

Agenda

Employment Panel

Date: **Wednesday 25 March 2026**

Time: **1.30 pm**

Place: **Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford,
HR4 0LE**

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

Jen Preece, democratic services officer

Tel: 01432 261699

Email: jennypreece@herefordshire.gov.uk

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Agenda for the meeting of the Employment Panel

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor Jonathan Lester**
Vice-chairperson **Councillor Liz Harvey**

Councillor Terry James
Councillor Pete Stoddart
Councillor Clare Davies
Councillor Stef Simmons

Agenda

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY) To receive details of any member nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the panel.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive declarations of interests in respect of items on the agenda.	
4. MINUTES To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 21 January 2026.	9 - 10
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive any written questions from members of the public. Details of the scheme and related guidance are available here: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200148/your_council/61/get_involved Please submit questions to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk The deadline for the receipt of questions is Thursday 19 March at 5.00 pm. Accepted questions will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting.	
6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS To receive any written questions from councillors. Please submit questions to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk The deadline for the receipt of questions is Thursday 19 March at 5.00 pm. Accepted questions will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting.	
7. RECRUITMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE To initiate the recruitment process for the post of Director of Finance	11 - 18

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- Attend all council, cabinet, committee and sub-committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the cabinet or individual cabinet members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting (a list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all councillors with details of the membership of cabinet and of all committees and sub-committees. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. The council's constitution is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution
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The location of the office and details of city bus services can be viewed at:

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services-

**The Seven Principles of Public Life
(Nolan Principles)**

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Minutes of the meeting of the Employment Panel held in Conference Room 2 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Wednesday 21 January 2026 at 3.00 pm

Committee members present in person and voting: Councillors: Jonathan Lester (Chairperson), Pete Stoddart and Stef Simmons

Committee members participating via remote attendance: Councillors: Liz Harvey

[Note: Committee members participating via remote attendance, i.e. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.]

Others in attendance: J Coleman (Democratic Services Manager), T Sampson (Director of HR and OD) and L Edwards (HR Improvement Manager)

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Clare Davies and Terry James.

36. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

38. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 September, and 22 October 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

39. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received from members of the public.

40. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No questions had been received from councillors.

41. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

In introducing the report, set out at appendix A, the Chair explained that the council has an obligation to produce an annual pay policy statement for each financial year. It is for the Employment Panel to review and recommend the statement for approval by Council.

The following principal points were raised by committee members.

Clarification was sought on the reference to the Real Living Wage in regard to the 03 and 04 HCS grade being described as “discretionary”. It was explained that the council has decided to apply the Real Living Wage consistently across all affected employee bands rather than discretion given on an individual employee basis.

It was noted that changes in the Pay Policy Statement from the previous year show a positive direction of travel, particularly the pay ratio between the lowest- and highest-paid employees is narrowing. The council is comparing well with neighbouring authorities on both this ratio and median/midpoint pay. The report demonstrates that the council is taking a considered and balanced approach to setting salaries, reflecting both local conditions and the national job market rate, and particularly so for the more senior roles.

Committee members raised questions around the gender pay gap information in the report. Despite women making up a larger proportion of employees across all pay grades, members are unclear why men are still paid slightly more on average. Members stressed the need to understand the causes of the gap so continuing progress toward reducing it can be evidence-led. It is important that the Council is seen to be leading by example in seeking to address and close this gap.

Committee members sought a more detailed breakdown of male/female distributions among the pay grades, analysis of part-time versus full-time working, and how this may affect progression and representation of women (in particular) at higher grades. It was recognised that pay data is already pro-rated, so part-time status is unlikely to affect the headline statistics but may still reveal underlying structural patterns.

Officers will carry out more detailed analysis and explanation around some of the trends currently being presented in the report. An explanatory paragraph will be included before the report goes to Full Council.

Committee members were invited to agree to recommend the pay policy statement 2026-27 to Full Council for approval and publication.

Resolved: That the pay policy statement in Appendix A is recommended to Full Council.

The meeting ended at 15:13

Chairperson

**Title of report: Recruitment of the Director of Finance****Meeting: Employment Panel****Meeting date: Wednesday 25 March 2026****Report by: Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development****Classification**

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To initiate the recruitment process for the post of Director of Finance.

Recommendation(s)**That:**

- a) **Recruitment for the post of Director of Finance is initiated in line with the estimated timescales set out in the report.**
- b) **Employment Panel considers the salary benchmarking information for the post of Director of Finance and determines whether to recommend any changes to full council.**

Alternative options

1. Employment Panel might decide not to recruit to the post of Director of Finance at this time and instead ask the Chief Executive to make an interim appointment for the next budget year. The advantage of this alternative option is that it gives some continuity for the entirety of the 26/27 budget cycle and allows the council's next Chief Executive the opportunity to review their senior structure.

Key considerations

2. The council's Finance Director has announced she is leaving the council in June and in accordance with part 4, section 9 of the council's constitution, Employment Panel is responsible for the selection of a new post holder.
3. The Director of Finance is a critical role for the council being a statutory officer (section 151 of Local Government Act 1972) and to ensure that the right candidate is found it is recommended that a specialist employment agency with the necessary skills, networks and resources to 'head hunt' a field of qualified candidates is engaged to undertake the search.
4. A selection process and draft timeline in which an appointment can be made is proposed below. The timetable is designed to give Employment Panel multiple opportunities to assess the candidates.

When (subject to change)	Activity	Lead
w/c 30 March	Select and brief agency	Director of HR&OD
w/c 6 April	Briefing agency and microsite build	Agency/ Council
23 April – 22 May	Candidate search	Agency
2pm, 4 June	Longlisting Employment panel to longlist up to 8 candidates for selection day 1.	Employment Panel
w/c 8 June	Psychometrics	Agency
Wed, 17 June	Selection Day 1 and shortlisting Includes technical interview and presentation to Employment Panel After which Employment Panel will decide which candidates (approx. 4) to bring back for day 2.	Employment Panel
Mon, 22 June	Selection day 2 and final interviews Includes staff panel, stakeholder panel, lunch with candidates and final interviews with Employment Panel.	Employment Panel
10.00, Wed, 24 June	Formal Employment Panel meeting for decision	Employment Panel

Salary

5. The remuneration for this post is currently set at £110,628 (pay award pending) and this salary has been approved by Council in the pay policy statement in February 2026. In accordance with guidance under the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's constitution, any new salary packages over £100,000 must be agreed by Council. If Employment Panel decides to change the salary for this post, it can do so by recommending an alternative salary package to Council.
6. To support Employment Panel in their considerations, a salary benchmarking exercise has been undertaken. For benchmarking purposes there is not a direct comparator, but s151 Officer posts nearby councils and smaller county councils have been considered.

Appointment of an Interim

7. It will not be possible to make a permanent appointment before the current post holder leaves and an interim appointment for a minimum of 4 months will be required while the recruitment process takes its course. The council's employment rules delegate the appointment of an interim Director of Finance (s151) to the Chief Executive.
8. The alternative option set out in paragraph 1 of this report, suggests that Employment Panel may wish to consider making a longer interim appointment, and delaying the start of the permanent recruitment. This would allow the interim appointee to be in post for the whole of the 2026/27 budget cycle and would give the new incoming Chief Executive the opportunity to review their senior structure before making a permanent appointment.
9. The council has a suitably qualified deputy s151 officer who is able to assume all the relevant statutory duties while any permanent or interim appointments are made to this post.

Community impact

10. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, the council needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, qualifications, and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively. The council is accountable for how it uses the resources under its stewardship, including accountability for outputs and outcomes achieved. In addition, the council has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies.
11. The post holder for this role provides strategic leadership to council services and has key leadership roles in Herefordshire, regionally and nationally. Without effective leadership, outcomes for communities and individuals in Herefordshire could be adversely affected.

Environmental Impact

12. The council's senior leaders have shared responsibility for the delivery of the county plan and corporate delivery plan and the inherent environmental objectives and outcomes within these plans.

Equality duty

13. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

14. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision and it has been found to have no impact for equality.
15. The council's policies in relation to job evaluation and recruitment and selection pay full regard to the council's responsibilities as set out in the public sector equality duty. The council is a disability confident employer, and the council encourages applications from candidates from diverse backgrounds.

Resource implications

16. The salary for the Director of Finance is currently £110,628 and will be met from within the existing directorate revenue budget.
17. The establishment budget is available for this post and the table below show the salary cost of appointing to this post for a full year, together with any estimated recruitment costs.

Revenue budget implications	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Salary for post of Director of Finance (assumed start date of 1 October and excluding any pay award which has not yet been announced)	65	110
Estimated Recruitment Costs	20	0
TOTAL	85	110

Legal implications

18. The council is required to appoint a suitably qualified s151 officer to lead on the council's financial functions as prescribed in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Such a person must hold a suitable financial qualification as specified in s113(3) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1988.
19. Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, SI 2001/3384 as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, SI 2015/881 say that where executive arrangements (Cabinet/Leader model) are in place, the appointment of chief officers and statutory chief officers and deputy chief officers, including their dismissal and the terms and conditions upon which they are appointed, is a function reserved to the Council. In the constitution this function is delegated to the Employment Panel (Part 4 Section 9 para 4.9.4 to 4.9.10).
20. Where cabinet executive arrangements are in place, before an offer of appointment is issued, the members of the Cabinet must be informed of the prospective decision, and the Leader may make any representations of 'material and well founded' objections to the decision maker (the council).
21. Any employee employed by the council must be employed on the council's normal terms and conditions and will be subject to all relevant policies and procedures as any other employee would be.
22. Any changes to terms and conditions must be approved by Employment Panel (Part 4 Section 9 point 32).

Risk management

23.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The council will not have adequate arrangements in place to cover all s151 responsibilities	A well-qualified and experienced deputy s151 officer is in post and is able to cover all s151 responsibilities while any interim or permanent appointments are made

Consultees

24. None.

Appendices

Appendix A – Salary benchmarking information

Background papers

None identified.

Director of Finance (s151 Officer) Pay Benchmarking – March 2026

The below lists s151 Officer salaries in regional or statically comparable organisations. The table should be used with caution because many of the s151 roles listed include additional responsibilities such as being the Director of Resources.

Local Authority	s151 Officer Title	Salary (£)	Source
Suffolk	Chief Financial Officer	114,230	statement-of-accounts-2024-2025-unaudited-signed-july-2025
Cornwall	COO and s151 Officer	117,425	Cornwall Council Statement of Accounts 2024-25
Cumberland	Chief Financial Officer	121,902	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
Cheshire East	Executive Director of Resources	131,208 - 148,823	Senior Officers Salary Count (2025) Insight Cheshire East
Norfolk	Director of Strategic Finance	137,100	Draft Statement of Accounts 2024-25.pdf
Wiltshire	Corporate Director Resources	138,567	Salaries and expenses - Wiltshire Council
West Berkshire	Executive Director of Resources	140,077	20260226-F Financial SOA 24-25 A4.pdf
Somerset	Chief Financial Officer	132,225 - 153,750	Somerset Council Committee Report - s151 Chief Finance Officer Recruitment.pdf
Dorset	Executive Director (s151)	137,465 - 154,394	dorset-council-pay-policy-statement-2025-26
North Yorkshire	Corporate Director Resources	141,233 - 164,272	Corporate Director of Resources - Section 151 Officer North Yorkshire Council
West Midlands			
Telford and Wrekin	Director Finance, People & IDT	99,530	statement-of-accounts-2024-25_redacted.pdf
Worcestershire	Chief Financial Officer	107,680 – 118,380	Appendix 8 - Pay Policy Statement WCC 2025 Final.pdf
Walsall	Director – Finance, Performance and procurement.	117,569	2024-25 Financial Report
Staffordshire	Director of Finance	143,067	A9n53k49_un5bog_f7q.tmp.pdf
Stoke-on-Trent	Corporate Director Resources	148,628	Statement of Accounts 2024 25 FINAL Signed .pdf
Shropshire	Director of Resources	148,751	annual accounts
Wolverhampton	Deputy CEX (s151)	158,802	Statement of Accounts

