

# Employment Committee



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

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Wednesday, 9 July 2025 at 2.00 pm  
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill,  
Grantham. NG31 6PZ

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**Committee Members:** Councillor Anna Kelly, Vice-Chairman of the Council (Chairman)  
Councillor Gloria Johnson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Rhys Baker, Councillor Ashley Baxter, Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing,  
Councillor Gareth Knight, Councillor Susan Sandall, Councillor Ian Stokes and  
Councillor Paul Stokes

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## Agenda

This meeting can be watched as a live stream, or at a later date, [via the SKDC Public-I Channel](#)

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Disclosure of interests**  
Members are asked to disclose any interests in matters for consideration at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2025** (Pages 3 - 10)  
To confirm both the public and private minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2025.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2025** (Pages 11 - 19)  
To confirm both the public and private minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2025.
5. **People Strategy (2025 - 2028)** (To Follow)  
To present the Council's refreshed People Strategy for 2025 - 2028 for approval. The strategy builds on the strong foundations laid by the previous plan and reflects current and emerging workforce needs.

6. **HR Policy Review** (Pages 21 - 58)  
To seek the Employment Committee's approval for the implementation of five updated HR policies as part of the Council's wider HR policy refresh. These policies have been reviewed and updated to ensure clarity, legal compliance and improved accessibility for employees and managers.
7. **Biannual HR Dashboard and Key Performance Indicator Update** (Pages 59 - 62)
8. **Pay Award 2025/26** (Pages 63 - 75)
9. **Work Programme 2025 - 2026** (Pages 77 - 78)
10. **Any other business, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

## Meeting of the Employment Committee

**Tuesday, 8 April 2025, 10.00 am**



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

Committee Members present	Officers
Councillor Anna Kelly (Chairman)	Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Councillor Gloria Johnson (Vice-Chairman)	Jane Jenkinson, Senior HR Officer
Councillor Matthew Bailey	Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer
Councillor Rhys Baker	
Councillor Ashley Baxter	
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing	
Councillor Phil Gadd	
Councillor Paul Martin	
Councillor Robert Leadenham	

### **26. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Gareth Knight, substituted by Councillor Robert Leadenham.

### **27. Disclosure of interests**

There were none.

### **28. Public minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2025**

The public minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2025 were proposed, seconded, and AGREED as an accurate record.

The Chairman notified the Committee that South Kesteven District Council secured the Excellence in Employee Engagement accolade in the 2025 Great British Workplace Wellbeing Awards. The Employment Committee congratulated the Wellbeing Team for the achievement.

### **29. Work Programme 2025 - 2026**

The Chairman notified the Committee of the following changes since the publication of the Work Programme:

- A meeting of the Employment Committee had been arranged to facilitate the interviews for the independent person for the Standards Committee. The meeting was to be held on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- The Employment Committee meeting provisionally planned for July 10<sup>th</sup> had provisionally been moved to 2pm, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- An update on the implementation of the Volunteer Policy had been added to the Work Programme as unscheduled, as had the Chief Executive and Director appraisals.

### **30. Exclusion of the Public and Press**

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to exclude the press and public for the remainder of the meeting given the likelihood that information that was exempt under paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them.

### **31. Exempt minutes of the meeting held 11 March 2025**

The exempt minutes of the meeting held 11 March 2025 were proposed, seconded, and AGREED as an accurate record.

### **32. Proposed Director Targets 2025-26**

Following deliberations, it was proposed, seconded, and AGREED that the Committee:

1. Considered the proposed targets to be included in the Directors' and Assistant Directors targets for 2025-2026
2. Approved the South Kesteven District Council's Directors' and Assistant Directors targets for 2025-2026 as attached in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

### **33. Review of Chief Executive Pay**

Following deliberations, it was proposed, seconded, and AGREED for the Committee to:

1. Accept the findings of the report prepared by East Midlands Councils and increase the Chief Executive's salary by a suitable percentage to achieve parity with the upper quartile level of comparator councils
2. Request Officers explore options for moving from a 'single pay point' to a 'salary grade' for the Chief Executive.

### **34. Any other business, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

An action for the Head of Paid Service was agreed and is contained within an exempt note.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## Meeting of the Employment Committee

Thursday, 24 April 2025, 10.00 am



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

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Committee Members present	Officers
Councillor Anna Kelly (Chairman)	James Welbourn, Democratic Services
Councillor Gloria Johnson (Vice-Chairman)	Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Councillor Matthew Bailey	Jane Jenkinson, Senior HR Officer
Councillor Rhys Baker	Joshua Mann, Democratic Services
Councillor Ashley Baxter	Officer
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing	
Councillor Gareth Knight	
Visiting Members	
Councillor Pam Byrd	
Councillor Sarah Trotter	

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### 35. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Martin, substituted by Councillor Robert Leadenhams, and Councillor Phil Gadd.

### 36. Disclosure of interests

There were none.

### 37. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2025

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED to defer the matter to the following meeting of the Employment Committee to allow the Committee to concentrate on the interviews for the Independent Person.

### 38. Work Programme 2025 - 2026

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED to defer the matter to the following meeting of the Employment Committee to allow the Committee to concentrate on the interviews for the Independent Person.

**39. Any other business, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED to defer the matter to the following meeting of the Employment Committee to allow the Committee to concentrate on the interviews for the Independent Person.

**40. Exclusion of Press and Public**

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED for the press and public and all non-Committee members except for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Standards Committee to be excluded during discussion of the following agenda items because of the likelihood that information that is exempt under paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them.

**41. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2025**

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED to defer the matter to the following meeting of the Employment Committee to allow the Committee to concentrate on the interviews for the Independent Person.

**42. Independent Person Interviews**

Following discussions, it was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** that the Employment Committee recommend two candidates for the role of Independent Person to Full Council.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## Employment Committee

Wednesday, 9 July 2025

Report of the Leader of the Council:  
Councillor Ashley Baxter

Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and  
Economic Development

## Human Resources Policy Review

### Report Author

Fran Beckitt, Head of Service – Human Resources and Organisational Development

 fran.beckitt@southkesteven.gov.uk

### Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the implementation of five updated Human Resources (HR) policies. These policies have been reviewed to ensure clarity, legal compliance and improved accessibility for employees and managers.

### Recommendations

**The Committee is recommended to:**

**Approve the following HR policies:**

1. **Supporting Performance Improvement Policy (formerly Capability Policy)**
2. **Zero Tolerance Policy: Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment**
3. **III Health Capability Policy**
4. **Leave Policy**
5. **Maternity Policy**

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Effective council

Which wards are impacted? All Wards

## **1. Implications**

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

### ***Finance and Procurement***

- 1.1 From a financial perspective, there is minimal budgetary impact by the adoption of these five new HR policies. Effective implementation of HR policies reduces risk of expensive legal challenges.

*Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer.*

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.2 All refreshed policies have been reviewed for compliance with current employment legislation including equality, health and safety and family leave regulations. Employment Committee's approval ensures appropriate governance and consistency across the organisation.

*Completed by: James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager)*

## **2. Background to the Report**

- 2.1 As part of an ongoing review, the HR team has undertaken a refresh of key people management policies. The aim is to make them more accessible to managers and employees; aligned with best practice and employment legislation.
- 2.2 A key change in approach is the replacement of a single HR handbook with standalone, topic-specific policies.
- 2.3 All policies and supporting documents will be hosted on the newly launched HR Hub.

2.4 The policy review principles are as follows:

(1) Succinct policies, in a user-friendly layout.
(2) Focus on informal resolutions.
(3) Exceed statutory requirements where possible to push the boundaries and enhance the culture of SKDC.
(4) Provide clear guidance and support for managers and employees on the application of policies.
(5) Ensure policies are clear, transparent and accessible.
(6) Ensure consistency and fairness across all HR policies and procedures.
(7) Align policies with TeamSK values.
(8) Involve stakeholders in the policy development and review process through Trade Union Representation, the People Panel, CMT and the Employment Committee.
(9) Update policies in line with the changing legal, regulatory and best practice frameworks (ACAS).
(10) Regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies.

### 3. Summary of Key Policy Changes

#### 3.1. Supporting Performance Improvement Policy (Appendix 1)

- Provides a clear, supportive framework to help employees meet expected performance standards through early intervention, constructive feedback and tailored development.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Name of policy – <i>Capability</i>	<i>Supporting Performance Improvement</i>	Shift in focus and tone to align with modern performance management practices (positive framing, focus on support).
One procedure for ill health, absence related	Separate policy for <i>supporting performance improvement</i> .	Strategic move aimed at improving clarity, fairness and effectiveness in how different types of employee

capability and poor performance.	Absences dealt with in <i>Sick Absence policy</i> .	challenges are managed. Different issues require different approaches and support mechanisms for employees.
Stages of process – <i>Informal, Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, Stage 4 (Capability Hearing)</i>	Stages of process – <i>Informal, Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 (Capability Hearing)</i>	Follows ACAS guidance and best practice. Provides a fair and structured opportunity for improvement with timely support and intervention.
Limited detail on informal stage	More focus on informal, early intervention	Identify and resolve issues at an early stage before they escalate.
Limited supporting documentation	Supporting documents include an improved <i>intervention plan</i> and flowchart	Supporting with clarity and understanding of the process.

### 3.2 Zero Tolerance Policy (Appendix 2)

- Reinforces the Council's commitment to a safe and respectful workplace.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Dealt with under the <i>Grievance policy</i> .	Separates grievances (e.g. challenges against processes) and behavioural concerns	The policies serve different purposes. The <i>Zero Tolerance policy</i> focuses on serious misconduct which can have significant emotional and legal implications.
Sexual harassment not specifically covered	Section in policy on <i>sexual harassment</i>	Recent changes to Employment Law puts responsibility on employers to do more to prevent sexual harassment. Supporting documentation includes a guide for employees on sexual harassment and a risk assessment.

### 3.3 III Health Capability Policy (Appendix 3)

- Sets out a fair process for supporting employees whose health impacts their ability to perform in their role.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Grouped all capability issues in one process (health and performance)	Specific stand-alone policy on <i>ill health capability</i> .	Provides specific guidance on the ill health process rather than generic capability.
Limited information in the policy on support for ill health capability	Specifies supportive actions such as job modifications, redeployment etc	Demonstrating a proactive and inclusive approach which is prominent at SKDC.
Doesn't detail the appropriate structured stages or links to pension etc.	Defined link to Occupational Health and Pension Fund	Clearer and formal process referring to the West Yorkshire Pension Fund

### 3.4 Leave Policy (Appendix 4)

- Updated to reflect entitlements and good practice, with clearer guidance on all types of leave.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Paid compassionate Leave – up to 5 days for: Mother, Father, Child, Spouse, Brother, Sister, Uncle, Aunt, Cousin, Grandparent, Mother-in-Law, Father-in-Law, Niece, Nephew	Up to 5 days for Mother, Father, Spouse, Brother, Sister. (Daughter/Son covered in parental bereavement leave). 1 day for Grandparent, Mother-in-Law, Father-in-Law, Niece, Nephew, Aunt, Uncle, Cousin	Supports colleagues when they are dealing with distressing personal circumstances whilst also considering a sustainable service delivery. (Managerial discretion will apply).
No reference to Carers' Leave	<i>Carers' Leave</i> of up to one week per year which can be taken flexibly.	Statutory right and support for Carers
No provisions for 'safe leave'	<i>Safe Leave Policy</i> – 5 days paid leave if required by an employee experiencing domestic abuse.	Best practice to provide dedicated support for employees experiencing domestic abuse, recognising that time away from work may be essential to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

### 3.5 Maternity Policy (Appendix 5)

- Clear guidance and supportive provisions to ensure employees feel valued, informed and supported throughout their pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
No neonatal leave	Section 8 covers neonatal leave, pay and support available	2025 change in Employment Law ensuring employees with babies requiring neonatal care receive the appropriate support and time off during the challenging period
Limited specific guidance and support on pregnancy loss	Section on miscarriage and stillbirth	Ensuring employees receive compassionate support during a deeply personal loss recognising the emotional and physical impact of pregnancy loss.
Limited information included	Additional information about KIT days, leave, risk assessments, support on returning to work including breast feeding etc.	Further support and guidance for employees and managers

## 4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Retaining the existing HR policies in the Employee Handbook without updates. This would risk non-compliance with current legislation and best practice.
- 4.2 Minor amendments would not have provided the clarity, consistency and improved employee experience the new policies offer.

## 5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Improving the content and presentation of policies is a way of aligning them with the Council's values. It also promotes a fair, modern and supportive workplace culture.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 The Trade Unions are consulted throughout the development of HR policies and their feedback is incorporated at various stages. Their input helps ensure the approach is fair, consistent and supportive of both employee and organisational needs.
- 6.2 The policy refresh has been discussed with the People Panel for their feedback and ideas. The draft policies have been shared with all staff providing an opportunity for questions and feedback.

## **7. Appendices**

- 7.1. Appendix 1 – Supporting Performance Improvement  
Appendix 2 – Zero Tolerance Policy – Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment  
Appendix 3 – Ill Health Capability Policy  
Appendix 4 – Leave Policy  
Appendix 5 – Maternity Policy

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# Supporting Performance Improvement Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a supportive and consistent framework that helps colleagues improve their performance when the required standards are not being achieved.

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### Relevant forms and letters:

- [SPI flow chart](#)
- [Supporting Performance Improvement Plan](#)
- [SPI letter templates – invites to meetings](#)
- [Letter of concern – performance template](#)

### Related policies:

- [Disciplinary Policy](#)
- [Ill Health Capability Policy](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk)

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

## 1. Policy Statement

At South Kesteven District Council, we want to be a great place to work where all employees feel supported and empowered to perform their roles effectively. This policy is designed to support employees who are not performing to the required standard by providing a supportive and structured process that encourages improvement. Where improvement is not achieved, this policy outlines the steps that may be taken.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of South Kesteven District Council. The policy applies when an employee is failing to perform their duties to the required standard due to a lack of capability, including skill or aptitude.

Poor performance arising from misconduct will be managed under the Council's Disciplinary Policy, while performance concerns linked to ill health or frequent absences will be addressed in accordance with the Council's Attendance Policy or Ill Health Capability Policy as appropriate.

## 3. Guiding principles

- Performance concerns will be dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner to ensure staff are supported to achieve and maintain job performance.
- Early identification and intervention when capability issues arise is important.
- Support and guidance will be provided to help the employee improve.
- A fair, transparent and consistent approach will be applied.
- Consideration will be given to any underlying health or personal issues and other Council policies and support mechanisms may be used if appropriate.
- Employees will be given clear expectations, reasonable time to improve and access to appropriate support.
- Capability concerns will be treated confidentially and with respect.

## 4. Process Overview

The 'Supporting Performance Improvement' process consists of four progressive stages, each designed to provide structured support, clear expectations and fair opportunity for improvement. The table below outlines each stage with typical timescales (although timescales may vary depending on specific circumstances).

Stage	Description	Typical Timescale
Informal Stage	An initial discussion to identify concerns, explore causes, and agree informal support.	4–6 weeks
Stage One – Formal Performance Review	A formal meeting to set clear performance objectives and support through a structured improvement plan.	4–6 weeks

Stage	Description	Typical Timescale
Stage Two – Formal Performance Review	A second formal review where remaining issues are addressed with a revised improvement plan.	4–6 weeks
Stage Three – Consideration of Dismissal	A final meeting to assess whether all reasonable support has been exhausted and whether dismissal is appropriate.	One meeting

## 5. Informal Stage

When concerns are first identified, in most cases the manager will hold an informal meeting with the employee to discuss, explore any underlying causes and agree a plan. The manager may discuss the issues with the employee either at their scheduled one-to-one meeting or in a separate arranged meeting. It is important for the employee to understand why the manager is concerned about their performance and be given the opportunity to address the concern.

The informal stage can include:

- A letter of concern explaining how the employee's performance is causing concern (following a discussion)
- A Performance Improvement Plan to document the issues, expectations and goals
- Additional support being put in place to support the employee's performance, for example coaching, mentoring, training or adjustments to duties.

At the meeting, the manager should explain what is expected and why the individual's performance is causing concern. The manager should listen to the employee to understand if there are other factors that they need to be aware of, including medical, domestic or underlying personal circumstances. If there are external factors that have impacted the employee's performance, these should be taken into account in any subsequent actions.

There is no right of accompaniment or appeal at this stage.

### 5.1 Performance Improvement Plan

In some cases, in order to address the performance issue, an informal 'Supporting Performance Improvement Plan' will be developed through the discussion between the manager and employee. This plan should include timescales for improvement, regular review meetings and support mechanisms (e.g. mentoring or training).

Progress will be reviewed within reasonable timeframes and if performance improves to an acceptable level, no further action will be required. If no significant improvement is observed, the formal steps outlined below may be initiated.

## 6. Formal Process

### 6.1 Stage One – Formal Performance Review

The manager should invite the employee to a formal meeting to discuss why the employee's performance is not meeting expectations and agree what actions are required to improve. The employee will be given the opportunity to discuss their performance and what might be causing the issues. The employee may be accompanied by a work colleague or Union Representative.

A formal performance improvement plan should be developed collaboratively between the manager and employee, and should include SMART actions (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) designed to address the areas where performance is not meeting the required standards. The manager will clearly outline the expected improvements and support available.

A formal review period, normally lasting six weeks, will be agreed upon. During this time, regular review meetings will be held to assess progress, offer feedback and adjust support as needed.

The formal process should be confirmed in writing to the employee, alongside a copy of the performance improvement plan. The timescale for review should be confirmed in writing along with confirmation that should the standards not be met, it may result in moving to the second stage of the formal process and potentially dismissal.

At the end of the stage one period, the manager should invite the employee to a formal meeting. If satisfactory improvement is made by the end of the review period, the formal process will conclude and normal performance management will resume. Where performance continues to not meet expectations, the manager and employee should discuss moving to the second stage of the formal process.

### 6.2 Stage Two – Formal Performance Review

If, following Stage One, the employee has not made sufficient progress to meet the required performance standards, the process may move to Stage Two. The manager should invite the employee to a Stage Two meeting where they should explain why their performance continues to not meet expectations. The manager should listen to the employee to understand their viewpoint, suggestions and reasons. The employee may be accompanied to the meeting by a Union Representative or colleague if they wish.

At the meeting, the manager will review the actions taken during Stage One and the outcomes of those actions. A revised Performance Improvement Plan will be agreed, again using SMART actions to provide clarity and structure. The plan will focus on specific areas still requiring improvement. A second review period will be set, (usually between four and six weeks but other timescales can be set where there is justification to do so), during which review meetings will continue to track progress, provide feedback and adjust support where appropriate.

At this stage, failure to meet the objectives may result in dismissal or other formal action. This stage represents the final opportunity for the employee to demonstrate sustained improvement.

If the employee's performance meets the required performance levels during the stage two period, the manager should confirm in writing that they are no longer on the formal process and normal performance management will resume.

### 6.3 Stage Three - Consideration of Dismissal

Where the employee's performance does not meet expectations following Stage One and Two, the manager needs to consider moving to the final stage of the formal process. At this stage, the case should be referred to a more senior manager, usually at least one level above the line manager, e.g. the employee's second line manager.

The manager hearing the case should review all the available information and if appropriate, write to the employee to invite them to a 'consideration of dismissal' meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to this meeting by a work colleague or Trade Union Representative. With the invitation, the manager should include a copy of all the information they have available regarding the employee's performance from the formal process.

During the meeting, the employee will have the opportunity to explain any mitigating circumstances.

The potential outcomes of the meeting include:

- Dismissal on grounds of capability
- Voluntary demotion (if a suitable role is available and mutually agreed)
- An extension of the Stage Two formal performance review
- No further action and normal performance management resumes

The manager should consider all the available information and feedback from the meeting before making their decision. This could be communicated verbally following a break in the meeting, or in writing following the meeting.

The decision should always be confirmed in writing setting out the employee's right to appeal. Dismissal will only be considered after all reasonable opportunities to support improvement have been exhausted.

## 7. Appeal against Dismissal

If the employee wishes to appeal a dismissal outcome, they should put this in writing to the decision-making manager or HR within 5 days of receiving the written confirmation of the decision. The employee should include why they are appealing the decision. An appeal meeting will then be arranged. The employee will be notified in writing of the time, place and manager dealing with the appeal at least 3 days beforehand. The employee can be accompanied by their Trade Union Representative or a colleague.

After the appeal meeting, the employee will be informed of the decision in writing. This concludes the process.

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk).

- This policy applies to all employees within South Kesteven District Council unless stated otherwise within the policy.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment.
- The Council reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.

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# Zero Tolerance Policy: Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment

The purpose of this policy is to provide colleagues with a fair and transparent process for addressing and resolving workplace concerns promptly and effectively.

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### Relevant forms and letters:

- [Complaint form – Bullying, Harassment or Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Supporting templates and meeting guides](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Guide for Employees](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk)

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

## 1.0 Policy statement

South Kesteven District Council is committed to maintaining an inclusive working environment where all colleagues are treated fairly with respect and dignity and where everyone feels they can be themselves. This policy aims to provide information on what bullying, harassment and sexual harassment is and the framework for concerns to be raised and resolved in a constructive and timely way.

## 2.0 Scope

We seek to ensure our working environment is safe and supportive to all those who work for us and this policy therefore applies to employees across all sites of South Kesteven District Council. The policy covers incidents that take place during working hours and outside of working hours, when an individual's actions adversely affect the Council or have a bearing on any workplace relationship. This could be, for example, on business trips, work social events or through social media.

We would normally expect complaints to have been made within three months of the event complained of and it may not be possible to investigate older complaints.

## 3.0 Guiding principles

- The Council actively encourages employees to talk through any concerns that affect them in the workplace.
- Some workplace issues can be resolved informally, in which case the Council will support colleagues to do so.
- Where informal resolution is not appropriate, the approach detailed in this policy will be followed in a timely, fair and constructive manner.
- All concerns raised by an employee will be handled sensitively and employees will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- The Council will take any cases seriously and deal with concerns including carrying out investigations where required, in a fair, consistent and timely manner.
- The employee may be accompanied at a meeting in the bullying and harassment process by a Trade Union Representative or a work colleague with no involvement to the case.
- Investigating managers and anyone else involved should treat concerns confidentially.
- Should an issue be raised in bad faith disciplinary action may be taken against the employee who has made a malicious claim.
- Anyone involved in a concern, including witnesses, must keep all details completely confidential.

## 4.0 What is harassment, bullying and victimisation?

**Harassment** is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating someone else's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This can include any kind of behaviour including spoken or written words, images, physical gestures, facial expressions, mimicry, jokes or pranks.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a legal obligation to ensure the following types of harassment do not take place at work:

- Harassment related to the protected characteristics of race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief;
- Sexual harassment (see section 5); and
- Less favourable treatment of an employee because they submit to or reject sexual harassment or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment.

Some forms of harassment, for example sexual assault, other physical threats and hate crimes, are a criminal matter and will be reported to the Police. If the complaint is reported to the police, or criminal court proceedings are being pursued, a complaint will still be investigated by the Council.

**Bullying** is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour. It is typically an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate or injure the recipient.

**Victimisation** is less favourable treatment of an individual because they have:

- Made a complaint or intend to make a complaint about being bullied or harassed; or
- Intend to act as a witness or give evidence in support of another person's complaint about being bullied or harassed.

## 5.0 What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment takes many forms, but whatever form it takes, it is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and we will not tolerate it.

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It also covers treating someone less favourably because they have submitted to, or refused to submit to, unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or in relation to gender reassignment or sex.

Sexual harassment may be committed by a fellow worker, an agent of an organisation or a third party. It does not need to occur in person. It can occur via digital means, including social media sites or channels (eg WhatsApp). Someone may be sexually harassed even if they were not the target of the behaviour. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- sexual comments or jokes, which may be referred to as "banter"
- displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photos
- suggestive looks, staring or leering
- propositions and sexual advances
- making promises in return for sexual favours
- sexual gestures
- intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life
- sexual posts or contact in online communications, including on social media

- spreading sexual rumours about a person
- sending sexually explicit emails, text messages or messages via other social media
- unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing

Instances of sexual harassment, bullying and victimisation may lead to disciplinary action up to, and including, termination of employment.

## **6.0 Third party sexual harassment**

Third-party sexual harassment occurs when an employee is subjected to sexual harassment by someone who is not part of our workforce but who is encountered in connection with work. This includes our customers, suppliers, members of the public and elected members.

Third-party sexual harassment of our workforce is unlawful and will not be tolerated. The law requires employers to take steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties and we are committed to doing so.

Although the process below does not apply to complaints relating to third parties, complaints will be taken very seriously and appropriate action will be taken including reporting to the police where it is criminal matter.

It may be appropriate to fully investigate a complaint made about a third party and consideration will be given as to what action may be appropriate to protect the complainant and anyone else involved. We will try to discuss the matter with the third party or their employer where appropriate.

## **7.0 SKDC's approach to bullying, harassment and sexual harassment issues**

The Council wants to encourage everyone to raise issues that are concerning.

### **7.1 Informal Resolution**

Some situations can be resolved informally which allows for them to be settled in a timely manner. In these situations, the employee is encouraged to raise the issue with a senior colleague of their choice (this does not need to be someone with direct supervisory responsibility) or HR. An open and confidential discussion should take place to understand the concern and explore possible resolutions.

The manager will make reasonable efforts to address the complaint and informally resolve the matter in a timely manner. Mediation may be considered if the concern relates to working relationships between colleagues which may conclude an approach to building an agreement for future working relationships.

The manager will confirm the outcome verbally to the employee, along with a summary letter or email.

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, SKDC or the complainant may decide to deal with it formally (see below).

## 7.2 Formal Complaint (Stage 1)

An employee can raise a formal concern when:

- An employee has tried to settle their concern informally without success or;
- In certain situations, a complaint will move straight to the formal stage, for example when seeking an informal resolution is not appropriate

This can be done by putting the concern in writing and either:

- Sending it to the line manager or the senior manager
- Sending it to HR ([hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk))

When a case is being heard as a formal complaint, the senior manager and/or HR should consider who would be appropriate to investigate. This may be an internal investigating manager or an external investigator with expertise/training for the role.

Where the allegation(s) is serious, SKDC may suspend the alleged perpetrator on full pay while the complaint is being investigated. A decision to suspend does not imply any guilt, but may support a fair investigation.

A meeting will be held with the employee to discuss the concern and how the employee would like it to be resolved. Further investigations and/or interviews will then take place with those involved, including the alleged perpetrator and witnesses. Colleagues may be accompanied by a Union Representative or colleague if they wish.

Notes of meetings will be shared with the interviewee. Both the complainant and the respondent will receive a copy of any materials used in the investigation including witness statements unless the investigating manager thinks there is a risk of intimidation or retaliation.

Both the complainant and respondent will receive a written summary of the investigating manager's conclusions and decisions.

The outcome will either be:

- Upheld
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld
- Not upheld – complaint made in bad faith

The investigator may make recommendations as an output to the case. This may include recommending the case enters the disciplinary procedure at the stage of a Hearing (i.e. with no fact finding required due to the investigation providing the facts of the case). This could be against the respondent, where the complaint has been upheld or partially upheld. It could also be a recommendation for disciplinary action against the complainant, if the investigation concludes the complaint was raised in bad faith.

The formal harassment and bullying action (Stage 1) will normally be completed within 28 calendar days. However, we recognise that certain circumstances may arise necessitating additional time for thorough investigation and resolution in which case the complainant and respondent will be kept informed.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 2 Appeal stage.

The respondent has no right to appeal the outcome of the complaint investigation, but if disciplinary action is taken, they have the right to appeal in line with the disciplinary policy.

### **7.3 Appeal (Stage 2)**

If an employee feels their concern has not been satisfactorily resolved having followed the stage 1 process above, they can appeal within five working days of receiving the outcome. This can be done by informing the Stage 1 Investigator of their wish to appeal or by contacting HR.

The employee should set out in writing why they wish to appeal and wherever possible, propose a solution that would resolve the concern.

The appeal manager will invite the employee to a meeting to discuss the appeal. Where required, further investigations and/or interviews will then take place.

As with stage 1, notes of meetings will be shared with the interviewee. Both the complainant and the respondent will receive a copy of any materials used in the investigation including witness statements unless the investigating manager thinks there is a risk of intimidation or retaliation.

Both the complainant and respondent will receive a written summary of the investigating manager's conclusions and decisions.

The appeal manager will carry out any necessary further investigations and then conclude the investigation in writing to the employee. The outcome will either be:

- Appeal upheld
- Appeal partially upheld
- Appeal not upheld
- Appeal not upheld – complaint made in bad faith

As with stage 1, the appeal manager may make recommendations as an outcome to the appeal which may include agreeing with initial recommended action or making additional/different recommendations. Disciplinary action may be recommended and this may include entering the disciplinary procedure at the stage of a Hearing (i.e. with no fact finding required due to the investigation providing the facts of the case). This could be against the respondent, where the complaint has been upheld or partially upheld. It could also be a recommendation for disciplinary action against the complainant, if the investigation concludes the complaint was raised in bad faith.

The Appeal (Stage 2) will normally be completed within 28 calendar days. However, we recognise that certain circumstances may arise necessitating additional time for thorough investigation and resolution, in which case the complainant and respondent will be kept informed.

The appeal is the final stage of this process.

## 8.0 Advice and Support

Employees who feel that they are affected by harassment, bullying or sexual harassment can seek advice and support from:

- Their manager
- A trusted colleague
- Our Employee Assistance Program
- Trade Union representatives
- Samaritans- 24 hour counselling service, call 116 123 or visit [here](#)
- Victim support- Information and support for anyone affected by crime, call 08 08 16 89 111 or visit [here](#)
- National bullying helpline, call 0300 323 0169 or visit [here](#)

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk).

- This policy applies to all employees within South Kesteven District Council unless stated otherwise within the policy.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment.
- The Council reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.

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# Ill Health Capability Policy

This policy sets out our approach to supporting employees whose ability to carry out their role is affected by ill health.

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### Relevant forms and letters:

- [Letter templates for Ill Health Capability](#)

### Related policies and Guidance:

- [Attendance Policy](#)
- [West Yorkshire Pension Fund](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk)

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

## 1.0 Policy Statement

South Kesteven District Council is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all employees. We recognise that, on occasion, an employee's ability to carry out their role may be affected by ill health. This policy sets out the Council's approach to managing situations where an employee's capability to work is impacted by long-term or persistent health issues. It aims to provide a fair, supportive, and consistent process, balancing the needs of the individual with the operational requirements of the organisation. It includes outlining support options, reasonable adjustment and where necessary, decisions regarding leaving the Council on the grounds of ill health.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Policy.

## 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all employees of South Kesteven District Council. It does not apply to agency workers or contractors.

## 3.0 Guiding principles

- All cases will be handled sensitively, with a focus on supporting the employee.
- The Council will make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010 where an employee is considered to have a disability.
- The process aims to ensure fair treatment, encourage open dialogue and explore all options before considering termination of employment.
- Managers will consult Occupational Health and work closely with HR throughout the process.

## 4.0 Leaving the Council due to ill health

The Council recognises it is important to take positive and supportive action to help employees with long term health issues recover and return to work if absent.

Managers should work with the employee to consider all reasonable options to support the employee to continue working. These could include:

- Reasonable adjustments
- Job modifications
- Redeployment

(Please see the Attendance Policy for more information).

However there are some situations where employment may no longer be a viable option for either the employee or the Council. In these cases, the employee may be referred to an Occupational Health Practitioner to identify if they meet the criteria to leave the Council due to ill health.

The manager is ultimately responsible for making the decision based on all relevant information, including Occupational Health advice.

## 5.0 Consideration of ill health retirement

Retirement on ill health grounds can be considered:

- In the event of a long-term illness
- Following an accident
- Where a long-term condition is preventing an employee from being able to complete their job duties
- By an employee's personal request

A referral to an Occupational Health Practitioner (approved by the West Yorkshire Pension Fund) should be made. The purpose of the referral is to seek advice on the employee's health and fitness with a view to determining the way forward. Occupational Health will be able to recommend whether the employee will:

- Be able to resume their full normal role
- Be able to resume their normal role after an initial period of adjustments or rehab plan
- Be able to resume their role with permanent adjustments, taking into account the needs of the employee and the opportunities for adjustments within the Council
- Be unable to resume to their role but would be able to undertake suitable alternative work (which may include reasonable adjustments)
- Be permanently unable to do their job until their normal pension age and not immediately capable of undertaking gainful employment.

## 6.0 Consideration of Dismissal Meeting

Following the receipt of the Occupational Health advice, the manager should consider what action to take. The Line Manager, or a suitable alternative manager, should invite the employee to a meeting and provide at least three days' notice of this meeting. A member of the HR Team and/or a note taker may be in attendance. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union Representative and will be advised, in writing, that their employment is at risk of termination due to ill health.

The meeting will include:

- Consideration of medical reports from Occupational Health and, if applicable, the employee's GP/specialists.
- Consideration of alternative outcomes to dismissal such as alternative roles or reasonable adjustments.
- Consideration of retirement on ill health grounds. Ill Health Retirement quotes can be requested through the HR Team.
- The manager is responsible for making the decision based on the advice from Occupational Health.

Where the outcome is ill health retirement, employees who have met the two year qualifying period in the LGPS may qualify for ill health benefits. The LGPS Pension Scheme provides a tiered ill health

retirement package with graded levels of benefit based on how likely it is the individual will be capable of gainful employment after they leave.

The manager should notify the employee of their decision in writing. The decision may also be given verbally at the meeting.

## 7.0 Appeal

Employees have the right to appeal against termination on ill health grounds and this will be conducted in line with the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (Local Government Pension Scheme) process. To appeal, the employee should submit the reason for their appeal in writing to the dismissing manager within five working days of the written notification of the decision.

Appeals will normally be heard at the next level of authority from that which the original decision was made. A member of the HR Team and/or a note taker may be in attendance. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union representative.

At the meeting, the manager will review the points of appeal raised by the employee along with discussing the Occupational Health advice. The manager may re-refer the case to a different Occupational Health Practitioner in order to support making a decision on the appeal outcome.

The Appeal manager will communicate their decision in writing to the employee.

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk).

- This policy applies to all employees within South Kesteven District Council unless stated otherwise within the policy.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment.
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# Employee Leave Policy

South Kesteven District Council supports our employees to take time off work and this policy outlines the different entitlements and schemes available.

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### Relevant forms and letters:

- [Compassionate Leave Form](#)

### Related policies and support:

- [Domestic Abuse Guide](#)
- [Maternity Leave](#)
- [Paternity Leave](#)
- [Shared Parental](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk)

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

## 1. Policy Statement

At South Kesteven District Council, we recognise the importance of healthy work-life balance and are committed to supporting employees in managing their personal responsibilities alongside their professional duties. This Leave Policy outlines the types of leave available and the conditions under which they can be accessed. By providing a fair and consistent approach to leave, we aim to promote employee wellbeing, support individual circumstances and ensure service continuity.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of South Kesteven District Council. It does not apply to casual workers or agency staff.

Please see separate Council policies for:

- Maternity Leave
- Paternity Leave
- Flexible Working
- Shared Parental Leave

## 3. Guiding principles

- The Council is committed to treating all employees fairly and equitably in relation to leave entitlements and requests.
- Leave arrangements will be administered in accordance with statutory rights and the Council's policies.
- Requests for leave will be considered sensitively and managers will balance operational requirements with individual needs.
- Employees are encouraged to take their annual leave entitlement to support their health and wellbeing.
- Where possible, leave should be planned and approved in advance to ensure effective service delivery.

## 4. Annual Leave

### 4.1 Annual leave entitlement

Annual leave entitlement is outlined in the table below. Annual leave for part time staff is calculated on a pro-rata basis.

	Basic leave entitlement	After 5 years Local Government service
Annual Leave Entitlement	26	31

The additional leave after 5 years Local Government service becomes effective at the start of the next leave year (1<sup>st</sup> April) following the 5 year qualification.

Annual leave for new starters is calculated on a pro-rata basis.

In addition to the entitlement outlined above, employees are entitled to 8 bank holidays per year. Part time workers are entitled to a pro-rata bank holiday entitlement.

#### **4.2 Requests for annual leave**

Leave requests should be approved in advance, with reasonable notice provided wherever possible. While there is no fixed notice period for booking annual leave, it should be agreed upon between the employee and their manager.

Managers should ensure that approval of leave does not compromise staffing levels or negatively impact service delivery.

#### **4.3 Leave period and carry over**

The Council's annual leave year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. Up to 5 days leave may be carried over to the following year with line manager approval. In exceptional circumstances, more than 5 days leave may be carried over with Assistant Director or Director approval (e.g. where the employee has been away from work for a significant period of the year).

Requests to bring leave forward from the following leave year will only be approved by line managers in exceptional circumstances.

#### **4.4 Leavers**

Employees leaving the Council should agree with their line manager if outstanding leave (pro-rata for the year worked) will be taken prior to their last day of service or paid in their final salary.

Employees who have taken annual leave in excess of their pro-rata entitlement will have the appropriate amount deducted from their final salary payment.

#### **4.5 Purchasing annual leave**

Purchasing annual leave is available to all permanent employees and those on fixed term contracts over 12 months. This scheme gives employees the opportunity to buy additional annual leave on top of their usual holiday entitlement, subject to management approval. Up to five working days can be bought, or equivalent weekly hours for part time staff, with the appropriate deductions in pay spread over twelve months. Requests to purchase annual leave should be sent to HR by 31<sup>st</sup> January in the leave year prior to the year the requested leave is for.

## 5. Parental Bereavement leave and pay

Under the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018, employees who experience the loss of a child under the age of 18 are entitled to two weeks parental bereavement leave paid at the full basic pay rate. This is a day one right, meaning there is no minimum length of service required. This entitlement applies to anyone with parental responsibility for the child. This also applies to parents who suffer a still birth 24 weeks or more into pregnancy, although it does not affect right to maternity leave entitlement.

## 6. Dependents leave

Employees can take a reasonable amount of time off work (unpaid) to deal with unexpected and sudden emergencies involving people who depend on them. The time off is subject to managerial discretion and supports employees in being able to make longer term care arrangements if required. This can be used for illness or unexpected incidents involving a dependant child during school hours.

Employees should personally make contact with their line manager as soon as is reasonably practicable to explain the reasons for the need to take time off and how long the absence is likely to last. In most cases, the period of absence should not be more than one or two days.

## 7. Compassionate leave

SKDC will normally grant compassionate leave in circumstances where an employee has to make arrangements for family bereavements of immediate family members or attend their funeral:

Family Member	Maximum number of days paid
Mother, Father, Spouse, Brother, Sister.	5 days
Grandparent, Mother-in-Law, Father-in-Law, Niece, Nephew, Aunt, Uncle, Cousin.	1 day

At the discretion of the line manager, flexibility will be applied on the above categorisations on a case by case basis.

SKDC may also grant up to five days of compassionate leave where an employee's close relative or dependant has a serious illness.

All types of compassionate leave are granted at the discretion of the line manager.

## 8. Parental Bereavement Leave

The Council recognises the devastating impact of losing a child, including stillbirths after 24 weeks of pregnancy, and provides parental bereavement leave to support employees during such deeply difficult times. Eligible employees may take either one or two weeks of leave, either consecutively or separately, within 56 weeks of the child's death. The Council will provide two weeks' leave at full pay, regardless of length of service or earnings.

Employees can access a range of emotional and practical support through the Council's Employee Assistance Programme, including free and confidential counselling services.

## **9. Disability Leave**

Disability Leave is available to support employees who are disabled to attend planned medical appointments, treatment or rehabilitation relating to their disability. This leave is separate from sick absence which will be used when an employee is unwell. This leave will usually be unpaid or employees may choose to make up time through the Council's flexi-time scheme where applicable.

Managers are encouraged to take a flexible and supportive approach to ensure reasonable adjustments are made, helping to remove barriers and enable employees to remain in work.

## **8. Support for military community employees**

As a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and a Gold Award holder under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, we are committed to supporting Council employees within the military community.

A Reservist will be granted 10 days additional yearly paid leave to meet commitments such as training camps or courses. Employees should provide evidence that they need to take the time off e.g. a letter from their Commanding Officer. Any additional leave should be taken out of holiday entitlement.

New recruits or members of staff planning to become a Reservist should inform their line manager.

## **9. Carers Leave**

Employees have a statutory right to one week of unpaid carer's leave per year (pro-rated for part time employees). This leave can be used to provide or arrange care for a dependent with a long-term care need. The leave may be taken flexibly, in blocks ranging from half a day to a full continuous week.

All carers are entitled to this leave from their first day of employment.

For further information on this, please see the 'Carer Support' section on the [HR Hub](#).

## **10. Time off for public duties**

Employees may request reasonable time off work to perform specified public duties such as a 'Justice of the Peace'. Colleagues requesting time off for public duties should speak to their line manager and HR.

Employees who are called for jury service should provide evidence to HR. The Council will 'top up' the standard allowance provided by the court to reach the employee's usual rate of pay.

## 11. 'Safe Leave' policy

The Council recognises that employees experiencing domestic abuse may require time away from work to access support and ensure their safety and wellbeing. In such cases, up to 5 days additional paid leave will be provided to employees. This can be used for various purposes, including attending medical appointments, seeking legal advice or arranging/moving into alternative accommodation.

Employees in this situation are encouraged to speak confidentially with their line manager or a member of the HR team.

## 12. Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is any absence from work that has not been approved in advance or cannot be reasonably explained. The Council expects all employees to follow the correct procedures for requesting and reporting leave. Failure to do so may be treated as a disciplinary matter as it can impact service delivery and place additional pressure on colleagues.

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk).

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# Maternity Policy

Having a new child is an important and exciting time. SKDC is committed to supporting employees through their pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work.

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### Relevant forms and letters:

- [Notification of request to take maternity leave form](#)
- [Pregnancy risk assessment](#)
- [KIT day record form](#)

### Related policies:

- [Paternity Policy](#)
- [Shared Parental Leave Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Policy](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk)

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

## 1. Policy Statement

The Council recognises the importance of creating a positive and inclusive environment for expectant and new parents. This policy sets out the rights, responsibilities and support available to employees before, during and after their maternity leave. Our approach aims to ensure legal compliance, promote wellbeing and enable a smooth transition through each stage of maternity.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of South Kesteven District Council, regardless of length of service. Employees on fixed-term or temporary contracts are covered by this policy for the duration of their contract.

The policy does not apply to casual workers or agency staff but these workers may be eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) or Maternity Allowance depending on their circumstances. Employees are encouraged to speak to HR for more information.

This policy is applicable to all pregnant employees, including those who are acting as surrogates and intending to give birth as part of a surrogacy arrangement. It outlines the entitlements and support available during pregnancy and maternity leave. This policy is supported by similar guidance:

- Paternity Leave Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Adoption Leave Policy

## 3. Guiding Principles

This policy is based on the following guiding principles:

- SKDC aim to support the holistic wellbeing of our employees and acknowledge the significance of family life.
- Pregnant employees will be supported and not subjected to a disadvantage or unfair treatment.
- We recognise and value the diversity of our workforce and the different family structures and needs of our employees
- We aim to facilitate a smooth transition for our employees who return to work after maternity leave and to provide them with the necessary support and resources.
- Managers and HR will ensure confidentiality and provide advice and guidance throughout the maternity process.
- Health, safety and wellbeing of pregnant employees will be prioritised through risk assessments and appropriate adjustments.

## 4. Maternity Leave Procedure

### Notification of pregnancy

It is important employees follow the steps below to notify the Council of their pregnancy. Not doing this may affect eligibility for maternity leave or pay, or the ability to start or end maternity leave as planned.

- Employees are encouraged to tell their manager about their pregnancy as soon as practical, and no later than the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> weeks before the expected week of childbirth.

- The employee will receive a MATB1 form from their doctor or midwife (usually issued around the 20-week scan). This form should be given to the manager as soon as possible and a copy forwarded to HR. It serves as confirmation of the pregnancy and is required to process Statutory Maternity Pay.
- The employee should agree with their manager on the intended start and end dates of their maternity leave. Maternity leave can start at any point from the beginning of the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth. The latest maternity leave can begin is the day after the child's birth.
- Once dates have been agreed, the employee should complete the Application for Maternity Leave Form, have it signed by their manager and forward it to HR.
- If the employee wishes to change their agreed return date, they should inform their manager in writing at least 28 days before the intended return. If they wish to return earlier and do not give the required notice, the Council may delay their return but not beyond the original return date.
- If the employee holds more than one role with South Kesteven District Council, maternity leave dates must be the same for each role. Both managers should be informed, although the process will typically be coordinated by the primary manager (the one overseeing the role with the most contracted hours). The primary manager will liaise with any secondary managers as required.
- If the employee is off work due to a pregnancy-related illness in the four weeks before the expected week of childbirth, maternity leave and pay will begin automatically from the day after the first day of absence.
- If the employee is absent due to illness that is unrelated to pregnancy, the Council's standard sickness absence procedures, as outlined in the Attendance Policy, will apply.

## 5. Antenatal Appointments

Employees are entitled to take reasonable paid time off work to attend antenatal appointments recommended by a doctor, registered midwife or registered health visitor. The employee should inform their manager of appointment times as early as possible.

## 6. Maternity Leave

Employees can take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave, regardless of their length of service or number of contracted hours. This entitlement also applies to surrogate birth parents.

A minimum of two weeks' leave must be taken after the birth of the baby (known as 'compulsory maternity leave'), but beyond that, the amount of leave taken is up to the employee.

## 7. Maternity Pay

The Council offers Enhanced Maternity Pay (EMP)\* for employees that qualify for [Statutory Maternity Pay \(SMP\)](#). To read the eligibility for SMP please see the Government guidance [HERE](#).

The following table outlines the level of Enhanced Maternity Pay (EMP) an employee is entitled to receive:

Weeks 1 - 6	Weeks 7 - 18	Weeks 19 - 39	Weeks 40 - 52
90% of your average weekly earnings	Half pay, in addition to SMP	SMP or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower)	These weeks will be unpaid

Employees are required to repay the EMP if they do not return to work after maternity leave or if they give notice to leave within the first three months of their return to work (this requirement may be varied at the discretion SKDC).

Employees with less than 26 weeks service may be eligible for [Maternity Allowance](#) instead of SMP.

Enhanced Maternity Pay and Statutory Maternity Pay will be paid through our normal monthly pay run.

### The Qualifying Week

To calculate the qualifying week, use a calendar to count 15 weeks back from the week the employee is due to have their baby. The maternity calculator at Gov.uk can also be used - [GOV.UK](#)

## 8. Neonatal Care Leave and Pay

Employees are entitled to neonatal care leave and pay if their baby requires neonatal care. This applies if the baby is admitted to a neonatal care unit (such as a neonatal intensive care unit or special care baby unit) for 7 continuous days or more within the first 28 days of life. The entitlement is for up to 12 weeks of paid leave in addition to other family related leave entitlements, such as maternity, paternity or shared parental leave. The length of neonatal leave is based on how long the baby receives neonatal care. Neonatal care leave must be taken within 68 weeks from the date of the child's birth.

### 8.1 Neonatal Pay

To receive statutory neonatal pay, the employee must have:

- At least 26 weeks of continuous service with the Council by the end of the qualifying week (15<sup>th</sup> week before the baby's due date – see section 7 above), and
- Earn at least the lower earnings limit for National Insurance contributions.

Neonatal care pay is up to 12 weeks payable at the 'Statutory Neonatal Care Pay' (SNCP) rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year (or at 90% of average weekly earnings if earnings are less than the SNCP rate).

Employees are not required to repay any statutory payments if they do not return to work.

### 8.2 Taking Neonatal Care Leave

The leave can be taken immediately following maternity leave (or paternity/shared parental leave) or at another appropriate time during the neonatal care period. Employees should speak to their manager to confirm when they would like the neonatal care leave to commence.

## 8.3 Support and Flexibility

The Council recognises the stress and challenges of having a baby in neonatal care and is committed to supporting affected employees with compassion and flexibility. Employees are encouraged to speak with their manager or HR to discuss their entitlements and any additional support needs.

## 9. Pregnancy loss

Pregnancy loss at any stage can be a deeply distressing experience and we are committed to providing compassionate support to employees during this time. Employees who experience a miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy or still birth will be treated with sensitivity and care. Employees are encouraged to speak confidentially with their line manager or HR so support can be offered.

### 9.1 Miscarriage

For cases of miscarriage (loss of baby before the end of the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy), managers should take a compassionate, case-by-case approach to supporting the employee. This may include time away from work (paid leave), temporary adjustments such as homeworking or amended duties where appropriate. Additional support could involve a referral to Occupational Health, Counselling, the Employee Assistance Programme or signposting specialist external sources. Please see the Pregnancy Loss Employee Guide for further information.

If an employee is unwell following a miscarriage and absent from work, this will not count towards absence triggers.

### 9.2 Stillbirth and neonatal loss

In the tragic event of a stillbirth occurring on or after 24 complete weeks of pregnancy, this will be classed as Maternity Leave and Maternity rules apply. Maternity leave starts on the day after the stillbirth. Employees can also take up to two weeks' statutory parental bereavement leave.

Managers will endeavour to support the employee with compassion and sensitivity. This may include signposting appropriate services such as bereavement support and discussing reasonable adjustments when the employee is ready to return to work. For further information and support on stillbirth and neonatal loss, please see the employee guide.

## 10. Risk Assessments

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager as early as possible that they are pregnant, as this enables the Council to provide appropriate support and put in place any necessary adjustments in a timely manner.

A risk assessment should be jointly completed by the manager and employee and any necessary adjustments put in place to protect the employee's health and safety. The employee can request for this to be reviewed at any stage of their pregnancy or upon their return to work.

If the employee holds more than one role at South Kesteven District Council, a separate risk assessment will need to be completed by each respective manager for each role.

## 11. Annual Leave

The employee's holiday entitlement will continue to accrue while they are on maternity leave. The employee will also receive days in lieu for any bank holidays that fall during their maternity leave.

It is recommended that the employee discusses their annual leave plans with their manager before starting maternity leave, including whether to take annual leave before or after the period of maternity leave and to agree the dates. Any annual leave not used prior to maternity leave will remain available upon the employee's return to work and may be carried over into the next holiday year if necessary. An employee will not lose any annual leave entitlement as a result of being on maternity leave.

## 12. Keeping in Touch

It is beneficial for the employee to maintain contact during maternity leave. The Council will aim to keep the employee informed of any significant updates or changes that may be relevant while they are away from work. The most appropriate method and frequency of communication should be agreed between the employee and their manager in advance.

Employees are entitled to take up to 10 Keeping in Touch (KIT) days during their maternity leave. These days allow the employee to carry out work without affecting their entitlement to maternity pay. KIT days must be mutually agreed in advance with the manager and can be used for any normal work activity, including attending training or team meetings. KIT days can be taken at any point during maternity leave, except during the first two weeks following the birth. There is no obligation for the employee to take KIT days, and the Council will not require them to do so.

On a KIT day, the employee will receive their normal contractual rate of pay for the hours worked. If the employee is receiving Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) at the time, this will be topped up to their usual hourly rate, ensuring the total payment does not exceed their standard daily pay. Please note that even if the employee works only part of a day, it will still count as one of the 10 allowable KIT days.

## 13. Returning to work after Maternity Leave

Employees will normally return to the same role and on the same terms and conditions of employment that applied prior to the maternity leave. However, if there's a reorganisation affecting this, the Council will consult with the employee about any potential impact.

The employee's manager will make contact before the employee is due to return to work to discuss arrangements for the return. The employee may wish to arrange a Keeping in Touch (KIT) day in advance, providing an opportunity to attend the workplace and have a conversation with their manager about the return to work.

## 14. Supporting Breast Feeding

The Council understands that employees may be breast feeding or expressing milk upon returning to work and we will provide appropriate support wherever reasonably possible. The employee is encouraged to discuss their needs with their manager or HR to agree suitable arrangements.

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at [hr@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:hr@southkesteven.gov.uk)

- This policy applies to employees within South Kesteven District Council unless stated otherwise within the policy.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment.
- The Council reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

## Employment Committee

9 July 2025

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,  
Leader of the Council and  
Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and  
Economic Development

## HR Dashboard and People Plan

### Report Author

Jane Jenkinson, Senior HR Officer

 Jane.Jenkinson@southkesteven.gov.uk

### Purpose of Report

To present the HR metrics for the full year period from April 2024 to March 2025.

### Recommendations

**The Employment Committee notes the information provided in the HR dashboard for the period April 2024 to March 2025**

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Effective council

Which wards are impacted? All Wards

## 1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

### ***Finance and Procurement***

- 1.1 The staffing budget remains the most significant annual cost incurred by the Council. It is important the Council actively reviews and understands the workforce composition, operation, development and performance to ensure it remains motivated, focused and skilled to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan ambitions.

*Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance (Deputy s151 officer)*

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

*Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright – Deputy Monitoring Officer*

## 2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Appendix A contains a presentation that provides an update on South Kesteven District Council's people metrics for the full-year period from April 2024 to March 2025.
- 2.2 The dashboard covers the following themes from the People Strategy and narrative for each is outlined below:
  - Recruitment and Workforce Planning
  - Engagement
  - Reward and Recognition
  - Development
  - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
  - Wellbeing

## 2.3 **Recruitment and Workforce Planning:**

- The establishment as at 31 March 2025 is 582 (316 males and 266 females). During the year, the Council had 79 new starters and 100 leavers.
- More than half (55%) of our workforce have been working for SKDC for less than 5 years.
- The total combined service of Officers at the Council is 4927 years.

## 2.4 **Reward and Recognition**

- The Council's recognition strategy includes long service awards, employee awards and #TeamSK Thank You which has received over 436 nominations during the year April 2024 to March 2025.
- National Employers have made a full and final offer of a 3.2% pay increase for 2025/26. Nationally, the Trade Unions are currently consulting with their members. SKDC are not part of national negotiations but normally follow the agreed pay award and are seeking approval via a separate report to the Employment Committee to pay this % increase as soon as possible as an interim pay increase, pending the outcome of the final pay award agreement for 2025/26.
- A staff awards evening was held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025. More than 230 nominations for the awards were received prior to the event and 19 awards given on the evening, 9 of which were chosen by staff and 10 chosen by CMT.

## 2.5 **Engagement**

- The Employee Engagement Survey for 2025 will take place between 7 July 2025 and 31 July 2025.
- Analysis of the survey results will take place during August. These will be presented at a future Employment Committee.

## 2.6 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

- A focus on being an inclusive place to work has continued in 2025 and has included holding Menopause Café sessions on Women's Health Physiotherapy, Reflexology and Nutrition.
- The Carers Forum held information sessions for employees and managers to raise awareness, and introduced a Carers Guide and Carers Passport to support.
- Nearly 70% of our workforce are aged over 40, with the largest numbers in the age range of 50-59. In Q2 of 2024, South Kesteven is an accredited 'AgeFriendly Employer'.
- The Council has a minimal gender pay gap, as reported to the Employment Committee in March 2025. Women earn £0.99 for every £1 men earn when comparing median hourly pay.

## 2.7 **Development**

- There were 669 places filled in learning events during the year.

- 100% of appraisals have been completed and the outputs will be built into the Workforce Development Plan.
- We have 33 colleagues on apprenticeship programmes in topics ranging from Senior Leadership and Joinery to Facilities Management and IT.
- Developing opportunities since April 2024 has included excel training, mentoring, internal work experience, IT skills specifically aimed at Operatives, presentation skills and various bitesize learning sessions.

## 2.8 **Wellbeing**

- Sickness absence increased during year with an average 12.15 days lost per FTE compared to 10.33 days for the same period last year and 13.53 for the previous year.
- Sickness absence increased significantly in December 2024 and January 2025 due to an increase in cold and flu related absences which accounted for almost 30% of all absence during those months.
- 50% of cold and flu related absences in December 2024 and January 2025 occurred in Street Scene and Waste and Recycling. To try and avoid a repeat of this free level of absence flu vaccinations will be promoted to all eligible staff and onsite provision arranged for Street Scene and Waste and Recycling with the aim of improving the take up of vaccinations.
- The top reasons for absence (days lost) remain as stress and mental health related illness, as well as other musculoskeletal issues.
- The Council's wellbeing programme has continued to offer a diverse agenda this year. The 'learn a new skill' introduced knitting and SK Choir to the programme, with photography and painting to also take place over the summer.
- Activities such as stress awareness, sleep health workshop, Mental Health Awareness Week, finance workshops, and working parents webinars have supported Mental and Social Wellbeing.
- Physical wellbeing has also been supported and encouraged by a football tournament, step challenge, and health checks.

## 3. **Consultation**

- 3.1. Discussions on the HR metrics in the HR Dashboard take place with the Trade Unions.

## 4. **Appendices**

- 4.1. Appendix 1 – HR Dashboard



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

## Employment Committee

9<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter  
Leader of Council and Cabinet Member  
for Finance, HR and Economic  
Development

## Pay Award 2025/26

### Report Author

Jane Jenkinson, Senior HR Officer

[Jane.jenkinson@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:Jane.jenkinson@southkesteven.gov.uk)

### Purpose of Report

To explain the reasons for a recommendation to implement a pay award in line with the National Employers' for Local Government Services final offer effective from 1st April 2025.

### Recommendations

#### The Committee is asked to:

1. Note the National Employers' for Local Government Services final pay award offer of 3.2% for the financial year 2025/26.
2. Note the current budget allocation for the pay award is only 2%.
3. Recommend to Council additional budgets to fund the proposed pay award of 3.2% from 1 April 2025:
  - £244k in order to fund the additional General Fund. This is to be funded from the Local Priorities Reserve.
  - £76k in order to fund the additional Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This is to be funded from the HRA Priorities Reserve.

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Effective council

Which wards are impacted? All Wards

## 1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

### ***Finance and Procurement***

- 1.1 As part of the 2025-26 budget process a predicted pay award of 2% was budgeted for so, based on the current final offer of 3.2% there is a shortfall of 1.2%. This shortfall equates to a budgetary impact of £244k on the general fund and £76k on the HRA which will require additional funding from reserves.
- 1.2 There is also a £9k impact on the members' allowances budget but, based on predicted savings within this service it is expected the impact can be contained within existing budgets.

*Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance (Deputy s151 officer)*

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.3 The proposed pay rise complies with the relevant legislation and regulations that govern the remuneration of local government employees including ensuring the bottom scale is above the predicted National Living Wage (NLW) rates ahead of a rise next April 2026. If the bottom grade falls below the 2026 NLW rate an instruction will be issued to employers to temporarily increase the bottom pay point(s) rate of pay to the NLW rate from 1 April for the period until the 2026 pay round is concluded.

*Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Deputy Monitoring Officer*

## 2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The National Employers for Local Government Services (National Employers) are responsible for negotiating pay, terms and conditions of staff in many local authorities. They consult with councils and propose offers to relevant Trade Unions.
- 2.2 On 24 April 2025, the National Employers announced a full and final offer for Council employees (Appendix A).

- 2.3 The offer is to pay an increase of at least 3.2% across all National Joint Council pay spines and all payments above the maximum pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer. The National Joint Council are the negotiating body for local government staff terms and conditions of employment.
- 2.4 On 22 April 2025, the National Employers for local government services announced a full and final offer for Chief Officers of 3.2%.
- 2.5 On 16 June 2025 ALACE (Association of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers trade union), confirmed that the National Employers have also made an offer of a 3.2% pay increase for Chief Executives.
- 2.6 South Kesteven District Council is not part of the national consultation process and the Council's pay scales are not on the National Joint Council (NJC) scales. Instead, SKDC consults with local Trade Union Representatives and aligns to local agreements. However, in recent years, the pay award has mirrored the outcomes of national negotiations.
- 2.7 Aligning the national pay offer to the Council's own pay scales, the offer amounts to an increase of 3.2% on all pay points.
- 2.8 In recent years South Kesteven District Council has reflected the National Employers final pay offer. This enables the council to recognise the hard work and dedication of its employees. Delaying the final pay offer could negatively impact some colleagues financially because receiving a larger lump sum back payment could affect benefit entitlements and payments.

### **3. Key Considerations**

- 3.1 The 2025-26 budget process predicted a pay award of 2%. Therefore an offer of 3.2% would leave a shortfall of 1.2%.
- 3.2 This shortfall would equate to a budgetary impact of £244k on the General Fund and £76k on the HRA.
- 3.3 There would also be a potential impact of £9k on the budget for Members allowances which currently increase in line with staff pay awards. However, it is anticipated that the impact would be contained within the existing budget.
- 3.4 The National Employers pay offer has not been accepted by the Trade Unions and it is therefore possible that it could change. If this were to happen, SKDC would need, once again, to review budgets and consult with Trade Union representatives.

## **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1 Not implementing a pay award would have a significant impact on: staff morale; employee relations; staff retention; and relations with the Trade Unions.

## **5. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 5.1. The staff award is a recognition of the hard work and dedication of our employees.
- 5.2. It is proposed to back date the pay award to 1 April 2025. A delay in implementation could negatively impact some members of staff.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1. The Trade Unions have been consulted and are in agreement with the proposed pay award.

## **7. Appendices**

- 7.1. Appendix A – Letter from the National Employers

# National Employers for local government services

**To: Chief Executives in England, Wales and N Ireland  
(to be shared with HR Director and Finance Director)  
Members of the National Employers' Side  
Regional Employer Organisations**

24 April 2025

Dear Chief Executive,

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY 2025

I am writing to update you on the work the National Employers have been doing on your behalf on the local government pay round for 2025.

You will recall that on 31 January, UNISON, GMB and Unite lodged their pay claim for:

- *An increase of at least £3,000 across all NJC spinal column points*
- *A clear plan to reach a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour*
- *One extra day of annual leave for all staff*
- *A reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay*
- *The ability for school staff to take [at least] one day of their annual leave during term time, with no loss of pay*

During February and March, employers in each of the nine English regions, plus Wales and Northern Ireland, were consulted at very well attended virtual pay consultation briefings; in total, more than 1,000 councillors and senior officers attended. The National Employers met initially on 24 March to discuss the key themes to come out of those briefings. They then adjourned for private political discussions before reconvening, in person, on 22 April.

As explained at the pay briefings, we are in familiar territory: little has changed in terms of councils' financial challenges and how we deal with the relentless pressure from the proximity of the National Living Wage (NLW) to the bottom of the NJC pay spine. As such, the National Employers have again been faced with very difficult decisions when considering their response to the unions' claim.

The large response to our pre-briefing questionnaire was extremely helpful in assisting members' deliberations. I can assure you that information from every return was shared with the National Employer members and I thank you for the time you committed to this process.

Whilst the regional pay briefings are the most important part of a consultation process designed to provide the National Employers with councils' views, they are not, and never have been, intended to provide the employers with a negotiating mandate. The National Employers are tasked by their respective LGA political groups and the WLGA and NILGA to come to a decision based on all the information available to them to pitch a pay offer at

a level that they believe will attract the broadest political support and, ultimately, achieve an agreement with the unions.

In their meeting on Tuesday, the National Employers considered very carefully a number of different possible pay offers, which included various options for percentage or cash figures, all of which had pros and cons. The issue of whether to propose the deletion of pay points from the spine was debated at length. The responses to the pay briefing survey showed that many councils would not be affected by the removal of one or more pay points but for some others the impact would be significant in terms of cost and disruption to their grade structure; this is the case particularly in most Welsh councils and in a majority of schools across the country. However, in the event, members felt that deleting the bottom pay point next April was required to meet the NLW challenge. This issue is explained in more detail below.

The National Employers also considered it important that their offer, as set out below, should provide certainty from the outset to the unions' national committees and all union members, the wider workforce and local employers, that it is the maximum they are able to make. Conscious of the usual implementation date of 1 April and concerns raised by employers and employees alike when previous Agreements have been delayed, the National Employers therefore agreed that their offer should again be full and final, as explained in the offer letter to the unions.

The National Employers agreed by a majority to make the following one-year (1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026), full and final offer to the unions representing the main local government NJC workforce:

- **With effect from 1 April 2025, an increase of 3.20 per cent to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive and on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4<sup>1</sup>)**
- **With effect from 1 April 2025 an increase of 3.20 per cent on all allowances (as listed in the 2024 NJC pay agreement circular dated 22 October 2024)**
- **With effect from 1 April 2026, the deletion of pay point 2 from the NJC pay spine**

This offer would achieve a bottom rate of pay of £12.65 with effect from 1 April 2025. The deletion of SCP2 would achieve a bottom rate of £12.85 from 1 April 2026 for the period until the 2026 pay round is concluded.

This offer means an employee on the bottom pay point in April 2021 (then earning £18,333) will have received an increase in their pay of £6,080 (33.17 per cent) over the four years to April 2025. For an employee at the mid-point of the pay spine (pay point 22), their pay will have increased over the same period by 22.48 per cent and for those on pay point 43, at the top of the spine, 14.33 per cent.

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<sup>1</sup> The Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4 provides that posts paid above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer are within scope of the NJC. The pay levels for such posts are determined locally, but once fixed are increased in line with agreements reached by the NJC.

## **The NLW pressure**

As was conveyed at the regional pay briefings, since 2016 the NLW has presented a huge challenge for local government in managing to maintain headroom between the bottom pay points and the statutory minimum.

At time of writing, the Low Pay Commission (LPC) has not published its forecast of the 2026 NLW. We understand this is because the LPC is yet to receive its remit from government, without which it cannot undertake the necessary forecasting. There is no indication when this situation will progress.

The employers' offer includes a proposal to delete the bottom pay point (SCP2) with effect from 1 April 2026; doing so would achieve a minimum hourly rate of £12.85 for the period from 1 April until the 2026 pay round is concluded.

When the NLW was introduced, the National Employers established a principle of seeking to ensure that the bottom rate of pay in local government is higher than the NLW, as they do not believe the sector should be a minimum wage employer. Meeting that principle each year has proved to be a challenge, given the significant annual increases to the NLW rate.

Since 2022, annual percentage increases to the NLW rate have been 6.60, 9.70, 9.80 and 6.70 respectively. The employers are well aware that an increase next year of more than 5.20 per cent (64p) will mean our (proposed) bottom rate of £12.85 will fall below the 2026 NLW rate. If this happens, we will move quickly to issue an instruction to employers that they should temporarily increase the bottom pay point[s] rate of pay to the NLW rate from 1 April for the period until the 2026 pay round is concluded.

## **Conclusion**

The National Employers are eleven senior elected members, many of whom are, or have been, Leader of their council. They are all acutely aware of the additional pressure this year's offer, which would need to be paid for from existing budgets, will place on already hard-pressed finances, especially for those councils and schools with large numbers of employees on the lower pay points. The National Employers also acknowledged the difficulties faced by councils in recruiting and retaining key staff across and above the pay spine. However, for the reasons set out above, they believe their offer meets the immediate NLW challenge and is fair to employees, given the wider economic backdrop.

The National Employers continue to wholeheartedly support the principle of the NLW but their remit is limited to securing pay agreements with the trade unions. Responsibility for making clear to government the cost to the sector of its NLW policy, lies with the LGA, in partnership with the WLGA and NILGA, all of whom have made clear that if additional funding is not forthcoming, jobs and services will be at risk as employers struggle to accommodate this additional cost when trying to balance their budgets.

You will note in the employers' offer letter they have urged the unions to try and synchronise the timing and duration of their membership consultations in order that a

final agreement is reached so that employees, who continue to provide such critical support to their communities, can receive this award as soon as is practicable.

A copy of the letter sent to the NJC trade unions, along with a copy of the employers' media statement and details of the membership of the National Employers are set out on the following pages.

Please share this letter and subsequent updates on pay, with your colleagues in HR and Finance, and with elected members, as appropriate.

I shall continue to keep you informed of developments.

Yours sincerely,

*Naomi Cooke*

**Naomi Cooke**  
**Employers' Secretary**

**Mike Short, Kevin Brandstatter, Clare Keogh**  
**Trade Union Side Secretaries**  
**NJC for Local Government Services**  
**c/o UNISON Centre**  
**130 Euston Road**  
**London NW1 2AY**

22 April 2025

Dear Mike, Kevin and Clare

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY 2025**

Thank you for your pay claim, which was received on 31 January. Following its receipt, the National Employers consulted councils and met initially on 24 March to discuss the key themes to come out of those sessions. They then adjourned for private political discussions before reconvening today.

The National Employers sought councils' views at the regional pay consultation briefings regarding your request that their offer should not be badged as '*full and final*'. Broadly speaking, whilst there was sympathy with your request for meaningful negotiations, a majority understood the pragmatic reasons behind making a '*full and final*' offer and the imperative of transparency and implementing the pay award as soon as possible and therefore were in favour of that being the approach taken again this year for all the negotiating bodies for which the National Employers have responsibility<sup>2</sup>.

Accordingly, the National Employers have agreed that making such an offer would again provide certainty from the outset to yourselves, your members, the wider workforce and local employers that their offer, set out below, is the maximum they are able to make.

However, as you will be aware, on 11 June the government will be announcing the details of its spending review, and we are hopeful it will provide councils with a three-year funding settlement. A longer-term settlement would provide more financial planning certainty for councils which in turn could, from 2026 onwards, enable the employers to consider alternatives to the one-year pay offers of recent years. Multi-year pay offers / deals would by necessity require meaningful negotiations and once agreed, would allow the breathing space we need to concentrate our joint efforts on reviewing the pay spine and preparing for the transition of significant numbers of NJC staff into the two new national negotiating bodies being established by the government.

The National Employers wish to make the following full and final, one-year (1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026) offer:

- With effect from 1 April 2025, an increase of 3.20 per cent to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive and**

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<sup>2</sup> NJC for local government services; JNC for local authority Craft & Associated employees; JNC for local authority Chief Officers; and JNC for local authority Chief Executives

on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (*in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4*<sup>3</sup>)

- With effect from 1 April 2025 an increase of 3.20 per cent on all allowances (*as listed in the 2024 NJC pay agreement circular dated 22 October 2024*)
- With effect from 1 April 2026, the deletion of pay point 2 from the NJC pay spine

Once again, the most important factor in formulating this response has been affordability. We have a duty to balance your claim against the interests of local residents, in terms of the level and quality of services provided by local authorities. The proposed increase will again be very difficult to fund in a number of local authorities and anything beyond that would take many more authorities well beyond their level of affordability. In response to other elements of your claim:

- A phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years, sooner if possible***  
The Employers reject this element of the claim. In order to achieve this objective would require increasing the bottom pay point by 22.35 per cent over the period 2025-27. That, plus the subsequent knock-on effect of increases to all subsequent pay points would be prohibitively expensive for councils at any time, not least during the current difficult financial circumstances.
- One extra day of annual leave for all staff***  
The Employers reject this element of the claim. All NJC employees currently receive a minimum of 23 days' leave (with a further three days after five years' service), plus two extra statutory days, plus public holidays. Many councils have a more generous basic leave entitlement.
- A reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay***  
The Employers reject this element of the claim in relation to a proposed 35-hour week (34 in London). Such a reduction would be out of line with norms in local government and would result in an increase in costs that would adversely affect local authority services.
- The ability for school staff to take [at least] one day of their annual leave during term time, with no loss of pay***  
The Employers reject this element of the claim. With the impending reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB), that will have responsibility for considering changes to pay and conditions for this group, we believe school employers in particular would have concerns about the NJC reaching a national agreement that gave all their non-teaching NJC employees the right to take “[at least] one day” off in term time. The cost of having not only to pay for that day but also for cover, would be significant at a time when schools are struggling financially and there is significant uncertainty about the SSSNB's remit and timetable.

The National Employers of course respect that each of your unions will have its own processes and procedures to follow, but we urge you all to please try and synchronise

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<sup>3</sup> The Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4 provides that posts paid above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer are within scope of the NJC. The pay levels for such posts are determined locally, but once fixed are increased in line with agreements reached by the NJC.

the timing and duration of your membership consultations, as you did last year, in order that a final agreement is reached and employees, who continue to provide such critical support to their communities, can receive this award as soon as is practicable.

A prompt settlement this year would give us the necessary opportunity to focus our efforts on negotiating a redesigned national pay spine, as well as continuing to discuss other complex issues, for example, the reinstatement (in England) of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body.

Yours sincerely,

**Naomi Cooke**

**Naomi Cooke**  
**Employers' Secretary**

## PRESS RELEASE: 22 APRIL 2025

### **Council employees' pay offer announced**

Following the announcement of a full and final pay offer for council employees, Chair of the National Employers for local government services, Cllr James Lewis, said:

*"Council employees have been offered a pay increase of 3.20 per cent from 1 April 2025.*

*For the lowest paid (currently earning £23,656 per annum), the offer means their pay will have increased by more than £6,000 (33.0 per cent) over the four years since April 2021.*

*The offer also includes a proposal to delete the bottom pay point (SCP2) from the national pay spine on 1 April 2026.*

*The National Employers are acutely aware of the additional pressure this year's offer will place on already hard-pressed council finances, as it would need to be paid for from existing budgets. However, they believe their offer is fair to employees, given the wider economic backdrop."*

### **Notes to editors**

The National Employers negotiate pay on behalf of 350 local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that employ around 1.5 million employees.

The total increase to the national paybill resulting from this offer would be £793.17m (3.20 per cent).

The National Joint Council for local government services negotiates the pay, terms and conditions of staff in local authorities. It agrees an annual uplift to the national pay spine, on which each individual council decides where to place its employees. Each council takes into account a number of factors such as job size and local labour market conditions when deciding an employee's salary. There are no nationally determined jobs or pay grades in local government, unlike in other parts of the public sector.

Separate national pay arrangements apply to teachers, firefighters, chief officers, chief executives and craftworkers.

-ENDS-

**NJC LGS EMPLOYERS (incl JNC CRAFTWORKERS; JNC CHIEF EXECUTIVES; JNC CHIEF OFFICERS) for the year ending 31 August 2025**

**LGA NOMINATED**

**LABOUR:** Cllr Claire Douglas (York, Yorks & Humber)  
Cllr James Lewis (Leeds, Yorks & Humber) **(Chair)**  
Cllr Peter Marland (Milton Keynes, S East) **(Lead Member)**  
Cllr Carole Williams (Hackney, London)

*Sub: Cllr Nazia Rehman (Wigan, N West)*  
*Sub: Cllr Thomas Renhard (Bristol, S West)*

**CONSERVATIVE:** Cllr Joanne Laban (Enfield, London) **(Lead Member)**  
Cllr David Leaf (Bexley, London)  
Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire, W Mids) **(Vice Chair)**

*Sub: Cllr Eddie Reeves (Oxfordshire, S East)*

**LIB DEM:** Cllr Keith House (Eastleigh / Hampshire, S East)

*Sub: Cllr Michael Headley (Bedford, East of England)*

**INDEPENDENT:** Cllr Doug McMurdo (Bedford, East of England)

*Sub: Cllr Julian Dean (Shropshire, W Mids)*

**WELSH LGA NOMINATED**

**LABOUR:** Cllr Anthony Hunt (Torfaen)

*Sub: Cllr Jane Gebbie (Bridgend)*

**N IRELAND LGA NOMINATED**

**SINN FEIN:** Cllr Christopher Jackson (Derry City & Strabane)

**DUP:** *Sub: Alderman Aaron Callan (Causeway Coast and Glens)*

**NATIONAL ASSOC OF LOCAL COUNCILS NOMINATED**

**PARISH:** vacant

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# Employment Committee Work Programme 2025 – 2026

Chairman: Councillor Anna Kelly

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Gloria Johnson

Subject	Purpose	Outcome sought
<b>9<sup>th</sup> July 2025</b>		
<b>People Strategy</b>	Consider a new People Strategy (June 2025)	The Committee to approve the new People Strategy for 2025-2029
<b>HR Policy and Handbook Review</b>	<p>New policies (June 2025):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zero Tolerance Policy – Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment</li> <li>• Maternity</li> <li>• Shared Parental Leave</li> <li>• Leave Policy</li> </ul> <p>Supporting Performance Improvement</p>	The Committee to approve the new HR Policies.
<b>Biannual HR Dashboard and Key Performance Indicator Update</b>	The Committee to be updated every 6 months on the people metrics in line with the strategy. (June 2025 Committee for full year dashboard).	The Committee to note the HR Dashboard.
<b>Annual Staff Pay Increase</b>	To consider the outcome of the pay increase discussions between the Council and the unions.	To recommend the proposed pay increase to Full Council.
<b>16<sup>th</sup> September 2025</b>		
<b>Renewal of the Co-opted member of the Governance &amp; Audit Committee</b>	To consider renewing the position and personnel of the co-opted member of the Governance & Audit Committee.	To renew the position and personnel of the co-opted member of the Governance & Audit Committee.
<b>12<sup>th</sup> November 2025</b>		
<b>Pay Policy Statement</b>	Annual report of the pay policy statement (November 2025)	The Committee to recommend the Pay Policy Statement to Full Council.
<b>Gender Pay Gap</b>	Annual reporting of the Gender pay gap position	The Committee to note the Gender Pay Gap position.

Items to be allocated in 2025-2026		
Local Government Reorganisation Updates	Updates to be provided to the Committee regularly as new information becomes available.	The Committee to note the update.
Update on the Implementation of the Volunteer Policy	The Committee is to be presented with an update of the Volunteer Policy	To review and approve the policy.
Chief Executive Appraisal	Annual Appraisal	The Committee to note the Chief Executives Annual Appraisal
Director Appraisal	Annual Appraisals	The Committee to note the Director's Annual Appraisal