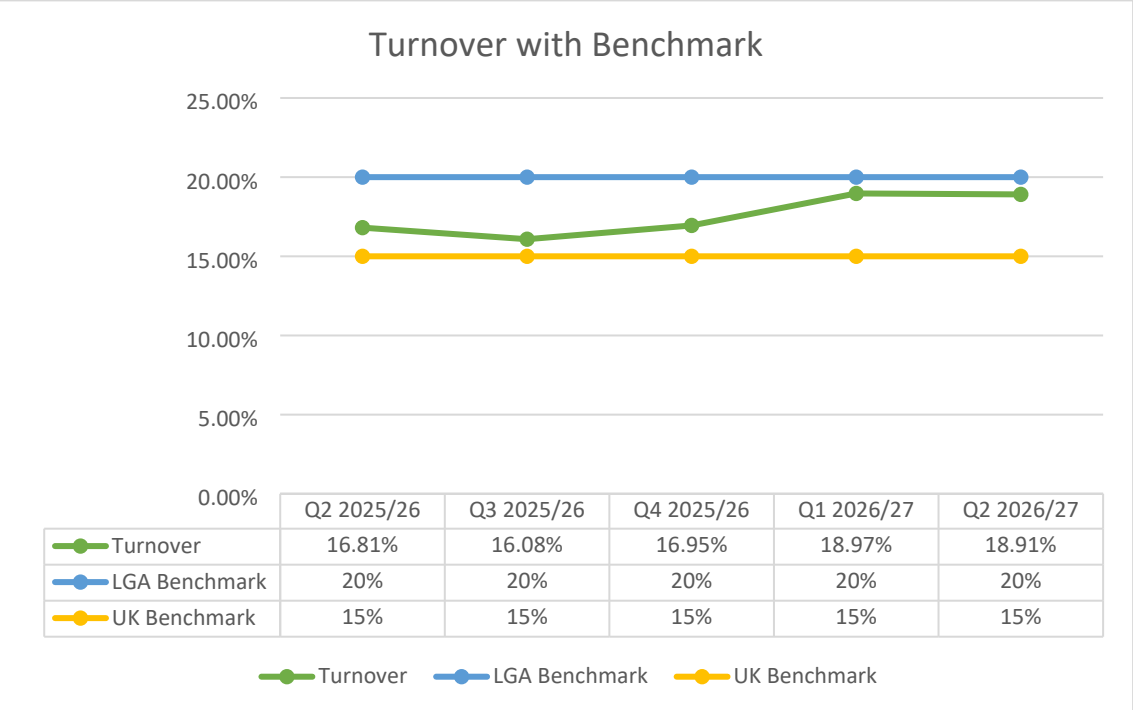
1.5 LEAVERS

During Q2, there were 41 employees on permanent or fixed-term contracts who left the organisation, which is the same as the total leaving in the previous Quarter (41).
15 of the leavers from Q2, resigned to take up other posts with either commercial or public sector employers, this an increase from last quarters report (9). We had 2 retirements during this quarter with a combined service of 45 years.

Leaving Reason	Permanent	Fixed-term
Dismissal Misconduct	2	
Dismissal - Ill Health Retirement	1	
End of Contract		8
Retirement	2	
Settlement Agreement	1	
Voluntary Resignation	23	4
Total	29	12

1.6 TURNOVER

In the 12 months to 30th September 2026, 135 employees left the Council. As a proportion of the average number of permanent/fixed term employees over this period, the overall annual turnover rate for employees is 18.91%, which is very similar to the previous quarter, and remains below the LGA benchmark.



1.7 RECRUITMENT METRICS

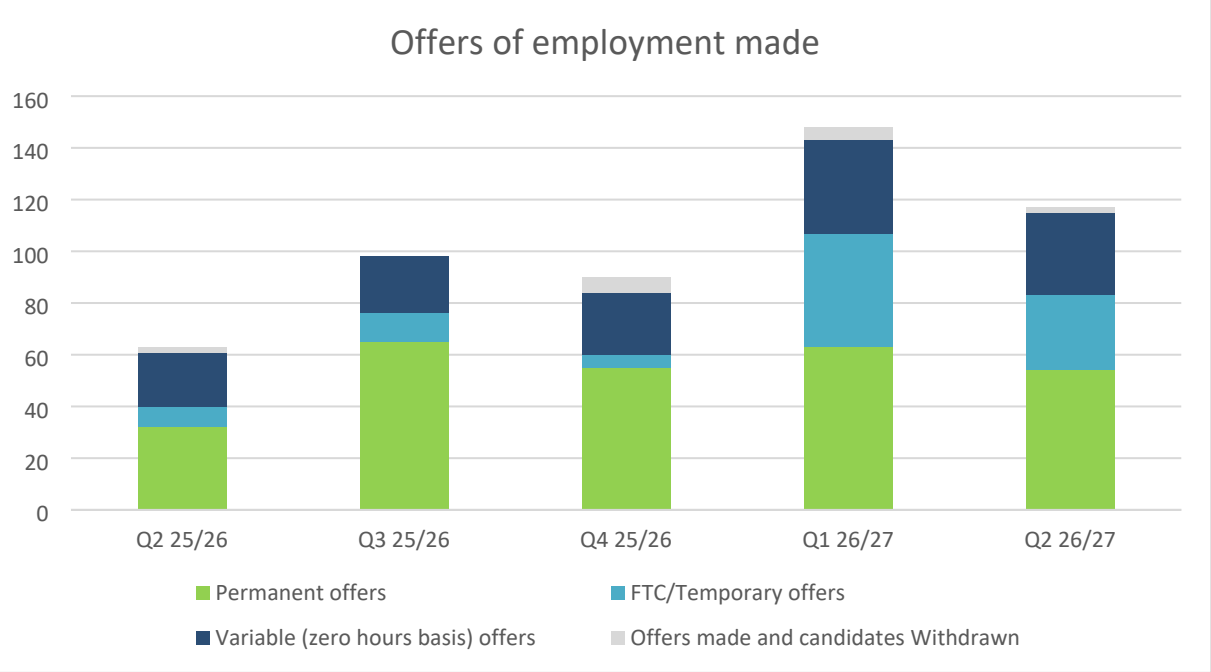
Of the 115 offers made through core recruitment activities, 35 were existing HDC staff, promoted or moving into other positions around the council. The HR team will continue to support the business with creating opportunities to grow and develop our workforce, careers, and mobility around services.
In terms of recruitment metrics, the council advertised 89 roles in Q2 26-27, a decrease from 95 in the previous quarter.

Advertised Roles	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27
	59	72	67	95	89

Advertised Roles per business area	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27
3CICT	7	5	4	1	6

Communities (Communications, Transformation, Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits, Communities and Operational Housing)	9	12	9	34	17
Executive / Corporate Office	1	1	0	0	0
Finance and Resources (HR, Finance, Facilities and Estates, Democratic Services and Elections, Procurement, Audit and Risk)	5	4	2	3	5
Place (Leisure, Health and Environment, Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection, Operations and Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery)	37	54	52	57	61

Number of candidates applied	**Q2 25/26**	**Q3 25/26**	**Q4 25/26**	**Q1 26/27**	**Q2 26/27**
	1032	712	915	1265	1052



1.8 Recruitment Challenges/Successes

Recruitment activity remained high during Q2 2026/27, with 89 roles advertised, compared with 95 in Q1 and 59 during the same period last year. Candidate attraction also remained strong, with 1,052 applications received, down from the exceptionally high 1,265 in Q1 but slightly above the 1,032 received in Q2 2025/26.

A total of 115 offers were made during the quarter, comprising 54 permanent, 29 fixed-term or temporary and 32 variable-hours appointments. Internal progression remained positive, with 35 offers made to existing employees moving into new roles or securing promotions, representing around 30% of all

offers and demonstrating continued opportunities for career development and workforce mobility.

A particularly positive development during the quarter was the recruitment of five apprentices, providing opportunities for individuals to develop their skills and careers while building future capability within the Council. These appointments comprise apprenticeships within Development Management, Urban Design, Planning Enforcement, Planning Business Administration and Grounds Maintenance. The recruitment of four apprentices across Planning is particularly encouraging, supporting the development of a future talent pipeline within a specialist service area where skills can be challenging to source externally.

Candidate retention following offer also improved, with two candidates withdrawing after receiving an offer, compared with five in Q1 and six in Q4 2025/26. This reduction is encouraging given the continued competition within the wider labour market.

The majority of the variable recruitment this quarter was to support frontline service delivery and operational resilience. Of these, 13 were variable lifeguards recruited to provide additional capacity during the busy summer period to the leisure centres and to help cover annual leave and other absences. A small number of variable caretaker appointments were also made to ensure continuity of service during periods of leave and long-term absence. Other appointments included an HR Administrator to provide additional support for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) related activity. We also successfully recruited five variable swimming teachers, a role that continues to be particularly challenging to fill and where additional capacity is critical to maintaining and expanding our swim programme provision. The remaining posts were additional posts for internal staff carrying out shifts at the Aquapark during the summer period, providing those individuals with new challenges and development.

A small number of campaigns did not result in an appointment, spanning specialist, operational and leisure roles, including Planning Change Officer, Business Analyst, Weekend Street Cleanser Driver and positions within One Leisure and Burgess Hall. In two cases, offers were made but subsequently declined, while the remaining campaigns did not identify suitable candidates. This reflects the differing challenges associated with recruiting specialist skills alongside operational roles where shift patterns and working hours can affect candidate attraction.

Overall, Q2 represents another strong quarter for recruitment. Although activity and applications reduced from the particularly high levels seen in Q1, both vacancy and application volumes remain above the equivalent period last year. Strong candidate interest, continued internal progression, investment in apprenticeships and fewer post-offer withdrawals provide a positive overall picture, while targeted approaches will continue to be important for roles where suitable candidates are more difficult to secure.

1.9 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

During the year, the Learning & Development (L&D) Team coordinated 20 work experience placements across the organisation, supporting students with interests in Leisure, Communications & Engagement, Planning, and Environmental Health. These placements provided valuable workplace experience and increased awareness of career opportunities within local government.

Building on the success of our previous placement through Impact - The Local Government Graduate Programme, a further recruitment campaign was undertaken to support strategic workforce development. Following a competitive selection process, two graduates have been successfully recruited and are now working within the Transformation and Corporate Reporting Team, providing additional capacity to support organisational change and improvement activities while developing their careers within local government.

The L&D Team is working with local training providers to secure CPCA-funded development opportunities as an alternative to apprenticeships. As part of this initiative, eight employees embarked on a nine-month qualification; Level 3 Diploma in Management programme in June/ July, supporting the development of leadership skills and building management capability across the Council.

Last year's leadership and development programme is now embedded into business-as-usual activity as part of the Council's core learning offer, with a number of modules being adapted and updated for in-house delivery to ensure continued access, long-term sustainability, and ongoing value for the organisation.

Apprenticeships

During Q2 we have had a completion for one member of staff in Business Administration Level 3 along with two leavers during Q2 undertaking Level 7 Senior Leadership apprenticeship.

Although no new apprenticeship programmes commenced during this quarter, five new apprentice positions were filled at HDC within the Planning team and Grounds Maintenance with their apprenticeship programmes scheduled to begin during the next quarter. This aligns with external funding arrangements and allows the apprentices time to settle into their new roles and teams before commencing their apprenticeship programme.

The apprenticeship programmes are:

- 2 level 3 Business Administration
- 2 level 4 Town Planning Assistant programmes
- 1 level 2 Horticulture

The figures shown in the table below are as at the end of September 2026.

	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Total
New and transferred apprenticeships	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Ongoing	**2**	**3**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**9**

2.0 SICKNESS ABSENCE

Definition: Long term sickness is classified as a continuous period of absence of 28 or more calendar days. All other periods of absence are defined as **short term**.
The absence data is calculated per full-time equivalent (FTE) as per the guidelines set out in the previous Best Value Performance Indicators (former statutory dataset) for sickness to account for adjustments in working hours.
Trigger points for management action under HDC policy are as follows:

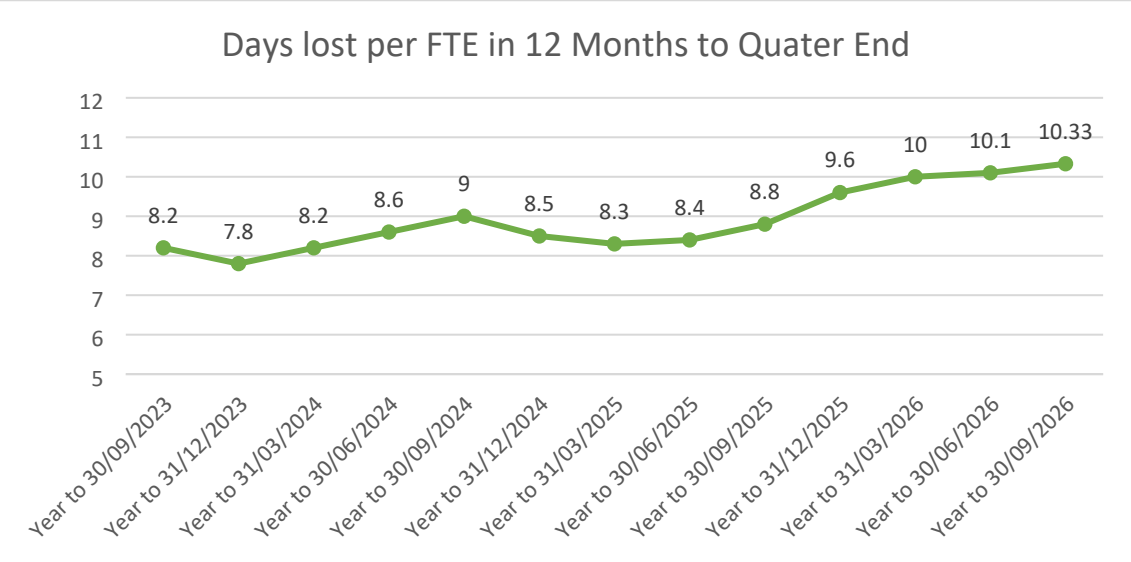
- 3 or more periods of absence in a rolling 3-month period
- 6 or more periods of absence in a rolling 12-month period
- 8 working days or more in a rolling 12-month period
- Long term absence of 28 calendar days or more
- Patterns of absence

(e.g., regular Friday and/or Monday; repeated absences linked to holidays)

2.1 TREND OF WORKING DAYS LOST ACROSS HDC

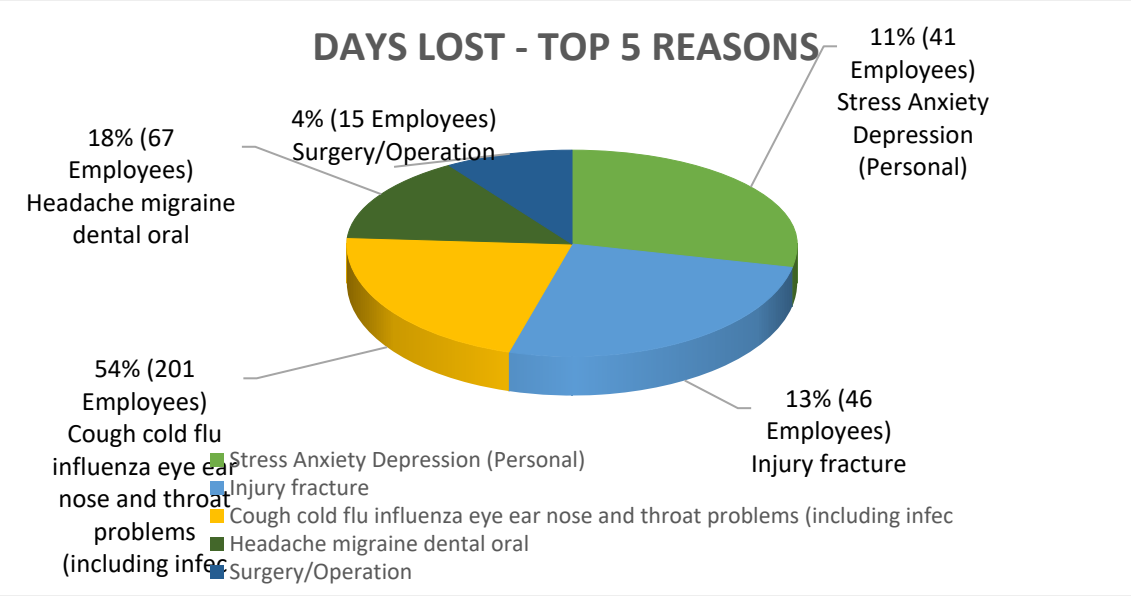
The graph shows the trend in sickness absence per FTE employee over a rolling period to the end of each Quarter since September 2023. It shows that sickness absence to the end of Q2 has seen a slight increase to 10.3 days per FTE, from the previous 10.1 days per FTE last quarter. This is in line with

national trends for UK employers across many industries. The year-to-date cost of sickness is £436,427.



2.2 REASONS FOR SICKNESS ABSENCE

The top 5 reasons for sickness absence by category below: -



2.3 SICKNESS ABSENCE BREAKDOWN

Despite there being a reduction in the number of days lost to long-term sickness, the absence figures during Q2 2026/27 continues to be driven primarily by long-term absence which accounted for 60.30% of all working days lost during the quarter. This is a decrease from 70.47% in the previous quarter, with long-term absence days decreasing from 1,217 to 1,036 days. The number of employees absent on a long-term basis has decreased from 29 to 24 as a quarter average with the current long term sickness case load at the end of September being 11 ‘live’ cases. This is a reduction from the previous quarter of

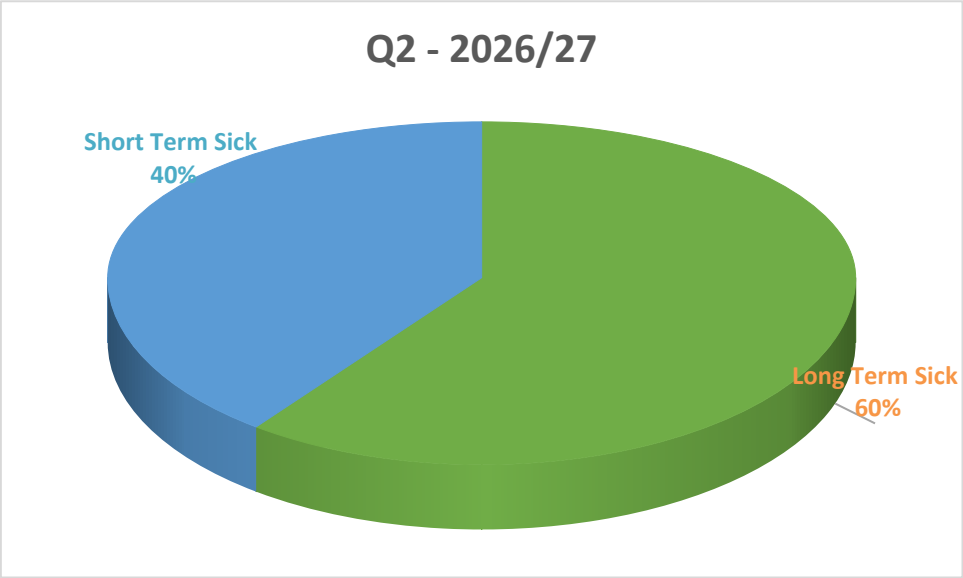
19 members of staff due to staff either returning to work or leaving the organisation. All 11 cases are being managed actively by the line manager supported by the HR Team.

In contrast, short-term absence has increased since the previous quarter from 510 to 682 working days lost and this has primarily been caused by a virus which affected the operations team at the end of Q1 and moving into Q2 and has therefore affected the figures for both quarters.

As is usual practice, the Council started the roll out of free 'flu vaccinations during this quarter with these proving to be popular with staff.

Quarter	Total days of long-term sickness	Total Working days lost (Short term sickness)	% of total absence long-term	% of total absence short-term
Q1 2024/25	859 (22)	449.5	65.60%	34.40%
Q2 2024/25	823 (18)	566.01	59.30%	40.70%
Q3 2024/25	525 (17)	663.29	44.10%	55.90%
Q4 2024/25	716 (22)	599	54.45%	45.55%
Q1 2025/26	750 (21)	600	55.56%	44.44%
Q2 2025/26	962 (22)	616	60.96%	39.04%
Q3 2025/26	978 (24)	684	58.84%	41.16%
Q4 2025/26	1019 (23)	642	61.35%	38.65%
Q1 2026/27	1217 (29)	510	70.47%	29.53%
Q2 2026/27	1036 (24)	682	60.30%	39.70%

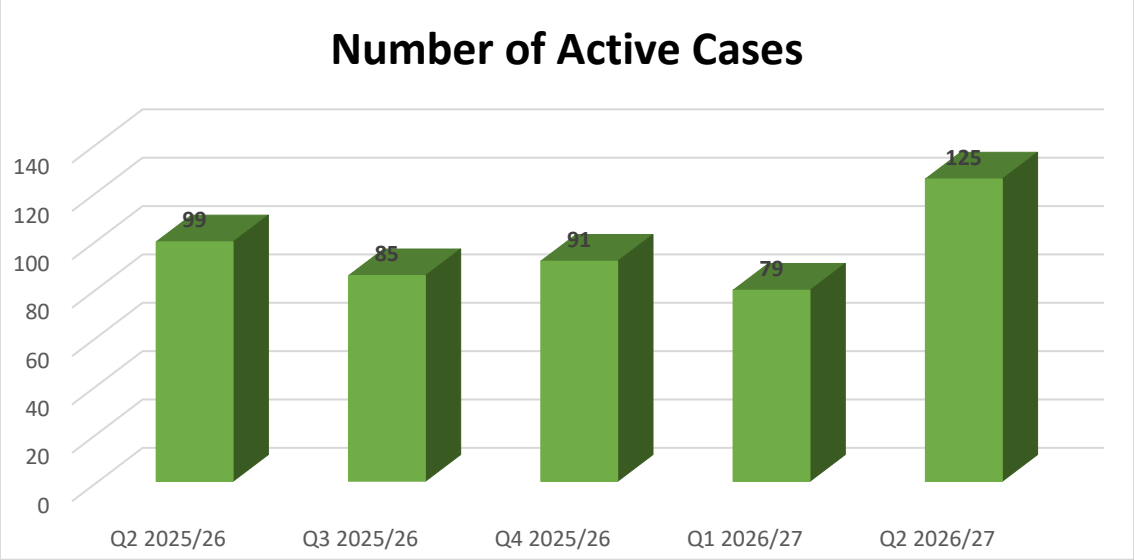
*Brackets denotes number of employees absent.



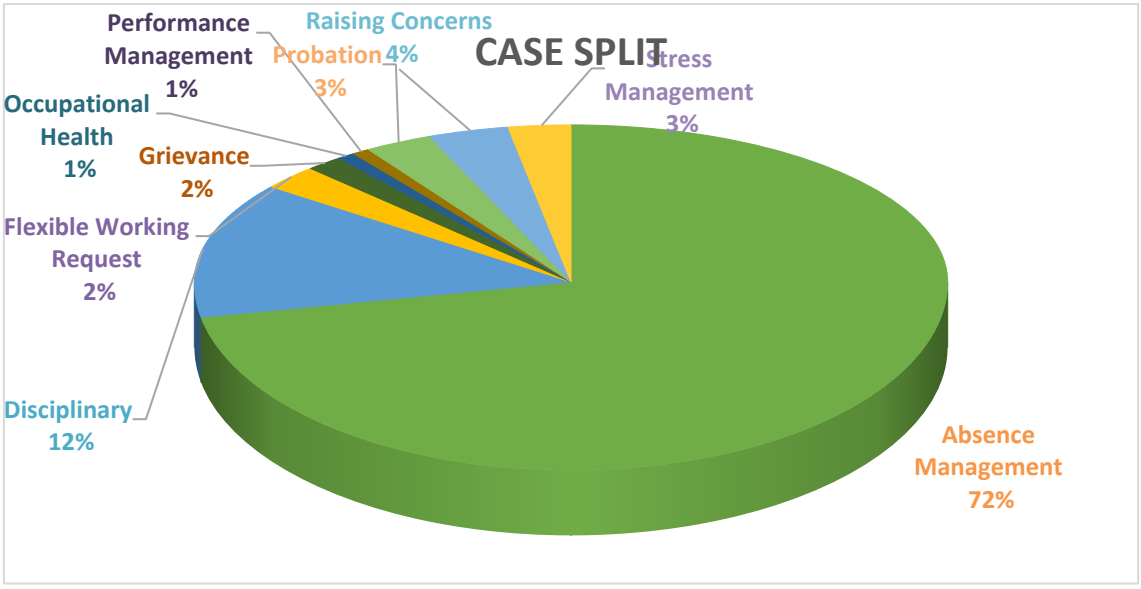
3.0 HR CASELOAD

The caseload is recorded to provide an indicator of the type of HR issues that the organisation has been dealing with over the last 12 months.

3.1 BREAKDOWN OF HR CASES BY TYPE



During Q2 there were 125 cases in progress, of which 45 were dealt with under formal procedures. Absence management continues to be the highest split of casework, with 90 of the 125 cases relating to the management of sickness absence and the resolution of some of the long term absence cases.

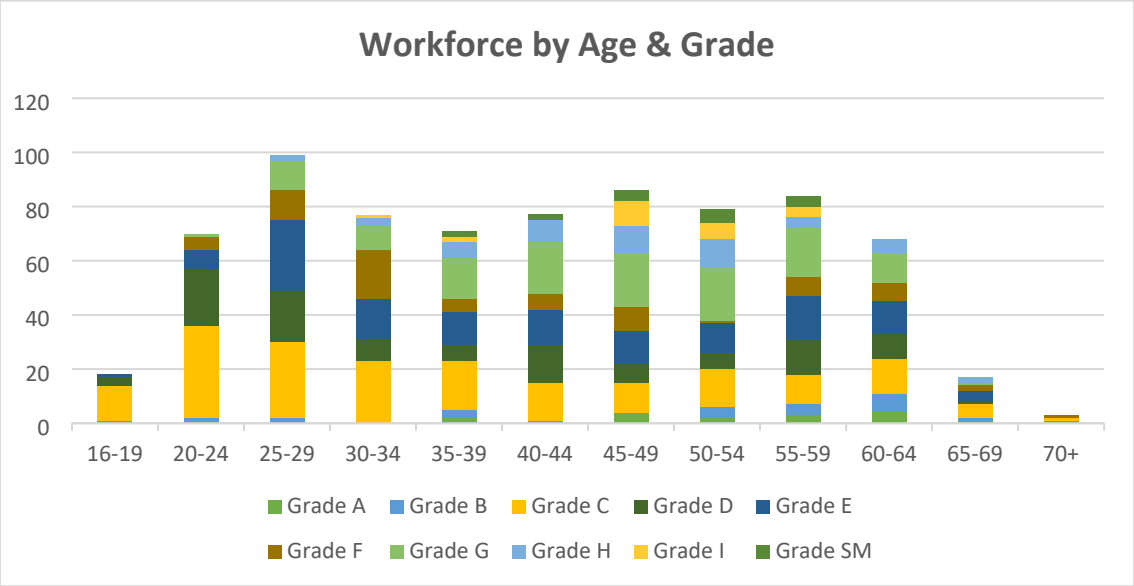

CASE SPLIT
Performance Management 1%
Raising Concerns 4%
Probation 3%
Stress Management 3%
Occupational Health 1%
Grievance 2%
Flexible Working Request 2%
Disciplinary 12%
Absence Management 72%

4.0 EQUALITIES DATA

Equality Data may be presented using percentages and not specific numbers as in some cases the sharing of specific numbers would mean that a small group of people could be easily identified.

4.1 WORKFORCE BY AGE AND GRADE

The number of employees by 5-year age band is depicted below by pay grade. Please note that where an employee has two jobs on different grades, they have been counted within their age band against both grades.

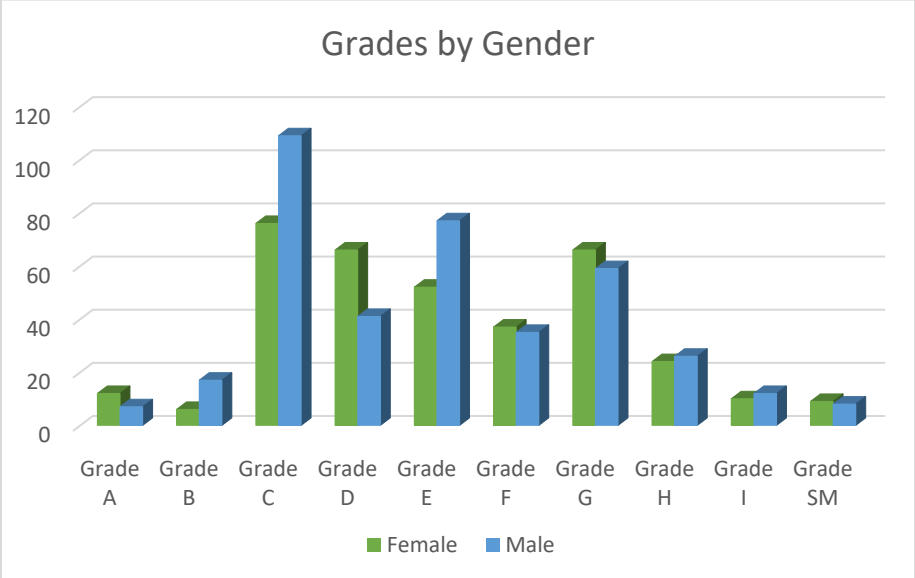


For the purposes of simplifying this graph, employees who have transferred into the Council on existing terms and conditions have been linked to Huntingdonshire District Council pay grades based on their current salary levels.

4.2 WORKFORCE GENDER



4.3 EMPLOYEES BY GRADE AND GENDER



4.4 WORKFORCE BY ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	% of workforce
Asian	2.67%
Black	1.87%
Mixed	1.34%
Not Stated	8.14%
Other Ethnic Groups	0.40%
White	85.58%

4.5 DISABILITY DATA

Disability Status	% of work force
No	77.57%
Not Known	11.48%
Yes	10.95%

5.0 ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORTS

This section reports on the number and nature of accidents and incidents occurring in owned, managed and occupied premises or associated with work activities undertaken by the Council's employees, during the period 1st July to 30 September 2026.

Definition: Accidents reported to the Incident Control Centre under the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations are referred to as RIDDOR accidents.

5.1 OPERATIONS SERVICES

There were no RIDDOR accidents reported.
There were five non-RIDDOR accidents relating to employees recorded.

The table below summarises these by nature and severity:

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
Non-RIDDOR accident	Fall from a height – height not stated	No First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Slips, trips or falls on same level	First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	No First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	Doctor Recommended	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	Doctor Recommended	1

5.2 OFFICE-BASED PREMISES

There were no RIDDOR or non-RIDDOR accidents reported.

There was one non-RIDDOR accident relating to a CPCA customer recorded.

5.3 ONE LEISURE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

There were no RIDDOR accidents reported.

There were four non-RIDDOR accidents relating to an employee recorded. The following table summarises these by nature and severity:

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
Non-RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	No First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Slips, trips or falls on same level	First Aid	2
Non-RIDDOR accident	Exposure to, or contact with, a harmful substance	No First Aid	1

A total of eighty-one accidents were recorded involving non-employees.

There were no RIDDOR reportable accidents involving non-employees recorded.

Agenda Item 4

Employment Committee – 25th November 2026

Report by: Head of Finance

Lead Cllr: Cllr J E Harvey
Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources

Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
ALL wards	Open	No

Use of Consultants and Temporary Staff

Executive Summary:

This annual report enables Members to monitor the Council's use of consultants and temporary staff during 2025/26. Total expenditure increased from £4.113m in 2024/25 to £5.827m in 2025/26, an increase of £1.714m (41.7%). The increase principally reflects investment in major capital projects, specialist support for key strategic programmes and the use of temporary resources to maintain statutory and frontline service delivery whilst permanent recruitment was undertaken.

Beyond maintaining service delivery on a temporary basis; the use of consultants and temporary staff has enabled the Council to deliver outcomes that would not otherwise have been achievable within existing capacity or capability. This includes progressing the Huntingdon Sport & Health Club project through RIBA Stages 1-4, advancing the Local Plan, supporting preparations for Local Government Reorganisation, maintaining Development Management performance during recruitment challenges, delivering the Windows 10 end-of-life programme, and providing specialist expertise across finance, audit, risk, treasury, commercial estates and ICT where the Council does not hold the required expertise in-house.

The Council's approach remains focused on securing temporary or specialist skills only where these are unavailable internally or where a temporary resource represents better value than establishing permanent capacity for short-term or project-specific requirements.

Recommendations

1.1. Members are asked to comment on the report and note its contents

	Key Corporate Plan Priorities
1	Delivering good quality, high value for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.

Report Author(s)

Sandra Beard – Head of Finance sandra.beard@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the Council's use of consultants and temporary staff during the 2025/26 financial year, including the principal reasons for their use and the movement in expenditure compared with 2024/25.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 In July 2014, the Employment Panel approved guidance for managers on the use of consultants and temporary staff.

2.2 Consultants and temporary staff are used where the Council requires either specialist skills not available within the establishment, or additional short-term capacity to deliver priority outcomes, or where a resourcing gap is required to be filled to maintain service delivery – for example during a recruitment exercise, or where recruitment for a hard to fill role has not been successful.

2.3 During 2025/26 this included professional expertise in areas such as major capital project delivery, planning policy, internal audit, treasury management, commercial estates, ICT transformation and environmental initiatives. In many instances the knowledge required is highly specialised, infrequently needed or linked to time-limited projects, making permanent recruitment neither practical nor cost effective.

The use of these resources has enabled the Council to maintain service resilience, meet statutory obligations, protect income streams and deliver key corporate priorities whilst operating within ongoing recruitment and labour market challenges. Temporary appointments have also provided continuity in critical service areas while permanent recruitment campaigns were undertaken.

2.4 The Council also secures external funding to deliver projects that support its corporate objectives. Where consultants or temporary staff are engaged specifically to deliver these projects, the related costs may be met from the external funding awarded and therefore do not create an additional pressure on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

2.5 The Council's definitions of consultants and temporary staff are set out below:

Consultants

Individuals engaged directly by the Council, either as sole traders or through a contractor, to provide specialist or professional skills and knowledge that are not available internally. They are generally appointed to deliver a defined task or project where retaining the expertise permanently would not represent value for money. The engagement ends after a

specified period or event, such as completion of a report or delivery of advice.

Temporary Staff

Individuals supplied through an agency or contractor to provide additional capacity. This may include short-term cover for staff absence, such as refuse operatives, or medium-term cover for vacant or hard to fill posts while permanent recruitment is completed.

3. EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS

3.1 The analysis below distinguishes between capital and revenue expenditure. Costs that are directly attributable to bringing a capital asset into use may be charged to the relevant capital project and financed from available capital resources, subject to the Council's accounting policies. All other costs are reported as revenue expenditure.

3.2 Capital

During 2025/26, capital expenditure on consultants and temporary staff was £1.625m, compared with £0.955m in 2024/25, an increase of £0.670m. The summary below is shown in rounded £000s, with detailed analysis provided in Appendix 1.

Capital Comparison of consultants and temporary staff 2025/26 and 2024/25			
	Consultants	**Temporary**	**TOTAL**
	£000	**£000**	**£000**
2025/26	1,575	50	**1,625**
2024/25	763	192	**955**
Increase	**812**	**-142**	**670**

The largest element was £1.367m of consultancy expenditure on RIBA Stages 1 to 4 for the Huntingdon Sport & Health Club. Other significant expenditure included £76k for Hinchingbrooke Country Park, £50k for the Windows 10 end-of-life programme, £28k for the replacement income management system, £50k for leisure centre refurbishments and £20k for roof-mounted solar panels.

3.3 Revenue

During 2025/26, revenue expenditure on consultants and temporary staff was £4.202m, compared with £3.158m in 2024/25, an increase of £1.044m. Consultancy expenditure increased by £0.274m, principally reflecting support for the Local Plan and Local Government Reorganisation. Temporary staffing expenditure increased by £0.770m, with the largest

increase relating to Development Management, alongside additional capacity across ICT, Corporate Resources and Public Protection. The summary below is shown in rounded £000s, with detailed analysis provided in Appendix 2.

Revenue Comparison of consultants and temporary staff 2025/26 and 2024/25			
	Consultants	**Temporary**	**TOTAL**
	£000	**£000**	**£000**
2025/26	1,697	2,505	**4,202**
2024/25	1,424	1,734	**3,158**
Increase	**274**	**770**	**1,044**

4. KEY IMPACTS

4.1 The use of consultants and temporary staff has delivered tangible benefits to the Council during 2025/26. These resources have enabled the progression of major capital projects, supported delivery of the Local Plan and Local Government Reorganisation workstreams, maintained Development Management capacity, strengthened financial governance through specialist audit, treasury and risk expertise, and supported critical ICT and transformation programmes.

4.2 The Council has deliberately focused consultancy expenditure on areas where specialist expertise is either unavailable internally or only required for a defined period. This approach provides access to professional skills and experience without creating ongoing employment costs.

4.3 Temporary staffing has enabled services to maintain performance and resilience during vacancies, periods of high workload and recruitment activity. Without this additional capacity there would have been increased risks of service disruption, delays to major projects, reduced income generation, slower planning decisions and reduced organisational capacity to deliver corporate priorities.

Value Delivered
Revenue expenditure on consultants and temporary staff supported a number of significant organisational outcomes during 2025/26, including:

- Progression of the Local Plan and associated evidence base.
- Specialist support for Local Government Reorganisation preparations.
- Maintenance of Development Management capacity and performance during recruitment challenges. The additional experience of those brought in has also enabled the service to continue to generate income though PPAs etc.

- Delivery of specialist finance, treasury, audit, risk and commercial estates activity.
- Protection of ICT service continuity and delivery of key technology programmes.
- Additional operational capacity to maintain frontline services and statutory functions.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Legal and contractual requirements relating to individual engagements remain applicable and must be considered as part of the relevant procurement and appointment process.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Since 6 April 2017, public sector bodies have been responsible for assessing the employment status for tax purposes of individuals engaged through intermediaries where the off-payroll working rules apply. For individuals engaged directly, rather than through an agency, the Council must determine the appropriate tax treatment using HMRC guidance and, where required, account for income tax and National Insurance contributions. Assessments consider the substance of the working arrangement, including factors such as control, substitution and the nature and duration of the engagement. Incorrect treatment may expose the Council to tax liabilities, interest and penalties. The Management Team have previously been briefed and provided with links to HMRC guidance and the online employment status assessment tool. Heads of Service are responsible for identifying relevant engagements and ensuring that the appropriate assessment is completed.

7. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix 1 - consultants and temporary staff – capital expenditure
- Appendix 2 - consultants and temporary staff – revenue expenditure

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

CONTACT OFFICER

Lydia Morrison
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources

Appendix 1

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

CONSULTANTS CAPITAL EXPENDITURE			
Service Area	**2024/25 £000**	**2025/26 £000**	
Corporate Resources	14	0	Investment Property in Hampshire
Housing Strategy	424	0	Market towns & future high streets*
	117	0	Old Falcon
	5	0	Transport project*
ICT Shared Services	85	4	Hardware replacement
		28	Income Management System
		20	Server 2016 Migration
		5	Windows 10 end of life
Leisure & Health	80	0	Solar canopy & panels
		5	Biodiversity
		1,367	Huntingdon Sport & Health Club
		50	Leisure centres refurbishment
Strategic Insight & Delivery	38	76	Fees relating to Hinchingbrooke Country Park
Facilities	0	20	Roof mounted solar
TOTAL	**763**	**1,575**	

TEMPORARY STAFF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE			
Service Area	**2024/25 £000**	**2025/26 £000**	
Economic Development	10	0	Administrative support relating to UK Shared Prosperity Fund
Housing Strategy	157	0	Old Falcon*
	25	0	Market towns & future high streets*
ICT Shared Services	0	50	Windows 10 end of life
TOTAL	**192**	**50**	

* externally funded

Appendix 2

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

CONSULTANTS REVENUE EXPENDITURE				
Service Area	**2024/25 £000**	**2025/26 £000**	**Expenditure for 2025/26 includes**	**Justification for Spend**
Chief Operating Officer	33	22	Support for Licensing	Specialist advice not available within establishment
Chief Planning Officer	175	197	Support for: Planning applications**	Specialist advice not available within establishment
	103	496	Local plan**	
	25	0	Community Infrastructure Levy	
	9	8	Other**	
Corporate Leadership	20	18	Support for: Leadership team	Specialist advice not available within establishment
	16	32	Strategic communications	
			Place Strategy**	
Corporate Resources	87	27	Support for: Risk management & internal audit	Specialist knowledge not available within the Council and/or that is required for financial stewardship and audit
	60	44	Financial management system	
	48	68	Commercial Estates**	
	41	13	Treasury, valuations and pension fund administration**	
	37	3	HR initiatives**	
	31	3	CIS	
	5	3	VAT reclaims**	
	8	43	Other areas	
	0	168	Bridge Place Car Park	
	0	120	LGR	
	0	19	Insurance	

Economic Development	43 43	0 20 27 12	Support for Hunts travel UKSPF Economic Growth Strategy Other Areas	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
ICT Shared Services	74	33	Support for ICT applications**	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
Leisure & Health	57 20 6 0 18	141 1 5 43 55	Support for Feasibility studies Latent demand surveys Mystery shoppers Website Development Other areas	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
Operations	55 30 12	0 20 14	Support for Garden waste project** Materials recycling contract** Other areas	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
Strategic Insight & Delivery	221 53 45 37 12	1 7 34 0 0	Support for: Biodiversity initiatives* Climate change strategy** Civil parking enforcement implementation project* Parks, open Spaces & countryside management** Other areas	Specialist advice not within establishment.
TOTAL	**1,424**	**1,697**		

* externally funded or funded from earmarked reserves/increased income

** budgeted in MTFS

TEMPORARY STAFF REVENUE EXPENDITURE				
Service Area	**2024/25 £000**	**2025/26 £000**	**Expenditure for 2025/26 includes**	**Justification for Spend**
Chief Operating Officer	98 60	16 88	Agency staff for: Commercial team Benefits Administration*	A combination of cover to maintain service delivery and to cover additional workload re grant payments
Chief Planning Officer	132	671	Agency staff for: Development Management*	Cover to maintain service delivery
Corporate Resources	60 37 10 3	79 121 13 0	Agency staff for: Procurement Finance Human resources Maternity cover* Other	A combination of cover to maintain service delivery and to support the income generating portfolio of property
Corporate Leadership	25	0	Agency staff for: MD team & Communications	
ICT Shared Services	228	309	Agency staff for: 3CICT service	Cover to maintain service delivery
Leisure & Health	4	2	Security	
Public Protection	0	80	Environmental Protection	Additional capacity
Operations	667 98 19 6 0 287 0 0	596 74 17 21 14 356 29 19	Agency staff for: Waste Management* Street Cleansing* Grounds maintenance Vehicle maintenance* Arboriculture Recycling Skip Services CCTV	Requirement to back fill vacancies, sickness and holidays with agency staff to maintain service delivery
TOTAL	**1,734**	**2,505**		

* externally funded or funded from earmarked reserves/increased income/staff savings

** budgeted in MTFS

Agenda Item 5

Employment Committee – 25 November 2026

Report by: Leanne Harfield, Head of HR and OD

Lead Cllr: Cllr Stephen Claffey
Portfolio Holder for Workforce

Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
All	Open	No

Employment Policies Update

Executive Summary:

HR have a programme of undertaking a programme to review and refresh employment policies to ensure that they are accurate, legally compliant and reflect current practice within HDC.

Recommendations

1.1. Employment Committee are requested to endorse these policies

	Key Corporate Plan Priorities
1	*Doing our Core Work Well*

Report Author(s)

Leanne Harfield, Head of HR. Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides a summary the policies that are being submitted for endorsement.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 The policies reviewed in this period are:

- Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Policy (New)
- Reserve Forces Training and Mobilisation Policy (New)

Summary of the changes:

Policy	Amendments
Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Policy	This is a new policy created in line with the Employment Rights Bill 2026 and incorporates: - 'All reasonable steps' duty - Liability for third-party harassment - Shift from reactive to preventative approach - Clear guidance on how HDC will support staff raising concerns about sexual harassment at work
Reserve Forces Training and Mobilisation Policy	This is a new policy created in line with the Armed Forces Covenant

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 N/A.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.1 N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Policies endorsed will be reviewed in line with the policy schedule.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Doing our core work well

These policies support the organisation to ensure that they are legally compliant and have the right processes and procedures in place to support staff to do our core work well and to delivery the Council's key Priorities. This allows HDC to continue to work towards being an employer of choice.

6.2 Financial Implications

6.3 There is unlikely to be an adverse financial implication from either of these policies

6.4 Policy Implications

6.4.1 These have been amended to ensure that they are in line with legislative updates and best practice.

6.5 Legal & Constitutional Implications

6.5.1 These have been amended to ensure that they are in line with legislative updates and best practice.

6.6 Community Impact

6.6.1 Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out for each policy following endorsement

6.7 Environment & Climate Change Implications

6.7.1 N/A

6.8 Equality & Diversity Implications

6.8.1 The Sexual Harassment at Work Policy will ensure that staff feel protected whilst at work and the Reserve Forces Training and Mobilisation Policy will ensure that staff are managed fairly and consistently whilst undertaking reservist duties

6.8.2 Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out for each policy following endorsement

6.9 Implications on Resources

6.9.1 There may be resource implications if there are requirements to backfill reservists, however this will be like for like replacements on fixed term contracts for the duration of the deployment.

6.10 Health & Wellbeing Implications

6.10.1 N/A

6.11 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.11.1 LGR is taken into consideration for all policies that are reviewed or updated in line with legal requirements, and where possible, taking into consideration what neighbouring Council's approaches are.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 These policies are designed to mitigate risk to the organisation and to allow consistent application across all service areas.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

8.1 N/A.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Policy

1.1

Version Control			
Version	**Author**	**Date**	**Changes**
1.1	Lisa Baggaley	30 October 2026	New Policy

Name of Policy	Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Policy
Person/posts responsible	Head of HR and OD
Date adopted	November 26
Endorsed by	Employment Committee
Review Date	November 2028

Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Policy

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council (the Council) is committed to providing a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.

1.2 The Council is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This includes harassment by employees, workers, agency workers, contractors, consultants, elected members, volunteers, service users, customers, suppliers, residents, partner organisations and members of the public.

1.3 The Council recognises its legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which came into force in October 2024, to take all reasonable and proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment before it occurs.

1.4 Sexual harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Allegations will be treated seriously and investigated promptly, fairly and sensitively. Any employee found to have committed sexual harassment may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for gross misconduct.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote a safe, inclusive and respectful working environment for all employees and workers.
- Prevent sexual harassment and foster a culture in which inappropriate behaviour is challenged and addressed.
- Explain what sexual harassment is and provide examples of unacceptable conduct.
- Clarify the responsibilities of employees, managers and the Council.
- Provide clear routes for reporting concerns and complaints. The support available to **employees affected by sexual harassment**.
- Demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting its statutory obligations to prevent sexual harassment.

The policy applies to conduct occurring:

- In Council workplaces.
- During work-related travel.
- At training courses, conferences and meetings.
- During work-related social events.
- Whilst working remotely.
- Through email, telephone, messaging applications, social media platforms and video conferencing systems.

3. Definition of Sexual Harassment

3.1 Sexual harassment is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as:

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

3.2 Sexual harassment can occur regardless of a person's sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, religion or belief.

3.3 A single incident may constitute sexual harassment. Whether conduct amounts to harassment depends on the circumstances and the impact on the individual concerned. The behaviour does not need to be intended to cause offence for it to amount to harassment.

3.4 Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Physical conduct of a sexual nature, unwelcome physical contact such as touching or hugging or intimidation
- Requests or pressure for sexual favours.
- Persistent suggestions to meet up socially after a person has made it clear that they do not want to.
- Telling/sharing sexual comments, jokes or innuendo.
- Offensive comments about a person's body, appearance or clothing.
- Leering, staring or sexually suggestive gestures.
- Sexual assault.
- Displaying, sharing or circulating sexually explicit material by any means.
- Sending inappropriate emails, texts, messages, photographs or videos.
- Sexual posts or contact through social media.
- Intrusive questions about a person's private life.
- Spreading sexual rumours.
- Offensive comments relating to sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment.

3.5 The person engaging in unwelcome behaviour does not have to intend to be sexually harassing the other person for the behaviour to be considered sexual harassment. Regardless of what was intended, sexual harassment is defined by the nature and the impact of the behaviour, not the intention behind it.

4. Third-Party Sexual Harassment

4.1 The Council recognises that sexual harassment may be perpetrated by individuals who are not directly employed by the Council. This includes residents, service users, customers, contractors, suppliers, consultants, agency personnel, elected members, visitors, partner organisations and members of the public.

3.6 The Council will not expect employees to tolerate inappropriate behaviour from any individual, regardless of their status or relationship with the Council.

4.3 Examples of third-party sexual harassment may include:

- A resident making sexual comments towards a Housing Officer during a home visit.
- A customer making inappropriate remarks to a Customer Services Adviser.
- A contractor sending sexually suggestive messages to an employee.
- A supplier making unwanted advances during a meeting.
- A member of the public making sexually offensive comments to an employee undertaking enforcement duties.
- Inappropriate conduct at Council meetings, consultations, events or training sessions.

4.4 The Council will take proactive measures to prevent third-party harassment and reduce risks through:

Risk Assessments of Behaviour – The Council may communicate expected standards through:

- Customer charters.
- Signage and public notices.
- Website information.
- Service agreements.
- Procurement and contractor requirements.

Training and Awareness – Employees and Managers will receive training to help them:

- Recognise sexual harassment.
- Respond appropriately to incidents.
- Understand reporting procedures.
- Identify high-risk situations requiring additional controls.

4.5 Employees who experience or witness third-party sexual harassment are encouraged to report concerns as soon as possible through the reporting routes outlined within this policy.

Concerns should be reported even where:

- The incident occurred only once.
- The behaviour appears minor.
- The employee is unsure whether the behaviour constitutes harassment.
- The employee does not wish to pursue a formal complaint.

Following a report of sexual harassment The Council may take action which could include:

- Speaking to the individual responsible.
- Issuing warnings.
- Restricting access to premises or services.
- Making alternative communication arrangements.
- Reviewing working practices.
- Excluding individuals from Council facilities.
- Terminating contracts where appropriate.
- Reporting matters to the police.
- Making safeguarding referrals.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 The Council is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for all employees through the iCare values as such HDC will:

- Take all reasonable and proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment.
- Create and maintain a culture of dignity, inclusion and respect.
- Provide regular training and awareness activities.
- Implement suitable reporting mechanisms and support arrangements.
- Investigate reported concerns promptly and fairly.
- Monitor trends and implement lessons learned.

Managers will:

- Lead by example and model respectful behaviour.
- Foster a workplace culture where inappropriate behaviour is challenged.
- Take all concerns seriously and act promptly.
- Ensure employees know how to access support.
- Protect individuals from victimisation and retaliation when raising or being involved in a complaint of sexual harassment.

Employees will:

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Raise concerns about sexual harassment they experience or witness with their line manager of HR.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour, if it can be done safely.
- Respect confidentiality requirements.

6. Preventative Measures

6.1 The Council recognises that preventing sexual harassment is more effective than responding to incidents after they occur. In line with its legal obligations, the Council will take all reasonable and proportionate steps to create and maintain a working environment in which sexual harassment is unlikely to occur.

It is important therefore that the Council puts in place preventative measures such as:

Training and Awareness

- Mandatory sexual harassment awareness training for employees, managers and elected members.
- Manager training on responding to concerns and complaints.
- Inclusion of behavioural expectations within induction programmes.
- Regular communications and awareness campaigns.

Risk Assessment and Workplace Design

- Assessing sexual harassment risks as part of health and safety processes.
- Reviewing risks associated with lone working, home visits and customer-facing services.
- Implementing safe systems of work where risks are identified.

- Considering workplace design and security arrangements to support employee safety.

Managing Third-Party Risks

- Displaying notices stating that abusive or sexually inappropriate behaviour towards employees will not be tolerated.
- Establishing behavioural expectations within supplier and contractor arrangements.
- Supporting employees in responding to challenging interactions.
- Taking action where inappropriate conduct occurs.

Leadership and Culture

- Promoting dignity, inclusion and respect through leadership behaviours.
- Encouraging employees to speak up about concerns.
- Challenging inappropriate behaviour promptly

.

Reporting and Monitoring

- Maintaining clear reporting arrangements.
- Monitoring trends and themes arising from complaints.
- Learning from investigations and implementing improvements.
- Reviewing policies and procedures periodically.

Compliance with the Preventative Duty

The Council will keep the effectiveness of its prevention measures under review and take all additional reasonable steps where risks are identified. Preventing sexual harassment is an ongoing responsibility and will be supported through leadership, workplace culture, risk management, employee feedback and continuous improvement.

7. Reporting Concerns

7.1 Concerns and complaints regarding sexual harassment can be reported by:

- Individuals who have experienced sexual harassment.
- Individuals who have witnessed sexual harassment.
- Managers who become aware of inappropriate behaviour.

Reports may be made directly to one or more of the following:

- A Line Manager.
- Another Manager.
- Human Resources.
- A member of the Employee Representative Group or Trade Union Representative.
- The Council's Whistleblowing arrangements where appropriate.

No employee will suffer any detriment for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

8. Resolution

8.1 There are both informal and formal ways to manage a complaint of sexual harassment. The appropriate way depends on the circumstances, but the choice lies with the employee who experienced the harassment.

8.2 Informal

If a manager receives a complaint regarding sexual harassment they must document the details of the complaint.

The details should include what happened, when it happened, where and who was involved. The manager would then pass this information onto the HR team who will support the manager through the process.

Where an informal complaint has been raised this may be addressed by:

- Having a discussion with the person the complaint is relating to.
- Management intervention.
- Facilitated conversations between the people involved.
- Agreed expectations about future behaviour.

Informal action may not be appropriate where allegations are serious.

8.3 Formal

Where informal action is not appropriate or has been unsuccessful, concerns may be addressed through the Council's Raising Concerns Policy where the complaint will be investigated. If the complaint is upheld, it may then lead to disciplinary action in line with the Disciplinary Policy.

An employee may not choose to file a formal complaint, due to potential distress involved. However, in such cases the manager, in consultation with HR, may still initiate disciplinary action against the alleged individual, in line with the legal duty for employers to prevent sexual harassment and failure to act appropriately may put others at risk.

9. Confidentiality

9.1 Reports and investigations will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Information will only be shared with those who need to know for legitimate business, legal, safeguarding or investigatory reasons. Confidentiality does not guarantee anonymity, but the Council will seek to protect privacy wherever reasonably possible.

10. Victimisation

10.1 The Council will not tolerate victimisation of any individual because they have:

- Raised a concern.
- Made a complaint.
- Supported another individual.
- Participated in an investigation.

Any employee found to have victimised another person may be subject to disciplinary action.

11. Consequences of Policy Breaches

11.1 The Council takes all allegations of sexual harassment seriously. Any employee who is found, following an appropriate investigation, to have breached this policy may be subject to formal action under the Council's Disciplinary Policy. Proven acts of sexual harassment may constitute gross misconduct and may result in dismissal. The level of action taken will depend upon the circumstances of the case, including:

The nature and seriousness of the behaviour.

- Whether the behaviour was deliberate, repeated or persistent.
- The impact on the individual(s) affected.
- Whether there has been any previous misconduct.
- Any mitigating factors identified during the investigation process.

3.7 Possible Outcomes – Where a complaint is upheld, the Council may take on or more of the following actions:

- Informal management action.
- A requirement to undertake training, coaching or awareness sessions.
- Formal management guidance.
- A written warning.
- A final written warning.
- Redeployment or reassignment where appropriate and lawful.
- Dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct.

The Council may also implement workplace measures designed to protect employees and prevent further incidents from occurring. These may include adjustments to working arrangements, reporting lines or workplace locations where appropriate.

3.8 Third-Party Harassment

Where sexual harassment is committed by a third party, the Council will take all reasonable and proportionate action to protect employees and reduce the risk of recurrence. Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- Issuing verbal or written warnings.
- Restricting contact with employees.
- Requiring communications to take place through specified channels.
- Restricting or withdrawing access to Council premises or services where lawful and proportionate.
- Ending contracts or agreements with contractors, suppliers or consultants.
- Reporting matters to relevant professional bodies, regulatory organisations or partner agencies.
- Reporting alleged criminal offences to the police.

3.9 Victimisation and Retaliation

Any employee who victimises, intimidates, retaliates against or treats another person unfavourably because they have:

- Raised a concern.
- Made a complaint.
- Supported a colleague.
- Acted as a witness.
- Participated in an investigation or hearing.

may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Victimisation is a serious breach of this policy and will not be tolerated.

3.10 Failure to Report or Address Concerns

All employees have a responsibility to contribute to a workplace culture where inappropriate behaviour is challenged and concerns are taken seriously.

Managers in particular have a responsibility to take appropriate action where concerns are raised or where they become aware of behaviour that may constitute sexual harassment. A manager who fails to address concerns appropriately, seek advice or escalate matters where required may themselves be subject to management action or disciplinary proceedings.

This reflects the Council's legal duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and to maintain a safe and respectful working environment.

11.6 Malicious Allegations

The Council encourages employees to raise concerns in good faith and recognises that a complaint may not always be upheld following an investigation. No action will be taken against an individual solely because a complaint is not substantiated, provided it was made honestly and based on a genuine belief that inappropriate behaviour had occurred.

However, where an investigation establishes that an allegation was knowingly false, malicious or made in bad faith, this may be treated as misconduct and managed under the Council's Disciplinary Policy.

11.7 Criminal Conduct

Some forms of sexual harassment may constitute criminal offences. Where appropriate, the Council may refer matters to the police, safeguarding authorities or relevant regulatory or professional bodies. Internal procedures may continue independently of any external investigation where appropriate.

12. Employee Support

12.1 Commitment to Supporting Employees

The Council recognises that experiencing, witnessing, reporting or being involved in a sexual harassment complaint can be distressing and may significantly impact an individual's wellbeing, health and work.

The Council is committed to ensuring employees are treated with dignity, compassion and respect and are provided with appropriate support throughout any informal resolution process, investigation or formal procedure.

The Council also recognises that employees who witness sexual harassment, receive disclosures from colleagues or participate in investigations may themselves experience stress, anxiety, fear of repercussions or concerns about working relationships.

Witnesses play an important role in helping the Council prevent and address inappropriate behaviour and will be treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity throughout any process.

For employees requiring support they should contact the Employee Assistance Provider, which offers free confidential counselling services. The Employees Representative Group or the Trade Union can also play an important role in supporting employees (details available on the Intranet page or HR team).

12.2 Workplace Adjustments

In some circumstances and where it is appropriate, it may be necessary to make some temporary adjustments whilst a complaint is being looked into and these adjustments may include:

- Changes to working arrangements.
- Home or hybrid working.
- Changes to reporting lines.
- Relocation of workstations.
- Temporary separation of individuals.
- Flexible working arrangements.
- Time off to attend support appointments, meetings or investigations.

Any adjustments will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will not imply any presumption regarding the outcome of an investigation. If any adjustments need to be considered please consult with HR before making any changes.

13. Monitoring and Review

13.1 The Council will monitor:

- Complaints and outcomes.
- Training completion rates.
- Emerging risks.
- Employee feedback.
- Trends relating to third-party harassment.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner where legislation, guidance or organisational requirements change.

This policy aims to support a workplace culture in which everyone is treated with dignity, feels safe at work and is empowered to speak up about inappropriate behaviour.

Reserve Forces Training and Mobilisation Policy

Version 1.1

Version Control			
Version	**Author**	**Date**	**Changes**
1.1	Kiran Hans	August 2026	New Policy

Name of Policy:	Reservists Policy
Person/posts responsible:	Head of HR
Date Endorsed/adopted:	November 2026
Endorsed by:	Employment Committee
Review Date:	November 2028

1. Policy statement

1.1 The Council recognises the valuable contribution that members of the Reserve Forces make to the UK Armed Forces, their communities, and the civilian workplace. The Council further acknowledges that the training undertaken by Reservists enables them to develop skills and abilities that are of benefit to both the individual and their employer, as many of the skills that Reservists gain during their training are transferable to the workplace.

1.2 This document provides a policy framework for the support of Council employees who are members of the Reserve Forces and sets out the obligations that the Council has towards Reservists and vice versa in relation to training and mobilisation commitments.

2. Types of Reservists

2 There are two main types of Reservists:

- Volunteer Reservist – civilians recruited into the Royal Naval Reserves, Royal Marines Reserves, Army Reserve and Royal Auxiliary Air Force
- Regular Reservist – ex-regular service personnel who may retain a liability to be mobilised depending on how long they have served in the Armed Forces.

3. Legal Considerations

3.1 The Reserve Forces Safeguard of Employment Act 1985 provides Reservists who have a liability to be mobilised with two types of protection:

- Protection of Employment – the Act provides protection from unfair dismissal and makes it a criminal offence for an employer to terminate a Reservist's job without their consent solely or mainly because they have a liability to be mobilised; and
- Rights to Reinstatement – the Act provides Reservists with a legal right to reinstatement to their former job, subject to certain conditions.

3.2 The Reserve Forces Act 1996 sets out the call-out powers under which reservists can be mobilised for full-time service.

4. Reserve Status Notification

4.1 For the Council to provide the appropriate level of support, Reservists are required to inform the Council that they are a member of the Reserve Forces and the specific force to which they belong. It is the responsibility of Reservists to ensure their personal details are kept up to date e.g. if they leave their respective Reserve Force.

4.2 In any circumstances, Reservists will not be disadvantaged as a result of notifying the Council of their reserve status.

4.3 Reservists are also required to grant permission for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to write directly to the Council by way of an Employer Notification which confirms their reservist status to the Council and the benefits, rights and obligations that apply to both parties. The notification also includes details of the financial assistance available if an

employee is mobilised and where possible, it will provide details of any annual training commitments.

4.4 If an employee, who is currently a Reservist, is considering renewing their Reservist commitment or is an employee who is interested in joining the Reserve Forces, it is expected that they should discuss the matter with their line manager for planning and support to join/renew reserve service. The purpose of this discussion is to:

- Understand the expected training, deployment and mobilisation commitments associated with Reserve service.
- Consider any potential impact on service delivery, team resources and business continuity.
- Discuss the organisation's support available to Reservists, including leave arrangements and policies.
- Ensure the employee understands their responsibilities for notifying the organisation of training and mobilisation requirements.
- Explore any reasonable adjustments or workforce planning arrangements that may be required.
- Promote an open and supportive dialogue whilst enabling the organisation to plan effectively for any future absences.

5. Training Commitments and Time Off

5.1 The average training commitment for reservists varies according to the reservist force to which they are attached.

5.2 Training will normally take place in evenings and at weekends but there is an expectation that reservists attend an Annual Training Camp in respect of which the Council will grant reservists up to a maximum of 10 days paid special leave each year to attend.

5.3 Reservists should provide their line manager with details from the Armed Forces of their annual training plan as soon as they receive notification, where possible, at least three months before the start of the training year in April. This is intended to support workforce planning and service delivery.

5.4 Evidence of any annual training camp and any associated request for special leave should then be submitted as soon as reasonably practicable and, wherever possible, at least four weeks before the period of leave.

5.5 Any other Reservist training commitments should be discussed with the employee's manager at the earliest opportunity. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking account of service requirements and the employee's role. Support may include a combination of annual leave, unpaid leave and/or temporary flexible working arrangements, as appropriate.

5.6 Permission to attend training, once granted, will not normally be withdrawn. Approval will only be rescinded in exceptional circumstances, such as a major incident, an unforeseen business continuity issue, a significant risk to the delivery of critical services/seriously harm the business, or where the Council's statutory obligations could not otherwise be met. Wherever possible, alternative arrangements will be explored before any approval is withdrawn and the Council will consider whether reasonable alternative arrangements can be made to maintain both service delivery and the employee's access to the training.

Where the Council considers that mobilisation would cause serious harm to the delivery of its services, the relevant Head of Service should consult HR immediately to determine whether an application for exemption, deferral or revocation is appropriate.

6. Mobilisation

6.1 Mobilisation is the process of calling reservists into full-time service with the Regular Forces to make them available for military operations.

Notice

- While there is no statutory requirement for a minimum period of notice of mobilisation, the MOD aims to give at least 28 days' notice of mobilisation for contingency (short notice), although the period of notice can vary depending on operational circumstances and may be shorter where there is an urgent requirement.

Call-Out Notification

- Call-out papers will be issued as formal notification of a reservist's mobilisation. Both the reservist and the Council should receive a call-out pack from the MOD. The documentation will include the call-out date (when the reservist must report for duty at a specified mobilisation centre) and the anticipated timeline.
- On receiving notice of mobilisation, if it is believed that the absence of a reservist will cause serious harm to the business of an employer, the employer has a right to seek exemption, deferral, or revocation of the mobilisation for one of the following reasons:

  a) Loss of sales, markets, reputation, goodwill or other financial harm.
  b) Impairment of the ability to produce goods or provide services; or
  c) Harm to the research and development of new products, services, or processes (which could not be prevented by the granting of financial assistance under sections 83 and 84 of the Reserve Forces Act 1996)

- Where the Council wishes to seek exemption, deferral or revocation of mobilisation, application must be made to the adjudication officer within 7 days of receipt of the call out notice. Where the application is not granted, the Council can appeal to the Reserve Forces Appeals Tribunal within 5 days of receipt of the adjudicator's decision. If the tribunal reject the application, the Council will be required to release the reservist for mobilisation.
- Where the Council considers that the mobilisation of a reservist would cause serious harm to service delivery, the relevant Head of Service, in consultation with HR, will prepare a business case for exemption, deferral or revocation of mobilisation. Any application to the Adjudication Officer will be authorised by the Chief Executive, or an officer delegated by the Chief Executive, and submitted within the statutory timescales.

Duration

- The maximum period of mobilisation will depend on the scale and nature of the operation and is typically no longer than 12 months. It will include medical and pre deployment training, the operational tour and post-operational tour leave.

Keeping in Touch

- Wherever possible, the Council is encouraged to keep in touch with reservists during mobilisation. The reservist's line manager should discuss the method

and frequency of contact prior to mobilisation. It is particularly important that contact is maintained during periods of organisational change where there may be implications for a reservist's post.

7. Terms and Conditions of Employment During Mobilisation

7.1 The contracts of employment of reservists mobilised for Reserve Service will continue during periods of mobilisation and there will be no loss of continuous service or service-related benefits as a consequence.

Pay

- Reservists will be granted special unpaid leave for the duration of their mobilisation during which time the MOD will assume responsibility for their military pay. The basic salary payment made by the MOD will be based on the reservist's military rank. If this payment is less than the salary that the reservist would otherwise receive from the Council, it is the reservist's responsibility to apply to the MOD for the difference to ensure that they suffer no loss of earnings. This is known as a 'Reservist Award'.

Pension Contributions

- During a period of mobilisation, the Council will calculate a notional pay figure for the reservist so that the reservist continues to build up a pension as if they were still at work. The Council however does not pay any employer contributions to the Pension Fund on the notional pensionable pay figure.

- The Council advises the reservist and the MOD of the notional pensionable pay and the appropriate employee and employer contribution due. The MOD deducts the employee contribution from the reservist and pays that contribution together with the employer contribution, directly over to the Pension Fund.

Accrual of Leave

- Reservists accrue leave with the MOD whilst they are in full-time service. When they demobilise, Reservists will be entitled to a period of post-operational leave during which they will continue to be paid by the MOD. It is the Reservist's responsibility to inform their line manager of the dates and duration of any post-operational leave as soon as this information is available, to ensure their anticipated return-to-work date can be appropriately planned and agreed.

- Reservist employees will not accrue annual leave with the Council whilst mobilised. Annual leave will be calculated pro-rata based on full calendar months from the time the employee returns from mobilisation.

Sick Pay

- Should a reservist become sick or injured during mobilisation they will be covered by the Defence Medical Services and any financial assistance will continue to be received (including pay) until demobilised. If the sickness or injury continues and results in early demobilisation, the reservist will remain covered by the Defence Medical Services until the last day of paid military leave. After this time, the reservist will be covered by the Council's sickness pay arrangements in line with relevant national terms and conditions and the Council's Management Sickness Absence Policy.

8. Return to Work

8.1 Both the reservist and the Council have obligations under the Reserve Forces Safeguarding of Employment Act 1985 regarding the return-to-work process.

Council

- The Council has an obligation under the Act to reinstate the reservist, where possible to their former role, and if not, to a mutually acceptable role on the same terms and conditions prior to mobilisation.
- Managers should review objectives following a return from mobilisation and ensure employees are not disadvantaged in performance assessment processes.

- The Council are also required to support reservists through:
- Updates on organisational changes.
- Refresher or retraining requirements.
- Skills updates where roles have changed.
- Reasonable time off for therapeutic treatment.
- Signposting to employee wellbeing support/EAP.

Reservists

- The reservist must write to the Council by the third Monday after their last day of military service making their request to return to work and suggesting a date which should fall within 6 weeks of their last day of full-time service. The Council cannot ask a reservist to return to work early, however the reservist may ask to do so.

- Where an offer of alternative employment is not considered to be suitable by the reservist, the reservist must write to the Council stating why it is not acceptable. If a reservist believes that the Council's response to their application denies their rights under the Safeguard of Employment Act, an application can be made to a Reinstatement Committee 3 for assessment. The Reinstatement Committee will consider the reservist's application and can make an order for reinstatement and/or compensation.

- A post-deployment report will be provided to the Council detailing the reservist's achievements during deployment and any qualifications or skills they have gained during training. Managers should take account of new and relevant skills that Reservists may have acquired during military operations and explore opportunities where these skills can be utilised.

- Line managers should provide returning reservists with appropriate support and training to allow the reservist to easily make the transition back into the workplace.

9. Financial Assistance

9.1 Financial assistance for employers in the event of an employee who is a reservist being mobilised is governed by the Reserve Forces Call Out and Recall Financial Assistance Regulations 2005. These cover additional costs above the normal earnings of the called-up reservists associated with replacing that employee.

10. Advice

10.1 Any questions about this policy should be raised with Line Managers. Where Managers require advice on applying the policy they can contact their HR Business Partner.

11. Review and Monitoring

11.1 This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective and appropriate. The organisation retains discretion to review the policy at any time and to consult as appropriate.