

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