

**19 JUNE 2025**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**HR COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee held on Thursday, 19 June 2025

\* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

\* Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

- \* Mark Clark
- \* Kate Crisell
- \* Sean Cullen
- \* Jeremy Heron

**Councillors:**

- \* Colm McCarthy
- \* Alan O'Sullivan
- Joe Reilly

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Officers Attending:**

Heleana Aylett, Alan Bethune, Jade Carter, Kate Hardy, James Loring, Zoe Ormerod, Shannon Smith, Daniel Reynafarje and Lee Ellis.

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Sean Cullen.

**4 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March and 12 May 2025 were confirmed by the Chairman as correct records.

**5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**7 HR UPDATE**

The Service Manager – Human Resources provided an overview of the work undertaken within the HR Service over and above the re-active casework.

The following updates were provided:

- The Staff Engagement Survey now had a draft action plan, which had been recently reviewed. The action plan would now be shared with staff.
- The Local Government National Recruitment campaign would be happening again, later in the year.

- Worked with the Transformation Team to look at how HR could streamline some of its processes and automate, where suitable.
- The Learning Management System was continuing to be developed. As part of Learning at Work Week HR had worked with the operational depots to make sure they were engaged in and taking part.
- The HR Service Review had been undertaken.
- The EDI Group continued to meet and there was now an away space established for those who wished to observe religious beliefs, breastfeeding/expressing milk, etc. More promotion would be undertaken to promote the facility.
- The Council had recently been reassessed to use the Disability Confidence Scheme logo. The Council achieved the Level 2 Award again, for another three years.
- With support from ICT, a case manager system was now in place and enabled a dashboard to be used, which could be split into each service. That data could then be shared with Strategic Directors and Service Managers. This would provide an up-to-date view of what was happening and would be a valuable HR tool.
- The annual return for the Local Government Pension Scheme had been submitted.

The Chairman thanked the presenter for the overview.

A member of the Committee raised a question on the recruitment process and given the uncertainty of local government reorganisation (LGR), was the Council experiencing any uncertainty, reluctance or a drop in the number of applications for roles. In response, it was stated that a couple staff had chosen to leave the Council and part of their reason for this was due to the uncertainty of LGR. As a Council we were mindful that we needed to put something in place that would enable us to retain our key staff. At the same time the Council would still need to make itself attractive to applicants. The Behaviours Framework would be a key piece of work.

Another member raised concern that 7% of staff had been subject to bullying in the past 12 months and the figure seemed remarkably high. In response, it was confirmed that the Council needed to be clearer with its definition of bullying and that HR were drilling down to make sure that the issues were addressed. In future, the question would be made clearer for responding. A Committee member also raised concern regarding the bullying of frontline staff during the roll out of the new waste collection service and what could the Council do to stop this. It was confirmed that all verbal incidents towards staff, from the public, were recorded and sent to the health and safety team for investigation. In terms of lone working, there was an app-based monitoring device which could be used, along with an orbit device which had a panic alarm. Conflict management training had also been undertaken.

A concern was also raised that 40% felt that their manager didn't listen to them and it seemed a large percentage. In response, it was stated that further work was

being undertaken to the Behaviour Framework and training was being provided to develop manager skills.

A question was raised asking how did those staff who did not have a Council device to access to Forestnet and how they received messages. In response, it was confirmed that HR were working with ICT to find ways to enable those staff to access Forestnet, whether that was a kiosk that was available at a depot, etc. It was important, as there was key information on Forestnet such as health and safety polices. Engagement and internal communications mechanisms were also being looked at.

A Committee member asked whether performance reviews were compulsory or voluntary. In response, it was noted that all staff should have an annual performance review, as it was an important part of managing a team. The new dashboard should provide data on whether performance reviews had been undertaken.

**RESOLVED:**

That Members noted the ongoing work within the HR Service.

**8 BEHAVIOURS FRAMEWORK**

An overview was provided by the Senior HR Advisor and the Organisational Development and Change Specialist.

It was confirmed that consultation had been undertaken across the organisation and there would be a phased delivery over summer and autumn. The Engagement Officer would be key to making sure that the message was being delivered across the teams.

**RESOLVED:**

That the behaviours framework and approaches for launch and onward development be noted.

**9 ANNUAL REVIEW OF MARKET SUPPLEMENT PAYMENTS REPORT**

The Payroll Manager provided an overview on the outcome of the Annual Market Supplement Payments Review for April 2025. The current Market Supplement Policy stated that such payments were intended as a short-term solution and therefore, must be reviewed annually.

This year, a new automated system had been implemented which generated the forms and controlled the approvals process. As of 1 March 2025, there were sixty four employees in receipt of a market supplement. The majority of those payments were to LGV Drivers and Building Control Surveyors. Following the review, there had been no changes made to existing arrangements and all market supplements had continued. The Council was also part of Southeast Employers and as a result used a system called Infinistats that enabled benchmarking with similar authorities.

It was confirmed that salaries were embedded in the base budget and when an application came forward, the service manager would need to demonstrate how it could be funded within the existing budget.

A Committee member asked if all those with the same job description would receive a market supplement and it was confirmed that all those with the same job description would receive the supplement.

**RESOLVED:**

That the HR Committee noted the current position of market supplements across the Council.

**10 HEALTH AND WELLBEING ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT 2024 - 2025**

The Senior HR Advisor provided an overview on the Health and Wellbeing Attendance Management 2024 – 2025 and the Council's efforts to manage sickness absence and support employees.

The following were highlighted:

- Sickness absence had decreased to 3.38% in 2024/25, down from 3.53% the previous year. This was due to proactive absence management and training for Line Managers.
- Stress and depression remained the most common reason for sickness absence at 26.8%, a slight increase from the previous year. This was addressed through targeted support and interventions.
- Operational role absences accounted for 62% of sickness absences, up from 57% the previous year. There was ongoing support for safe working practices and well-being initiatives.
- Managing sickness absence continued to be a priority with a strong emphasis on employee well-being. This included well-being action plans, phased returns to work, employee assistance programme, promotion of healthy lifestyles, well-being champions, etc

A Committee member asked how you became a well-being champion. It was confirmed that this was a voluntary process, that there were a number across the Council and it was recognised that being a well-being champion had its limitations. All well-being champions had received training to undertake the role. There would be a boundary between the support that could be provided and they were not available 24/7. There would also be signposting to external bodies or support initiatives.

It was hoped that the roll out of the new waste collection service and wheelie bins would reduce the incidences of operational role absences.

It was confirmed that currently cases of stress and depression were recorded individually, across the Council. However, the new dashboard would make it easier to track the data. It was also stated that around 50% of those with stress and depression were absent because of home issues. Once someone had been off for a certain period the occupational health service would be asked to review the return, providing feedback on how to manage the member of staff back to work.

**RESOLVED:**

That the HR Committee noted the content of the report and support the proposed attendance management action plan detailed in Section 8.

**11 CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY QUARTER 1 REPORT**

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided an overview on the Corporate Health and Safety Quarter 1 Report.

The following highlights were reported:

- Two audits were undertaken in Quarter 1. The Gas Team and Housing Maintenance scored 84.32%, with one high priority action. The Street Scene Team 80.38%, with five high priority actions. There has been improvement from the previous Audits that were undertaken, three years previously.
- A warning marker register system had been introduced and updated, which was now on SharePoint. This would allow operational staff to access via the NFDC mobile device. Work was also underway to create a specific power app system.
- Conflict management training had also been provided as part of the new waste collection rollout.
- Total of 327 accident incident reports received in 2024/25, a slight increase of 12 from the previous year. There was a total of 420 days lost due to incidents and accidents, which was a slight decrease from the previous year. Walking and loading were the top reported activity within place, operation and sustainability. There was also a reduction in the number of members of the public incidents reported.
- There had been positive feedback from the teams out on the ground during the rollout of the new waste collection service.

A Member of the committee asked if blinds had now been purchased for the benefits section and whilst it was confirmed that nothing had been purchased yet, some tests had been undertaken on light levels

Members discussed providing all staff with general reminders regarding manual handling. It was noted that there had recently been a screensaver for all the SharePoint information and a manual handling news bulletin had been circulated to the leadership team, with a communication to all staff. There were also larger, monthly, health and safety news posts regarding specific topics.

Conflict management was discussed with the rollout of the waste collection service. It was confirmed that in terms of incident reports, they mainly related to frustration from the public, directed at the Council as a whole. There was training on how to have discussions and to understand it wasn't personal but to step away and leave that area, if necessary. Cards had been distributed with specific telephone numbers and emails that the public were advised to call. No body cams, etc were used as there was also the monitoring system and vehicle tracking and Officers would know where anyone was located to get assistance to them. Feedback had been mostly positive.

A Committee member raised the need for stress and mental health support with the Homelessness Team due to the incredibly stressful role they undertook and was pleased to see this covered in the report.

**RESOLVED:**

That the HR Committee noted the findings from:

- a) all Service Safety Panels and Working Groups
- b) the annual accident/incident report for 2024 – 2025

**12 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee reviewed its future Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be approved.

CHAIRMAN