

**8 JANUARY 2026**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**HR COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee held on Thursday, 8 January 2026

\* 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

**Officers Attending:**

Heleana Aylett, Alan Bethune, Brian Byrne, Jade Carter, George Gale, Kate Hardy, Zoe Ormerod and Lee Ellis

**24 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2025 were confirmed by the Chairman as correct record.

**25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**26 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**27 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 report contained updates on:

- Recruitment
- Learning
- LGBTQ+ Employee Network
- EDI Group
- Employment Rights Bill
- Brief Bites
- Case Manager
- Updated HR Policies

A Member raised whether due to local government reorganisation the Council would use additional agency staff for short term contracts. It was confirmed that there was no policy in place regarding the use of agency staff over and above the

recruitment of permanent roles due to their expense. However, the situation would be monitored, as there was currently no budget for agency staff.

Clarification was requested on the date of the introduction of unfair dismissal protection as part of the Employment Rights Bill and the introduction of a retrospective start date. In response, the Service Manager - Human Resources explained the subject was complicated and the member would be provided with a response outside of the meeting.

An explanation was provided on the challenges the Council faced when recruiting staff which included that the requirement for specific skills and the potential impact of local government reorganisation. The exit interview had recently been amended to include a specific question on local government reorganisation and its uncertainty on job roles. Data on this question and its impact would be presented to a future meeting of the HR Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report was noted.

**28 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

The Senior HR Advisor provided an overview of the updated learning commitments in the People Strategy and the new growth and goals conversations.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the ethos of the Council was to ensure that all employees had access to opportunities that supported their growth and contributed to the strategic aims within the corporate plan.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report was noted.

**29 PEOPLE STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

The Organisational Development and Change Specialist provided a progress update on the people strategy which included the progress and impact of the work undertaken which included behaviour commitments, growth and goals conversations, recruitment, process improvements and the embracing change programme.

A member requested whether there was feedback on the growth and goals conversations. It was confirmed that a significant number of conversations had been held with a copy of the conversation added to the employee file. Feedback confirmed that conversations had been positive and that the process was more proactive. Further updates would be provided at the next meeting of the HR Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That Members reviewed and noted the progress of the People Strategy.

**30 SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

The Service Manager – Community Safety and Wellbeing provided an overview of the updated Safeguarding Policy. There was a requirement for the policy be reviewed at least every three years to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice. Several key areas had been updated to ensure that the Safeguarding Policy reflected key changes.

The Chairman confirmed that she had contacted group leaders regarding additional safeguarding training for members due to the updated policy.

A member requested clarification regarding how children had been recognised in their own right as victims of domestic abuse. In response, it was confirmed that previously to be recognised as a victim of domestic abuse you needed to be eighteen years or above, which was then reduced to sixteen years. The act now recognised that if a child lived in a home where there was domestic abuse between adults, that a child didn't have to witness the abuse, they just need to live in an environment where domestic abuse was perpetrated to now be a victim of domestic abuse. There was evidence that children who had grown up in an environment of domestic abuse could replicate abuse in unhealthy relationships. The Council was working with partners such as Yellow Door to help young people build healthy relationships and around misogynistic behaviour.

**RESOLVED:**

That the HR Committee reviewed the revised and updated Safeguarding Policy prior to Portfolio Holder approval.

**31 GENDER PAY GAP**

The Payroll Manager provided an overview on the Gender Pay Gap data for the period ending 31 March 2025 and confirmed that the gender pay gap had decreased.

A member stated that it was good to see the gender pay gap had decreased at the Council.

**RESOLVED:**

That the HR Committee noted the contents of the report and that no action was required by the Council due to the positive findings.

**32 PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

The Service Manager – Human Resources provided an overview of the Pay Policy Statement and proposed that the current Spinal Column Point 14 be deleted and that Spinal Column Point 15 would become Band 1 from 1 April 2026. Bands 2 and 3 would contain two Spinal Points each.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council supported those at the lowest pay scales and that the Council paid its employees above the minimum wage.

**RESOLVED:**

That the HR Committee supported and recommended for approval to Council:

1. The changes outlined from Bands One and Two, with effect from 1 April 2026; and
2. The Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27.

### **33 GUIDE TO SUPPORTING THOSE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE**

The Service Manager – Human Resources provided an overview on the revised Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse Guide.

It was confirmed that employee groups had been consulted on the revised guide and as a result the guide had been amended to state that help could now be sought from a member of the LGBTQ+ group. It was confirmed that the LGBTQ+ group had asked for the option to be added to the guide.

The Portfolio Holder requested confirmation that support and training would be provided for employees who were points of contact. It was confirmed that the points of contacts would engage in initial conversations and if further support was required then additional, professional support would be used or signposted.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the HR Committee supported the revised Guide to Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse.

### **34 CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The Health and Safety Advisor provided an overview of the Corporate Health and Safety Report.

It was confirmed that the member of the public who had suffered an accident due to a contractor not suitably securing an exterior fence, had now recovered. A civil claim that had been submitted to the Council had been forwarded to the contractor.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the HR Committee noted the work undertaken by the Health and Safety Groups; and
2. Supported the proposal to combine the Control of Contractors Working Group and the Asbestos Working Group.

### **35 WORK PROGRAMME**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be approved and for the next meeting of the HR Committee that a report be submitted on the changes to polices required due to the Employment Rights Bill.

CHAIRMAN