

Meeting of the Employment Committee

Monday, 22 June 2026, 11.00 am



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Paul Stokes (Chairman)
Councillor Gloria Johnson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Bridget Ley

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Tim Harrison

Officers

Karen Bradford, Head of Paid Service
Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Fran Beckitt, HR Manager
Kati Conway, UNISON Representative
Charles James, Policy Officer
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rhys Baker and Anna Kelly.

Councillor Rhys Baker was substituted by Councillor Bridget Ley and Councillor Anna Kelly was substituted by Councillor Pam Byrd.

2. Disclosure of interests

There were none.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026 were AGREED as an accurate record.

4. Updates from the previous meeting

The outstanding action had been completed prior to the meeting.

5. Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2025/26

The Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report – End-Year (Q4) 2025/26 was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing.

The report was the fourth of the reporting cycle and covered the period January to March 2026 (Quarter 4 2025/26). This outlined that the Council was on track as it had continued to embed the People Strategy and accompanying action plan. 100% of actions from the people plan aligned to the strategy had been delivered. These objectives were based around recruitment, development, engagement, EDI, reward and recognition and wellbeing.

The Corporate Plan 2024-2027: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2025/26 was noted by the committee.

6. 2026/27 Pay Award

The 2026/27 Pay Award was introduced by the Leader of the Council.

South Kesteven had historically implemented the full and final offer from the National Employers for Local Government Services. On 24 March 2026, this was announced as a 3.3% pay increase. Despite not being part of the national consultation process, there was a local agreement to align the pay award to mirror the outcome of national negotiations.

The current budget allocation for the pay award was 3%. The 0.3% shortfall equated to a budgetary impact of £65k on the general fund and £35k on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which required additional funding from reserves.

The report also recommended a Real Living Wage increase was applied to grades SK3 – SK7. Requiring £147k from the General Fund and £2k from the HRA. This proposal supported the Council's previously agreed commitment to paying the Real Living Wage, as endorsed by Full Council.

The National Employers pay offer had not been accepted by the Trade Unions and it was therefore subject to possible change. If this were to happen, SKDC would need, once again, to review budgets and consult with Trade Union representatives.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- It was noted that the current approach of not being part of the national consultation process but mirroring the outcome anyway prevented the possibility of strike action.
- Were SKDC to await the final outcome of the Trade Union negotiations before implementing the pay award then this would become a financial burden to both the organisation and the employees.
- Clarity was sought about the job roles receiving pay banding SK3-SK7. Examples included Waste, Cleaning and Operative roles.
- It was queried how the proportional differentials between pay grades could be maintained given that grades SK3-SK7 were proposed to receive up to 5.1% in line with the commitment to meet the real living wage. It was confirmed that the differentials would remain unaffected, keeping the pay scales in order. Only those on Pay Scales below SK7 would receive the full 5.1% uplift.
- It was noted that SKDC were not bound to adhere to Green Book Conditions of Employment.
- It was confirmed that the Real Living Wage uplift had not been budget for initially as the Trade Unions had not released their offer in time for SKDC's budget setting process.

It was identified that the table in 1.3 of the report, under the HRA section, £2000 should have been categorised under the Real Living Wage, rather than the Members Allowance. Incorporating this amendment, it was proposed, seconded and AGREED to recommend to Cabinet an additional budget of:

- A. £214,000 from the Local Priorities Reserve to fund the General Fund impact of the proposed pay award impact for 2026/27.
- B. £37,000 from the Housing Priorities Reserve to fund the HRA Impact of the proposed pay award impact for 2026/27.

7. HR Dashboard

A presentation on the HR Dashboard was given by the HR Manager.

The HR Dashboard outlined the following:

Workforce Planning:

- The establishment was 621 (340 males and 281 females). During the year, the Council had 105 new starters and 70 leavers.
- 60% of the workforce had been employed by SKDC for less than 5 years.
- The total combined service of Council Officers is 5,361 years.
- Exit interviews were used to identify trends which were reported to the Senior Leadership Team.

Reward and Recognition:

- The Council's Recognition Strategy included long service awards, employee awards and the '#TeamSK Thank You' scheme which received nearly 600 nominations in 2026.
- A staff awards evening was held in June 2025. More than 200 nominations for the awards were received prior to the event and 19 awards were presented.

Wellbeing:

- A comprehensive wellbeing programme was delivered including more than 50 events across the year to support engagement and resilience.
- Staff absence levels were 11.40 days per FTE compared to 12.45 days per FTE for 2024/25.
- The most common reasons for absence (days lost) remained as stress and mental health related illness, back and neck and other musculoskeletal issues.

Learning & Development:

- There were 121 formal learning events during the year.
- 94% of appraisals were completed with the remaining ones being finalised as of May 2026.
- The outputs were being built into the Workforce Development Plan.
- There were 42 colleagues on apprenticeship programmes in varied topics including: senior leadership; joinery; facilities management and IT.
- Development opportunities this year included: ILM courses; mentoring; internal work experience; coaching; and various bitesize learning sessions.
- Continued delivery of the Line Manager Forum saw a resilience training programme in March, alongside ongoing Senior Manager Forum engagement to strengthen leadership capability.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- A focus on being an inclusive place to work in 2025 included: support through the Carer's Network; celebrating Black History Month; Menopause Cafes; and raising awareness of hidden disabilities.
- Nearly 70% of the workforce was aged over 40 with the largest proportion in the age range of 50-59. South Kesteven was an accredited 'Age-Friendly Employer'.
- The Council currently had a negative Gender Pay Gap meaning that, on average, women were paid slightly more than men across the organisation.

Employee Experience:

- Employee engagement levels were measured in an annual survey in June 2025. They demonstrated an increase across the Council.
- Feedback sessions took place across all teams to discuss the survey results and to recommend action plans in response to the survey.

- The People Panel continued to inform improvements and workforce decisions. The Panel consisted of employees from across the Council (one from each team) who provided feedback, shared employees' perspectives and acted as a sounding board for proposed changes.
- The HR Hub continued to be enhanced to improve policy accessibility and support for employees.
- Staff engagement had been maintained during LGR through regular briefings and change planning activities.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- Reassurance was sought and given that unsuccessful job applicants were given suitable responses and feedback.
- The HR Manager expressed that exit interviews had been a successful mechanism that all employees were invited to attend and the results were reported to CMT.
- Given the high proportion of employee absence due to mental health related matters, it was queried how officers were responding. It was confirmed that, in such instances, the HR were in regular contact with the individual, the individual's manager, and there was a series of mental health related support available both in-house, with trained first-aiders, and support facilitated externally.
- It was noted that the number of absence days per-employee had decreased, however, it was still higher than the Council would like. It was pointed out that SKDC was not an outlier in mental health related matters causing a high proportion of absences and not all mental health absences were work-related. The results of the Employee Engagement Survey had indicated employees found SKDC were highly satisfied with their working environment.
- A Member suggested a report benchmarking absence days per-employee against neighbouring authorities.
- It was requested that figures be provided showing the number of internal promotions. **ACTION**
- Clarity was sought and given that those on degree apprenticeships secured permanent roles.

The HR Dashboard was noted by the committee.

8. HR Policy Review

The HR Policy Review was introduced by the Leader of the Council.

The proposed Organisational Change policy provided a clear, fair and transparent framework for managing organisational change across South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) including: restructures; redeployment; ring fencing arrangements; redundancy situations; pay protection; and support for affected employees. This was to replace the previous Redundancy Policy.

The proposed policy included:

- Clear guiding principles for managing organisational change.
- Requirements for consultation with employees and recognised Trade Unions.
- Measures to avoid or minimise compulsory redundancies.
- Positioning of redundancy as one outcome within wider change, not the main focus as was the case in the previous policy.
- Support available to employees affected by organisational change.
- An explanation of how decisions link to service delivery needs, priorities and financial considerations.
- An emphasis on transparency, open communication, employee wellbeing and a fair process.
- An additional requirement for business case and governance of approval.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- It was confirmed that the proposed Organisational Change Policy would bring the Council's policy in line with the updated Employment Law legislation.

Following discussions, it was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to recommend approval of the proposed Organisational Change policy to the Chief Executive.

9. Work Programme 2026 - 2027

The Work Programme 2026-2027 was noted by the committee.

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

There was none.

11. Exclusion of Press & Public

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED that the press and public be excluded during the discussions of the remaining agenda items because of 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.

The meeting adjourned at 11.59 and resumed at 12.05.

Councillors Tim Harrison, Graham Jeal, and Philip Knowles left the meeting and did not return.

12. Proposed Director Objectives

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED that the Employment Committee:

1. Considered the proposed objectives to be included in the Directors' and Assistant Directors targets for 2026-2027.
2. Approved the South Kesteven District Council's Directors' and Assistant Directors objectives for 2026-2027 as attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

13. Updates on Alcohol & Drug Testing and Speeding

The updates of Alcohol & Drug Testing and Speeding Assessments were noted by the committee.

14. Chief Executive Pay Review

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to:

1. Accept the findings of the report prepared by East Midlands Councils and introduce a salary grade band for the Chief Executive's salary.
2. Approve a 1.4% pay increase for the Chief Executive.