

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive
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NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.

Contact: Democratic Services
committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk

2 June 2026

To: MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the General Purposes Committee to be held in the Council Chamber, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill on Wednesday, 10th June, 2026 commencing at 7.30 pm.

Members of the Committee are required to attend in person. Other Members may attend in person or participate online via MS Teams.

Information on how to observe the meeting will be published on the Council's website.

Yours faithfully

DAMIAN ROBERTS

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

1. Guidance for the Conduct of Meetings

5 - 8

PART 1 - PUBLIC

2. Apologies for absence
3. Notification of Substitute Members 9 - 10
4. Declarations of interest 11 - 12

Members are reminded of their obligation under the Council's Code of Conduct to disclose any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests in any matter(s) to be considered or being considered at the meeting. These are explained in the Code of Conduct on the Council's website at [Code of conduct for members – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council \(tmbc.gov.uk\)](http://tmbc.gov.uk).

Members in any doubt about such declarations are advised to contact Legal or Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.

5. Minutes 13 - 16

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of General Purposes Committee held on 11 March 2026

Matters for Decision under Delegated Powers

6. Stansted Parish Council Community Governance Review 17 - 20

This report sets out proposals that could help to contribute towards the efficient and effective delivery of local council services to the residents of Stansted Parish.

7. Request for Dispensation - Councillor D King 21 - 26

This report asks Members to consider a request for a dispensation under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable Councillor D King to participate in meetings of the Council (including Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee and full Council) where the Local Plan is under consideration and in meetings of the Planning Committee where any applications for development in respect of the site identified as T01 (land north east of Tonbridge) in the draft Local Plan are considered.

8. Adoption of New Volunteers Policy and Changes to the Recruitment and Selection Policy 27 - 54

This report seeks Members' consideration and approval of a new Volunteers Policy and revisions to the Recruitment and Selection Policy, addressing an internal audit recommendation and aligning recruitment practice with the Workforce Development Strategy.

9. Workforce Development Strategy Progress Update 2025-26 55 - 78

This report provides Members with an overview of progress made during the first year of the Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2028, assurance that the Strategy is being effectively implemented, highlights areas where further development is ongoing and seeks Member endorsement for the continued delivery of the Strategy, including progression into Year 2 priorities.

10. Urgent Items 79 - 80

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

Matters for consideration in Private

11. Exclusion of Press and Public 81 - 82

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

Matters for Decision Under Delegated Powers

12. Establishment Report 83 - 112

(Reason: Part 2 – Private – LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 2 – Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

This report sets out for Members' approval a number of establishment changes recommended by the Council's Management Team. Members should note that, in accordance with adopted conventions, all of the savings/costs referred to in this report reflect the salary at the top of the scale/grade plus associated on costs.

13. Urgent Items 113 - 114

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

MEMBERSHIP

Cllr M R Rhodes (Chair)
Cllr A McDermott (Vice-Chair)

Cllr B Banks
Cllr K Barton
Cllr L Chapman
Cllr J Clokey
Cllr M A Coffin

Cllr R W Dalton
Cllr B A Parry
Cllr R V Roud
Cllr K B Tanner

GUIDANCE ON HOW MEETINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED

- (1) Most of the Borough Council meetings are livestreamed, unless there is exempt or confidential business being discussed, giving residents the opportunity to see decision making in action. These can be watched via our YouTube channel. When it is not possible to livestream meetings they are recorded and uploaded as soon as possible:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPp-IJISNgoF-ugSzxjAPfw/featured>

- (2) There are no fire drills planned during the time a meeting is being held. For the benefit of those in the meeting room, the fire alarm is a long continuous bell and the exits are via the doors used to enter the room. An officer on site will lead any evacuation.
- (3) Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk in the first instance.

Attendance:

- Members of the Committee are required to attend in person and be present in the meeting room. Only these Members are able to move/ second or amend motions, and vote.
- Other Members of the Council can join via MS Teams and can take part in any discussion and ask questions, when invited to do so by the Chair, but cannot move/ second or amend motions or vote on any matters. Members participating remotely are reminded that this does not count towards their formal committee attendance.
- Occasionally, Members of the Committee are unable to attend in person and may join via MS Teams in the same way as other Members. However, they are unable to move/ second or amend motions or vote on any matters if they are not present in the meeting room. As with other Members joining via MS Teams, this does not count towards their formal committee attendance.
- Officers can participate in person or online.

- Members of the public addressing an Area Planning Committee should attend in person. However, arrangements to participate online can be considered in certain circumstances. Please contact committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk for further information.

Before formal proceedings start there will be a sound check of Members/Officers in the room. This is done as a roll call and confirms attendance of voting Members.

Ground Rules:

The meeting will operate under the following ground rules:

- Members in the Chamber should indicate to speak in the usual way and use the fixed microphones in front of them. These need to be switched on when speaking or comments will not be heard by those participating online. Please switch off microphones when not speaking.
- If there any technical issues the meeting will be adjourned to try and rectify them. If this is not possible there are a number of options that can be taken to enable the meeting to continue. These will be explained if it becomes necessary.

For those Members participating online:

- please request to speak using the 'chat or hand raised function';
- please turn off cameras and microphones when not speaking;
- please do not use the 'chat function' for other matters as comments can be seen by all;
- Members may wish to blur the background on their camera using the facility on Microsoft teams.
- Please avoid distractions and general chat if not addressing the meeting
- Please remember to turn off or silence mobile phones

Voting:

Voting may be undertaken by way of a roll call and each Member should verbally respond For, Against, Abstain. The vote will be noted and announced by the Democratic Services Officer.

Alternatively, votes may be taken by general affirmation if it seems that there is agreement amongst Members. The Chairman will announce the outcome of the vote for those participating and viewing online.

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General Purposes Committee

	Conservative	Liberal Democratic	Green	Ind. Kent Alliance	Labour
1	Robin Betts	David Thornewell	Lee Athwal		
2	Matt Boughton	Michelle Tatton	Steve Crisp		
3	Robert Cannon	Anita Oakley	Mark Hood		
4	Des Keers	Frani Hoskins	Robert Oliver		
5	Adem Mehmet	Garry Bridge	Stacey Pilgrim		

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Declarations of interest

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 11th March, 2026

Present: Cllr M R Rhodes (Chair), Cllr A McDermott (Vice-Chair), Cllr B Banks, Cllr K Barton, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr R V Roud, Cllr K B Tanner and Cllr R P Betts (substitute).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L Chapman.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

GP 26/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of a substitute member was recorded as set out below:

- Councillor R Betts substituted for Councillor L Chapman

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 this Councillor had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

GP 26/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

GP 26/3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 21 January 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

GP 26/4 STANSTED PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The report of the Chief Executive set out a request received from Stansted Parish Council for a Community Governance Review to consider increasing the number of Parish Councillors from seven to nine. The request, appended as Annex 1 to the report, followed a resolution of the Parish Council and referred to increasing workloads, use of committees and succession planning as key reasons for seeking additional Councillor capacity. The electorate of Stansted Parish Council as at 2 March 2026 was recorded as 452.

The Committee noted that Community Governance Reviews were undertaken in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Local Government Act 1972, and that the General Purposes Committee had delegated authority to determine whether such a review should be undertaken. Reference was made to national guidance and to the Aston Business School model for parish representation, which indicated that for a parish with an electorate of fewer than 500 electors an optimum council size would normally be between five and eight Councillors.

Comparative information on Parish Councillor numbers elsewhere in the Borough was provided in Annex 2 to the report. The Committee had regard to the fact that all seats on Stansted Parish Council were filled at the last parish elections and to the explanations given by the Parish Council.

Members considered the proposed timetable and methodology for the Community Governance Review, including publication of Terms of Reference, an initial consultation with residents and stakeholders, the preparation and publication of draft recommendations and the formulation of final recommendations with a view to implementation at the Parish Council elections in May 2027. The consultation arrangements set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report included the use of an online survey, letters to electors, direct communication with stakeholders, press releases, social media, local publicity and the availability of paper copies in the locality.

The financial implications were noted, with the £600 cost of the consultation exercise, to be funded from the General Revenue Reserve.

The Chair proposed, seconded by Councillor McDermott (Vice-Chair) and the Committee unanimously

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a Community Governance Review be undertaken to ascertain whether residents of Stansted wished for the number of Parish Councillors to be increased from seven to nine;
- (2) the budget of £600, funded from the General Revenue Reserve, be approved;
- (3) the draft timetable, as set out in Annex 3, be approved;
- (4) the Terms of Reference, as set out in Annex 4, be approved; and
- (5) the consultation process as set out in paragraph 5.1, be approved.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**GP 26/5 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT 2025**

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive summarised the legislative context of gender pay gap reporting and incorporated the outcomes of the Borough Council's gender pay gap analysis for 2024-25. The Committee noted that the Council was required to publish annual gender pay gap data in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 and that the latest data would be published on the Council's website by 30 March 2026.

Over the past twelve months, both the mean and median gender pay gaps had decreased by 0.02% and 0.41% respectively, when compared to the previous year. Despite these marginal improvements, the overall gender pay gap had largely remained unchanged. It was noteworthy, however, that there had been an increase in the proportion of male employees within the upper quartile.

The analysis suggested that the extent of the gender pay gap was primarily attributable to the lower number of men occupying the lowest graded positions within the Council. Furthermore, several council services were contracted out, and these roles, often lower graded, were predominantly filled by men. This arrangement might contribute to the Council's gender pay gap being higher than that observed in comparable councils across Kent.

Members questioned the extent to which the Borough Council's decision to align the Real Living Wage to the lowest spinal column point in 2025 might influence future gender pay gap figures. Officers clarified that the published figures related to the workforce position as at 31 March 2025 and therefore preceded the period in which the Council's lowest spinal column point was temporarily aligned with the Real Living Wage, and that any impact of that decision would be reflected in subsequent reporting years.

Members expressed differing views on the value of the gender pay gap. Some Members commented that, provided that the role attracted appropriate remuneration and recruitment was based on merit, the headline figures were of limited relevance, whilst other Members emphasised the importance of monitoring the gender pay gap as a means of identifying structural barriers and informing actions such as flexible working arrangements, menopause support and wider equality initiatives.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**GP 26/6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE**MATTERS FOR DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS****GP 26/7 ESTABLISHMENT REPORT**

(Reason: LGA 1972 – Sch 12A Paragraph 2 – Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

The report set out for Members' approval a number of establishment changes recommended by the Borough Council's Management Team. Members noted that, in accordance with adopted conventions, all of the savings/costs referred to in the report reflected the salary at the top of scale/grade plus associated on costs.

In addition, Members noted a number of changes and updates to the Establishment since the last meeting of the Committee, as outlined in Section 5 of the report.

The Chair proposed, seconded by Councillor McDermott (Vice-Chair) and the Committee unanimously

RESOLVED: That

- (1) four full time, Housing Allocations Officer posts be permanently established from 1 April 2026 at scale 5/6;
- (2) the Parking Manager post be regraded from M8 to M7 from 12 March 2026;
- (3) the Accountancy Assistant post be regraded from scale 4 to scale 5/6, and the post title be redesignated to Finance Officer from 1 April 2026; and
- (4) the fixed term Safeguarding Officer post be permanently established at 18.5 hours per week from 1 April 2026.

The meeting ended at 7.56 pm

General Purposes Committee

10 June 2026

Part 1 - Public

Matters Taken Under Delegated Powers



Cabinet Member	N/A
Responsible Officer	Damian Roberts, Chief Executive
Report Author	Daune Ashdown, Head of Electoral Services

Stansted Parish Council Community Governance Review

1 Background

- 1.1 In December 2025, a request was received from Stansted Parish Council to increase the number of Parish Councillors from 7 to 9. In March 2026, a subsequent report to General Purposes Committee (Report GP26/4) sought permission to undertake a Community Governance Review to ascertain if the residents of Stansted agreed with the proposed increase.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 This report sets out proposals that could help to contribute towards the efficient and effective delivery of local council services to the residents of Stansted Parish.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That an increase in the number of councillors at Stansted Parish Council from 7 to 9 **BE APPROVED** with effect from the next scheduled Parish elections in May 2027.

4 Introduction

- 4.1 Following agreement by General Purposes Committee for a Community Governance Review to be undertaken, a one-month consultation with residents was undertaken from 16 March until 17 April 2026. Letters were sent to every household in the Parish (245 households) and emails were sent to all registered electors that we hold addresses for (275 electors). In addition, the Council sent out regular social media posts and provided posters to the Parish Council to display in the Parish.

4.2 In total, the Council received 29 responses. This represents a 6.4% response rate. Whilst this is low, it is a similar response rate to other Community Governance Review consultations that are solely related to Councillor numbers, and not to boundary changes or the establishment of a new Town or Parish Council.

4.3 The following is an overview of the consultation response:

- 82.7% (24 respondents) agreed that Stansted Parish Council should increase Councillor numbers from 7 to 9. 13.8% were not sure (4 respondents) and only 3.5% (1 respondent) felt that it shouldn't.
- The main reason for respondents agreeing with the increase is that it would help the Parish Council manage an increased workload (15 respondents), with 3 respondents indicating that they support the proposal as it would help to diversify the skillset of Councillors. The other respondents provided a wide range of reasons including improving efficiency and attracting younger councillors.
- 89.7% (26 respondents) had heard about the consultation directly from the Borough Council, with the remaining respondents having heard directly from Stansted Parish Council.
- All respondents were aged over 35 years, with 79.3% (23 respondents) aged 55 years or over.
- 86.2% (25 respondents) stated that they do not have a disability, with 10.3% (3 respondents) preferring not to say and 3.5% (1 respondent) stating they are disabled.

5 Proposed Next Steps

5.1 Following this consultation exercise, and subject to approval from Councillors, it is proposed that no further consultation on this matter is required. As such, the next steps in this process are to:

- Inform Stansted Parish Council of the consultation outcome and the decision of the General Purposes Committee.
- Notify key stakeholders, including the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), Kent County Council (KCC), Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) and adjoining authorities.
- Make/publish a Community Governance Review Order and notify relevant bodies as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

- Update the elections system at publication of the register in December 2026, with changes taking effect at the next scheduled Parish Elections in May 2027.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 The process has been managed by existing staff with minimal costs associated with the consultation exercise (around £600) which have been covered from the General Revenue Reserve.

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 No risks directly associated with this report and process.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 deals with Community Governance Reviews

- 8.2 In addition to the 2007 Act, legislation relating to parishes can also be found in the Local Government Act 1972 (in particular, provision about parish meetings and councils, the constitution of a parish meeting, the constitution and powers of parish councils and about parish councillors) and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (reviews of, and recommendations about, electoral areas by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England), as well as in other enactments.

9. Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 9.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.
- 9.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

10. Equalities and Diversity

- 10.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived disproportionate impact on end users.

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General Purposes Committee

10 June 2026

Part 1 - Public

Matters Taken Under Delegated Powers



Cabinet Member	n/a
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield, Monitoring Officer
Report Author	Adrian Stanfield, Monitoring Officer

Request for dispensation – Cllr Dennis King

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

1.1 This report asks Members to consider a request for a dispensation under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable Councillor Dennis King to participate in meetings of the Council (including Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee and full Council) where the Local Plan is under consideration and in meetings of the Planning Committee where any applications for development in respect of the site identified as T01 (land north east of Tonbridge) in the draft Local Plan are considered.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 This report contributes to the above priority by setting out a request for a dispensation, which if granted would allow Cllr King to participate as local ward member in meetings of the Council relating to a site in his ward that has been allocated for development in the draft local plan.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Members are requested to consider Councillor King's request for a dispensation. If approved, it is suggested that the dispensation remain in effect until the next scheduled Borough Council elections.

4 Introduction and Background

4.1 Members will be familiar with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and supporting regulations concerning Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI). In addition to the requirement to disclose to the Monitoring Officer the existence of any DPI, Members must also comply with specified requirements where they are

present at a meeting of the Council and have a DPI in any matter to be considered, or being considered at the meeting. Specifically, a Member must not

- (1) participate, or participate further, in any discussion of the matter at the meeting, or
 - (2) participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting
- 4.2 The Council's adopted Code of Conduct imposes identical requirements in relation to Members with an Other Significant Interest (OSI). The Code further requires that Members with a DPI/ OSI in a matter under consideration must withdraw from the meeting room whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered and not seek to improperly seek to influence a decision about that business.
- 4.3 Under section 33 of the Localism Act, the Council may, on receipt of a written request to the Monitoring Officer, grant a dispensation to councillors and co-opted members relieving them from restrictions on participating, or participating further, or voting or further voting in meetings where consideration is being given to an item of business in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.
- 4.4 The Borough Council may grant a dispensation only if, having regard to all relevant circumstances, it considers that
- (a) without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in any particular business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business; or
 - (b) without the dispensation, the representation of different political groups on the body transacting any particular business would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of any vote relating to the business; or
 - (c) granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Authority's area; or
 - (d) without the dispensation each member of the Authority's executive would be prohibited from participating in any particular business to be transacted by the Authority's executive; or
 - (e) it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.
- 4.5 A dispensation must specify the period for which it has effect, and the period specified may not exceed four years.
- 4.6 Under the Council's constitution, dispensations under paragraphs (a) and (d) above may be granted by the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Joint Standards Committee and the Independent Persons.

Dispensations under paragraphs (b), (c) and (e) may only be granted by the General Purposes Committee, in consultation with the Independent Persons. The present request does not fall within paragraphs (a) or (d) and the matter is therefore referred to the General Purposes Committee for consideration.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 The grounds for Councillor King's request for the dispensation are set out in his letter at **Annex 1**.

6 Other Options

- 6.1 The Committee could refuse the request from Cllr King for a dispensation.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 7.1 None arising from this report.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 If approved, the dispensation would allow Cllr King to participate in meetings of the Council without being at risk of contravening the Localism Act 2011 and supporting regulations.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 As set out above.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 Consultation will take place with the 2 Independent Persons (David Mercier and Paul Cummins) in advance of the meeting of the Committee.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 If agreed, the dispensation would be applicable with immediate effect.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

- 12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 12.1.1 Adaptation and resilience have not been considered.

- 12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

- 12.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – letter from Cllr King

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Dennis King

Borough Councillor for Higham Ward



E-mail: Dennis.King@tmbc.gov.uk

Mr Adrian Stanfield

Director of Central Services and
Monitoring Officer

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Gibson Building, Gibson Drive
Kings Hill
West Malling. Kent ME19 4LZ

11th May 2026

Dear Adrian,

**General Purposes Committee 10th June 2026
Request for dispensation – Code of Conduct**

You have requested that I write to you as Monitoring Officer in support of an application for dispensation, to enable me to participate in any Council Planning Meeting, which will may be considering developments in Higham Ward, particularly those which have been identified in the Tonbridge & Malling Draft Local Plan.

My principle concern in raising this request relates to a development allocation in the Draft Local Plan designated TO1. This allocation which is situated in Higham Ward proposes the construction of 1671 houses across 2 large areas, which are directly adjacent to each other. The 2 sites are proposed to accommodate 750 houses and 911 houses respectively.

In total area TO1 equates to 74 hectares or 183 acres of open farmland. This allocation would be the largest single development in Tonbridge & Malling. Despite the possibility that there may be more than one application for sub-units of this area the resulting development when completed will function as one working development and would consequently have serious wider implications for infrastructure requirements across Higham, North Tonbridge, the Wider Tonbridge area and even beyond the boundaries of TMBC.

Given that my home is situated next to the north east corner of one of the plots making up area TO1, I feel that I need to seek a dispensation for any suggested conflict of interest before any related application to any part of TO1 comes before committee. However, the larger of the 2 areas making up TO1, known as Grange Farm, is separated by Higham Lane from the area where I live. I am therefore seeking dispensation to enable me to participate as the local member for Higham Ward as a voting member and with the opportunity to speak in committee on that basis. I will lay out my reasons to support this.

Yes, my property does abut to the north-east corner of the land which is allocated in the TMBC Draft Local Plan to hold 750 new homes. It is debateable whether the development will have a positive or negative effect on the value of my property. The main impact would be likely to be one of inconvenience during the construction phase. However, this effect is likely to be felt over a much wider area, given the scale of the works involved and the inevitable pressures on the roads with general disruption across Higham and beyond. The question to be asked is on what basis, such as distance from the development, would we draw the line? Given that I have no intention of moving from my home, I feel that the issue in my case is academic.

Members may be aware that in the course of the recent Regulation 18 consultation the responses from Higham residents represented the largest volume of submissions from any ward in Tonbridge & Malling. In fact this single ward represented circa 20% of the total overall number. This reflects a significant interest and level of engagement by residents in regard to the TO1 proposal, irrespective of how close they live to the site(s).

Given that I have been aware of the possibility of this development for many years and have fielded many question and queries from residents over the years, I feel that Higham residents would consider it a serious democratic deficit if I were not able to be seen to be part of the decision making process as their councillor. I believe that Higham residents would consider that it is very reasonable for the dispensation to apply and I also believe that I could easily demonstrate this to be the case. By contrast, should I not be able to be present in the chamber I believe that my residents would reasonably feel that they would be disadvantaged. My main concern remains my ability to represent my community during a period of significant change.

As I have outlined above TO1 is a very large-scale development the impacts of which are much wider than the Higham area. There would be very significant infrastructure implications affecting Tonbridge and the wider area, particularly when considering the reality of the TMBC and TWBC local plans considered together. This development must be considered from the wider holistic perspective.

Finally, I would like to point out to the committee that my situation is not unique. There will be other members who live close to large developments. As indeed they did when submitting responses to the Draft Local Plan. Therefore, there is the issue regarding where we draw the line in identifying any potential conflict of interest and the need to ensure a high level of councillor participation.

I respectfully ask the General Purposes Committee to give me the dispensation to proceed to participate in the forthcoming Higham applications on an equal footing.

Yours Sincerely,

Dennis King

General Purposes Committee

10 June 2026

Part 1 - Public

Matters Taken Under Delegated Powers



Cabinet Member	Not Applicable
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield, Director Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive
Report Author	Mathew Brooks, Head of HR & Development

Adoption of a New Volunteers Policy and changes to the Recruitment and Selection Policy

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' consideration and approval of a new Volunteers Policy and revisions to the Recruitment and Selection Policy, addressing an internal audit recommendation and aligning recruitment practice with the Workforce Development Strategy.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 The aim of adopting the new policy and updating the Recruitment and Selection Policy is to ensure that the Council continues to provide a supportive and inclusive working environment for all.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Recommend adoption of the Volunteers Policy.
- 3.2 Recommend approval of the revised Recruitment and Selection Policy.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 An internal audit review of the Council's Volunteer Management processes identified that there is currently no overarching corporate policy governing the management of volunteers across the Council.
- 4.2 Adopting a formal policy is beneficial to ensure that there is a clear and consistent approach across the Council. If the current members of staff who are responsible for the oversight of the volunteers leave, or the role of the volunteers be extended

into other areas of the Council's operations, then any new members of staff may not manage these responsibilities as effectively. An overarching policy ensures that essential aspects are addressed, and standards and management of the volunteers remains high.

- 4.3 The audit concluded that a corporate policy would provide a consistent framework, ensuring that essential standards and processes are maintained across all services.
- 4.4 In response, officers across the Council worked collaboratively to develop a draft Volunteers Policy (**Annex 1**).
- 4.5 In addition, a comprehensive review of the Recruitment and Selection Policy (**Annex 2**) has been undertaken to ensure full alignment with the Council's Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2028 and to reflect evolving organisational priorities.
- 4.6 This includes responding to changing labour market conditions, supporting workforce planning and development, and ensuring the Council is well positioned to manage structural change associated with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 4.7 The revisions provide greater flexibility within a clear governance framework to support recruitment, retention and organisational resilience, while maintaining the Council's commitment to fair, transparent and merit-based selection processes.

5 Proposal

5.1 Adoption of a Volunteers Policy

- 5.2 The proposed Volunteers Policy establishes a consistent corporate framework for the management of volunteers across the Council.
- 5.3 The policy recognises the important contribution that volunteers make in supporting service delivery and enhancing community outcomes.
- 5.4 The policy sets out a clear structure for:
- Identifying and approving volunteering opportunities
 - Recruitment and selection of volunteers
 - Induction, training and supervision arrangements
 - Health and safety and risk management
 - Safeguarding and DBS requirements
 - Confidentiality and data protection

- Ongoing support and management arrangements

5.5 It also clarifies the status of volunteers, ensuring there is no contractual relationship, while providing appropriate protection, support and oversight.

5.6 The policy introduces consistent expectations across all directorates and ensures that volunteer activity is appropriately governed, monitored and supported.

5.7 **Changes to the Recruitment and Selection Policy**

5.8 In line with the Council's Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2028, which places a strong emphasis on recruitment, retention and employee development, the updated Recruitment and Selection Policy maintains the Council's core principle of fair, open and merit-based recruitment, while introducing greater flexibility in defined circumstances.

5.9 The key change allows, in exceptional and objectively justified cases, for roles to be advertised on an internal-only basis, subject to Management Team approval.

5.10 Examples where internal-only recruitment may be appropriate include:

- Redeployment and workforce stability considerations
- Roles requiring significant organisational knowledge
- Supporting internal development, succession planning and retention
- Addressing hard-to-fill posts or skills shortages
- Secondments, acting-up opportunities and temporary roles

5.11 The policy makes clear that:

- Internal-only recruitment must always be objectively justified
- Decisions are subject to appropriate governance and approval
- Selection processes remain fair, transparent and merit-based

5.12 The approach also supports workforce resilience and development, particularly in the context of LGR, by enabling targeted internal opportunities while continuing to create external vacancies through backfilling.

5.13 In addition, the revised policy strengthens the Council's approach to selection by clarifying that, except in exceptional and agreed circumstances, all final stage interviews must be conducted in person. This ensures robust assessment of candidates and supports a consistent, high-quality recruitment process.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

6.1 There are no direct financial implications. Improved volunteer coordination and workforce planning support value for money.

7 Risk Assessment

7.1 Without a Volunteers Policy, there is a risk of inconsistent practice and reputational damage.

7.2 The revised recruitment approach is controlled and low risk, supported by governance and equalities compliance.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 Both policies align with employment law and the Equality Act 2010, ensuring fair, transparent and non-discriminatory practices.

9 Consultation and Communications

9.1 Both policies have been developed in consultation with services, Management Team and shared with UNISON and the Council's Joint Employee Consultative Committee for their feedback.

10 Implementation

10.1 Policies will be implemented following approval, supported by guidance and communication to managers and staff.

11 Cross Cutting Issues

11.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

11.1.1 A moderate source of emissions is likely to be maintained at current levels or increased.

11.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

11.2 Equalities and Diversity

11.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

11.3 Other If Relevant

- Human Resources
- Business Continuity / Resilience
- Health and Safety

- Healthy Lifestyles

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – Volunteers Policy Annex 2 – Recruitment and Selection Policy

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Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Volunteer Policy

The Council is immensely proud of its volunteers who, through their efforts, are putting something back into society, working with our staff to make the borough a better place, whilst also learning new skills and socialising with others.

The use of volunteers allow many improvements to be made which without them would not be affordable. Volunteers are essential in helping to maintain current service standards. Volunteers complement and add value to the services the Council provide and the Council is thankful for the time they give.

It is recognised that people and our communities thrive when there are more opportunities to volunteer, to give time and effort to making Tonbridge & Malling and its organisations and communities a better place.

It is important that volunteers are not discouraged by too much bureaucracy, but a framework is required.

What is volunteering?

Volunteering encompasses any unpaid activity where individuals willingly offer their time, skills or expertise to benefit others or contribute to a cause, organisation or community.

There is no contractual obligation on the volunteer to provide their services.

What our volunteering policy seeks to do:

The Council recognises the significant contribution that volunteers give to making the borough and its organisations and communities a better place. In doing so, it has a duty to ensure that the experience of those who volunteer is a safe and positive one, with the right amount of support and supervision.

The Council also recognises the benefits which volunteering provides its employees, and though the Council's own Employee Volunteering Policy supports employees to "give something back" to their community, whilst at the same time enhancing flexibility and development opportunities for its staff through providing up to three days paid time off for voluntary duties with recognised groups undertaking work of benefit to the residents of the borough.

The Volunteer Policy sets out the standard processes and procedures of the Council's volunteer programme. These include:

1. Identifying volunteering opportunities
2. Recruitment and selection of volunteers
3. Induction and training
4. Health and Safety
5. Safeguarding
6. Confidentiality and Data Protection
7. Ongoing Support

1. Identifying volunteering opportunities

Ideas for volunteering opportunities can come from either members of staff, elected Members or from potential volunteers themselves. It is important that the following steps are followed to ensure that the volunteering opportunity is a safe and positive one, for both the volunteer and for the Council.

2. Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

The Council's Volunteer Supervisor (for the specific volunteering opportunity) should produce a volunteer role description. This will describe the role so that any potential volunteers can assess their suitability before applying. The role description should include:

- Purpose of role
- A broad outline of tasks and activities to be undertaken
- The name of the person who the volunteer reports to
- Location and volunteering hours
- How the role fits in with the work of the organisation
- Expectations of behaviour and dress (if appropriate)

Individual volunteers

An individual volunteer is someone who volunteers directly for the Council, rather than volunteering as part of a constituted group which volunteers under its own insurance.

Group volunteering

Externally constituted volunteer groups, doing regular activities connected with Council land (for example Friends of groups working in Council parks/gardens), with

their own public liability insurance, will need to have their own safeguarding policy, risk assessment and insurance.

A partnership agreement with constituted volunteer groups will also be adapted for each group to outline the commitments on both sides and will be signed on behalf of the group and by the Council.

Groups (whether constituted or not) that have no public liability insurance will be asked to either get their own insurance or ensure that their volunteers register individually as Council volunteers when undertaking Council activities.

If businesses, local organisations, and educational establishments wish to provide volunteers for a one-off event or activity, then the organisation will be required to have their own risk assessment and public liability insurance that will cover their staff acting as volunteers and to also complete a group volunteering form as a disclaimer.

One-off individual volunteers

There may be instances where more informal volunteering is appropriate and more appealing to volunteers. For example, at a tree planting activity where many volunteers may be those who have walked past and expressed a desire to take part. In this situation, volunteers will be asked to complete a declaration to sign in to the activity which confirms the volunteer understands what is expected of both parties and ensures that they are covered by the Council's public liability insurance for the activity. These one-off opportunities are the only ones where individuals under 18, aged 16-18 only may take part, ONLY if they are accompanied and signed in by a parent or guardian.

For one-off volunteering activities the usual process of recruitment, induction and volunteer management does not apply. However, all volunteers are to be treated with respect and support during the activity and should have a named point of contact on the day for any questions or concerns.

Young people volunteering

Council volunteers must be 18+ years old. The only exception is for one-off volunteering opportunities (please see section above) where individuals aged 16-18 can take part but must be accompanied at all times and signed in by a parent or guardian.

The Council will on occasion deliver specific schemes that work with young people or deliver projects or programmes that benefit young people. These activities will all require their own safeguarding and health and safety risk assessments to be prepared and signed off in line with the Council's policy framework to ensure that the young people's experience is a safe and positive one.

Volunteers are encouraged not to bring children and young people with them when they are volunteering, as they are the responsibility of their parents at all times which may reduce their ability to focus safely on the task in hand. If it is essential for the volunteer to bring a child or young person (due for example to childcare arrangements falling through at the last minute and the volunteering role being essential) then the child or young person is not a volunteer and the volunteer supervisor should assess the risk and mitigate the risks accordingly. This may mean sending the volunteer home if the risk of the child being on site cannot be effectively mitigated.

3. Induction and Training

The lead Council officer for the volunteering opportunity must provide all volunteers with an introduction to the organisation as well as induction and training tailored to the volunteering opportunity.

4. Health and Safety

The Council are committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and wellbeing of its volunteers in accordance with Health and Safety Legislation. This includes carrying out suitable and sufficient risk assessments for all volunteering activities and implementing appropriate control measures to minimise risk. In addition, where a volunteer makes us aware of a pre-existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may also be necessary.

Where identified, the Council will provide volunteers with suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and clear guidance on its use. Volunteers will receive relevant information, instruction and training to enable them to carry out their roles.

Volunteers are expected to take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by their actions. They must follow the Council's Health and safety policies, procedures and instructions and report any hazards, incidents or near misses.

5. Safeguarding

All supervisors must ensure that volunteers are aware of and have received appropriate training in the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be required for any volunteer whose role may involve unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults.

Managers and volunteer supervisors must seek advice from the Council's Human Resources team to determine the appropriate level of DBS check for each role.

Volunteers must not commence duties until the appropriate DBS checks have been completed and clearance has been confirmed.

Further guidance is available within the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

6. Ongoing Support

All volunteers will receive appropriate support and regular supervision in their activity. The level of supervision will match the nature of the role and the experience of the volunteer. All volunteers will have a nominated volunteer supervisor, someone they can have regular access to if problems arise or when help and support is needed.

As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use the Council's grievance policy and procedure. However, they are entitled to use the Council's complaints procedure. Complaints by volunteers should be raised in the first instance with their volunteer supervisor and dealt with informally where possible. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully by their supervisor, or if the complaint is against their own supervisor, by another volunteer supervisor or their line manager.

If a complaint is brought against a volunteer, this will be investigated by the relevant supervisor. Every attempt will be made to resolve the matter as quickly and informally as possible. If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved, then the volunteer may be told their services are no longer required with immediate effect.

7. Expenses

The Council will not pay volunteers but is committed to paying reasonable "out of pocket" expenses such as car parking, ensuring that potential volunteers are not excluded due to financial reasons. However, these need to be agreed in advance with relevant managers before the volunteer commences their activity.

8. Moving On

The Council welcomes feedback and encourages volunteers to offer ideas for improvements.

Volunteers who are leaving the organisation and who have made a regular commitment to it should be offered, reference and/or statement of their achievements to ensure that their services are properly and formally appreciated.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed within 3 years of its adoption.

Human Resources April 2026

DRAFT



Recruitment and Selection Policy, Procedure and Guidance

**Human Resources
(Revised 2026)**

Contents:

1. Policy Statement
2. Role of Chief Officers
3. Role of Managers
4. Role of Human Resources
5. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications
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11. Offer of Appointment
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Recruitment Flowchart

Appendix 1

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council recognises that its ability to deliver high-quality services depends on having a skilled, capable and motivated workforce. The Council is committed to supporting employees to develop their skills and reach their potential, in a way that aligns individual development with organisational priorities. This policy applies equally to all posts within the Council.

Our approach is to ensure that roles are clearly defined, with responsibilities and expectations linked to the Council's priorities and values. Where possible, the Council will take a flexible approach to working arrangements to support recruitment and retention and to make best use of the skills and experience of its workforce. Our aim is to maintain an effective, high-performing workforce that takes personal responsibility, works collaboratively and delivers high-quality services.

All employees are expected to demonstrate the Council's values of Innovation, Transformation and Delivery, and to work in accordance with the Council's behaviours of Team Work, Can-do Attitude, Respect and Integrity.

Skills, experience, potential, and motivation will be the major determining factors in selecting individuals into jobs. The Council aims to provide all employees with the opportunity to develop long term careers appropriate to their abilities and ambitions. All posts are open to job sharers unless specifically excluded under the provisions of the post.

The Council is committed to maximising equality of opportunity and intends to select the best available person for every vacancy, regardless of any protected characteristic under the Equalities Act, involvement in a trade union, or criminal convictions which are 'spent'.

Therefore, all vacancies will be advertised internally and externally simultaneously unless there are overriding business reasons for not doing so (e.g., potential redundancy and redeployment situations) or where the Council's Management Team have determined a vacancy or opportunity to be suitable for internal only candidates as determined in section 6. below. We will use the most cost-effective advertising and recruitment methods available.

Our managers will be trained in all aspects of recruitment and selection, and only those who have carried out this training and demonstrated competency will be allowed to participate in the recruitment process. We understand that investment in these skills is important to ensure our turnover of staff is at an acceptable level. We recognise that high turnover has both obvious and hidden costs as follows:

- Recruiting – expense of advertising, administrative and management time
- Learning and Development – bringing the new employee up to speed, either through externally delivered training or work shadowing etc.
- Productivity – the learning curve of the new employee, and the loss of acquired organisational knowledge of the departing employee
- Morale – the enthusiasm of the recruit or existing employees when there is disruption within the team

- Culture – a mismatch between what is required and the personality of the recruit
- Management – the time and effort taken getting new starters accepted, observing their ‘fit’, communicating expectations and judging performance
- Reputation – dealing with recruitment errors that may harm our reputation

The Council is committed to ensuring that the necessary resources (time, skills and experience) are dedicated to effectively managing the recruitment process to attract and retain the right people for the right jobs. Information gained from the selection process will be used for development purposes during employees’ induction.

All employees must co-operate with the policy and procedures. They must not discriminate unfairly or persuade anyone else to discriminate unfairly. Intentional discrimination in decision making by an employee involved in selection, appointment or promotion on grounds which are unlawful will be regarded as serious misconduct which may lead to disciplinary action and, depending on the details of the case, could result in dismissal. Canvassing by an employee on behalf of an applicant for appointment shall be regarded as misconduct and may render the employee liable for disciplinary action.

The Council’s Code of Conduct prohibits employees from being involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with them.

2. THE ROLE OF CHIEF OFFICERS

Chief Officers will be responsible for the choice of interview panel and the testing methods to be employed.

3. THE ROLE OF MANAGERS

All managers are responsible for ensuring that they have employees with the skills, knowledge and ability for them to achieve the goals of the Council. The ultimate responsibility for recruitment and selection rests with the manager and they must be involved at all stages of the recruitment process. This includes:

- Making the decision to recruit and obtaining authority
- Identifying the job requirements
- Drawing up the Person Specification and Job Description
- Determining the selection methods to be used and having these approved by the Chief Officer
- Designing job related testing
- Interviewing and assessing candidates
- Making the final selection decision
- Notifying successful and unsuccessful candidates
- Inducting the successful candidate
- Notifying Human Resources of any Agency staff engagements

4. THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources offer support and advice both in the administration of the recruitment process and in the assessment of candidates. HR should also monitor recruitment

exercises and ensure that the Council's equalities policies are being adhered to, and provide support to managers in exercising their responsibilities specifically in the following areas:

- Administration of Job Evaluation and advising on pay and conditions
- Advertising externally, internally
- Tendering for media costs and advising on appropriate advertising media in the event
- Advising on appropriate recruitment methods and processes
- Advising managers of redeployment candidates and procedures
- Placing all posts on websites
- Preparing and sending out application packs
- Administration and monitoring of application forms
- Advising interview panels
- Obtaining employment references, medical clearance and DBS checks
- Monitoring equal opportunities
- Undertaking contract administration
- Ensuring the checking and recording of all appointees' (including Agency staff) Right to Work

5. JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

All jobs must have a Job Description and Person Specification. This describes the role's broad responsibilities and key tasks. The Person Specification includes the skills, qualifications and experience required, as well as the behavioural competences of the role. Managers should consider how this post will help achieve the Council's objectives, and what skills and experience are required to carry out the role competently. Getting the skills and experience right is absolutely crucial to attracting the right candidate, provides a sound basis for selection by ensuring only candidates who meet the minimum standards are short listed, and plays a key role in any advertising campaign. It is important that applicants have enough relevant information for them to make a realistic decision about applying for the post.

Managers should consider the hours required to provide the service. Does it need to be full time or could it be carried out on a part time or job sharing basis?

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications should be written in clear and concise language, avoiding jargon wherever possible.

6. ADVERTISING VACANCIES

Recruitment & Retention is one of the four key pillars of the [Workforce Development Strategy 2025-2028](#), which includes a commitment to ensure recruitment approaches are sufficiently flexible to respond to nationally recognised hard-to-fill roles, whilst also maximising opportunities for the development and progression of existing employees.

All appointments will be made in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution. The provisions below relate to recruitment decisions where authority is delegated to the Council's Management Team.

The Council's default position is to advertise posts both internally and externally. Exceptionally, and where there is a clear business rationale, posts may be advertised on an internal-only basis. This includes:

- redeployment under the '3Rs' Policy
- agreed internal development opportunities
- roles requiring critical organisational knowledge
- hard-to-fill posts where internal progression supports service continuity

All such decisions must be objectively justified and approved by Management Team.

Vacancies will generally appear first on the Council's job page and JobsGoPublic websites before they are advertised in other external media. In the event that the website advertising is unsuccessful in attracting a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced candidates will other media be employed.

Where vacancies are identified as hard to fill, either due to recent recruitment experience or as a result of a recognised national or sector-wide skills shortage, it may be appropriate to advertise the post externally at the first recruitment attempt.

In the event that other external media are used for advertising purposes, managers and Human Resources should consider the following for each vacancy:

- What advertising media should be used? There are a variety of local and national websites, jobs boards, professional association magazines/publications (physical copy and websites).
- When drafting text for an advert, care needs to be given to ensure the text accurately reflects the requirements of the Person Specification and Job Description. If there is a requirement for a DBS check then this needs to be included in the advert.
- Consider an appropriate closing date. At least 10 days should be left between the advert going live and the closing date, giving plenty of time for applicants to complete an unhurried application and return it. The standard length to advertise is for a minimum of 3 weeks with the role closing close to midnight on a Sunday.
- During holiday periods or over Christmas it is better to allow a later closing date or reconsider the timing of the campaign.
- Wherever possible, interview dates ought to be fixed before the advert goes out, then this can be included in the advert for the applicants' convenience.

7. SELECTION

7.1 Application form and CV's

The Council requires all applicants to complete a standard application form. These forms are all returned to human Resources and the relevant information for short-listing purposes is then passed to the manager. The advantages of using a standard application form include:

- The form directs the applicant to provide specific information
- The information is given by the applicants in a standard order
- Managers shortlisting can easily find their way to specific information
- Application forms contain a declaration that the information is accurate and truthful which the Council can rely on if, during the early stages of employment, it turns out to be false.

CV's may be accepted in exceptional circumstances, where a post has proved particularly difficult to fill, to make the process more attractive to the candidate. Candidates appointed through this route, are still required to fill out and sign the standard application form before commencing employment with the Council.

7.2 Information for applicants

As well as an informative and engaging advert, all vacancies advertised on the Council's website should include the following:

- Link to apply using the Council's standard application form
- Job Description
- Person Specification
- 'Join Us at TMBC' document detailing the key information and benefits all potential applicants should know about working for the Council.

7.3 Short listing guidance

Short listing is the period in the recruitment process that can cause un-necessary delays. It is important to remember that high calibre candidates will be expecting a speedy response, and that this Council may not be the only opportunity these applicants are looking at.

We need to ensure that their impression of us meets high expectations and will encourage them to attend any assessment and interviews. Statistics show that the longer the recruitment process, the more likely applicants are to drop out, so getting organised in advance is crucial. Wherever possible, applicants should be informed of the timescales and key dates for the process.

Managers should carry out short listing individually and then jointly as soon as possible after the closing date. To assist, there is a standard short-listing sheet which can be customised to accommodate specific vacancies. The panel should agree the short-listing criteria prior to seeing the application forms and the criteria must reflect the detail of the Person Specification. Each panel member should score how, in their view, the applicant meets each of the criteria.

All applicants with a disability who meet all the Essential criteria for a job vacancy will be offered an interview and considered on their merits. Managers will be informed by HR if they inadvertently do not short list such a candidate, in order that they can assess whether the candidate meets the minimum criteria. The disclosure of an unspent criminal offence should not necessarily disqualify a candidate from being considered for a position. All cases should be considered on their merits and aligned with the Council's DBS Policy.

Any applicant who meets the essential requirements should progress to the next stage of the recruitment process. Whilst there should not be a determined number to progress to the next stage, consideration should be given to the maximum number of applicants to be selected for the next stage. This may depend on costs, e.g., testing and expenses and time resources of the panel.

It may be relevant to have an additional stage i.e., long listing, whereby applicants are screened prior to interview. This often happens in larger campaigns or where there is an exceptionally large number of applicants meeting the essential criteria. Long listing can involve testing, telephone/MS Teams interviews or other selection techniques. If it is agreed that there are too many applicants, then the panel can move on to the 'desirable' requirements as detailed in the Person Specification, in an attempt to refine the short list.

Criteria for selection/rejection should be applied equally to all applicants. An applicant who has been rejected for a job and believes their rejection to be on the grounds of any Protected Characteristic, can take their case to an Employment Tribunal. If it is shown that the selection criteria were applied inconsistently, it leaves the Council exposed to allegations of unfair and unlawful discrimination. This would prove costly to the Council in terms of 'damages' and also to the reputation of the Council as a good employer.

8. ASSESSMENT

A variety of assessment tools are available, the majority of which can be managed internally. On occasion, it may be necessary to appoint specialist recruitment consultants for senior or specialist posts.

The minimum requirement for assessment is a panel interview comprising of at least two suitably trained employees, at a grade equal to or higher than that of the vacancy. Interviews should always be conducted with a minimum panel of two.

The following assessment tools can assist the manager in the overall assessment of a candidate:

- *Written Exercises* - Usually on the day of the interview and used to test the knowledge on a subject matter relative to the vacancy or prioritisation skills through an 'in tray' exercise.
- *Presentations* – Candidates may be required to prepare, either in advance of the interview or on the day, a presentation on a particular subject. Presentations will vary enormously, and unless presentations or public speaking are part of the job, they should not be used.
- *Group Assessment* – for certain posts it is useful to determine a variety of skills, in particular problem solving and influencing skills when working within a team.
- *IT Assessments* – if specific IT skills are required for the post, these skills should be tested in practice.

For those posts where written communication skills are an essential criterion, it is recommended that the competency of candidates is tested via a "simulated" test e.g., timed writing of reports, letters responding to enquiries etc.

The following tools may also be used but can only be administered by professionally qualified external consultants:

- *Psychometric Ability Testing* - A variety of tests are available and must be applicable to the vacancy. The tests vary in length and complexity and assess a candidate's ability in specific areas relevant to the post.
- *Personality Assessment* - This assessment requires a candidate to think about their own behaviour in the workplace and provides us with an indication of their working style and behaviour.

This must be discussed in advance with HR before proceeding as there are usually significant costs attached.

9. EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

Interviews remain a commonly used assessment method, but on their own they are not always the most reliable way of assessing a candidate's suitability for a role. Unstructured interviews, in particular, can be a poor predictor of future performance.

The purpose of this guidance is to support managers to make robust, fair and objective appointment decisions by assessing candidates against the requirements set out in the Person Specification, including their skills, knowledge, experience and behavioural competencies.

All interviews must be structured and use competency-based interview techniques. Competency-based interviewing enables managers to explore not only what a candidate has achieved, but how they have achieved it, providing insight into the behaviours, judgement and approach they would bring to the role.

9.1 Preparing for the interview

A preparatory meeting must take place before any interviews are held. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure the interview process is well-planned, consistent and fair. Panel members should agree the interview questions, how responsibilities will be shared (including chairing the panel and recording responses), what additional assessment methods will be used where appropriate, and the timescales for decision-making.

Careful consideration should be given to the overall structure and style of the interview. A structured approach that encourages meaningful discussion is more effective than rapid or formulaic questioning, as it enables candidates to provide fuller and more informative responses. Interviews should be conducted in a professional and respectful manner and treated as a two-way process, allowing both the Council and the candidate to assess whether the role and organisation are a good fit.

Providing candidates with an early opportunity to speak about their experience and motivations can help them feel comfortable and supports a more open and productive interview discussion.

Where appropriate, managers may also consider including an independent panel member. Depending on the nature of the role, this may involve an internal colleague with relevant specialist knowledge or an external adviser, to provide additional objectivity and expertise.

9.2 Interviewing in person

The interview and assessment process may comprise a single interview or a number of stages, depending on the nature and seniority of the role. These stages may include, for example, an initial screening interview, a formal panel interview, presentations or other assessment methods. Where appropriate, certain stages of the process – particularly initial or first-stage interviews – may be conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams to support flexibility and efficiency for both candidates and the panel.

It is Council policy that where only one interview is being held, or where a final stage interview is taking place, this must be conducted in person. This ensures that the panel is able to fully assess the candidate, and that candidates have the opportunity to experience the working environment and the organisation more directly.

However, in exceptional and justified circumstances, alternative interview arrangements may be agreed with the approval of the relevant Director in consultation with the Head of Human Resources & Development

9.3 Question checklist and guidance

The questions should be designed to extract the evidence/information from the candidates to enable an assessment against the requirements stated in the Person Specification. Ideally, all candidates should be asked the same core questions to ensure they have the same opportunity to respond. It will often be necessary to probe further into a candidate's response and this is perfectly acceptable.

Interview questions must be designed to gather relevant evidence against the requirements set out in the Person Specification. Questions should be fair, objective and consistent for all candidates.

When developing interview questions, managers must avoid:

- hypothetical or purely theoretical questions that do not seek evidence of past behaviour, experience or achievement
- closed or overly restrictive questions that limit meaningful responses
- leading questions that suggest a preferred answer
- questions relating to personal circumstances that are not relevant to the role, including family responsibilities, marital status or childcare arrangements
- questions relating to a candidate's nationality, country of origin or intentions to remain in or return to another country
- questions that refer to protected characteristics, including age, sex, race, disability or any other personal characteristic, or that ask candidates to speculate about how they would feel being different from others in the team

Many such questions are discriminatory and unlawful. Where a role includes specific requirements, managers should frame questions neutrally and focus on the candidate's ability to meet those requirements. For example, questions should explore whether a candidate can fulfil working patterns or duties associated with the role, rather than making assumptions based on personal circumstances.

Many questions of this nature are discriminatory and must not be asked. Interview questions should be framed neutrally and focus solely on a candidate's ability to meet the genuine requirements of the role.

Where a post includes specific working arrangements or requirements, these should be stated clearly and candidates asked whether they are able to meet them. For example, it is appropriate to ask whether a candidate can fulfil a requirement to work specific hours or patterns, rather than making assumptions based on personal circumstances.

Questions relating to childcare, family arrangements or other personal matters are inappropriate and may be discriminatory, regardless of whether they are asked consistently of all candidates. Selection decisions must be based on merit and evidence against the role requirements, not on assumptions linked to personal circumstances.

A range of e-learning modules on recruitment and interviewing best practice is available to staff involved in recruitment and selection. These resources, alongside advice and support from the HR team, are designed to support fair and effective recruitment decisions and best practise.

10. MAKING A DECISION

The final decision must be made on merit and based upon the information gathered from the whole recruitment process, which includes the application form, any tests the candidates will have been required to do, the interview and references. The short list / selection matrix has been designed to assist in this process by providing a record of objective criteria on which to base a selection decision.

The selection decision is made as to the candidate who best meets the criteria that have been specified in the person specification. The job should only be offered to a candidate who meets all the essential requirements. If there is more than one candidate who meets the essential requirements then the desirable requirements must be taken into account.

The selection must be done as objectively as possible and based on the evidence gathered throughout the process. The panel members must record their initial findings and then come to a consensus of opinion and record the panel's decision. A manager may find that a decision is challenged so it is very important that to ensure that the process is undertaken fairly, objectively and has been recorded in writing.

Managers should bear in mind that they may not be in a position to offer the post to any of the short-listed candidates, in which case they may wish to hold second interviews or revisit the short list scoring to see if there are other candidates for whom an interview may be appropriate.

11. OFFER OF APPOINTMENT

Managers should make a *verbal* offer of appointment making it clear that it is subject to medical clearance, references acceptable to T&MBC and DBS check if applicable. Where the successful candidate has previously indicated that a reference cannot be applied for at that stage of the application process, they should be asked if they are happy for that reference to be taken up having been offered the position and advised to wait for clearance of references before handing in their resignation. In the case of a DBS check, advise candidates that there may be a lengthy delay.

Care must be taken when making verbal offers as anything said is contractually binding. Managers may wish to offer by saying "Subject to our receipt of references and medical clearance satisfactory to us, we would like to make you a conditional offer of employment as (job title) on a starting salary of £(salary)".

Managers must then immediately advise Human Resources of the terms of the offer. Human Resources will then obtain the necessary references, medical checks and DBS check where required, agree with the line manager as to their acceptability, and only then prepare and send the necessary contract documentation.

12. REFERENCES

12.1 Employment references

If the applicant has given permission, references will be sought immediately. In cases of external candidates, two written references will be sought: one being from the current/last employer/education facility.

References will be sought, unless previously permitted, once a verbal provisional offer of appointment has been given. References must only be sought by Human Resources and never without the candidate's prior knowledge, and shared with the line manager as soon as they are received.

In the event that a reference is deemed to be less than satisfactory, the matter should be discussed with the Chief Officer and HR in order to determine whether or not the conditional offer should be withdrawn.

In the rare instance that it is not possible to obtain a written reference, a verbal reference (fully recorded by Human Resources) will be accepted but only after permission to do so has been granted by the Service Chief Officer.

12.2 Medical clearance

All successful candidates must complete a medical questionnaire. This is confidential and is returned to the Council's Occupational Health Adviser (OHA) who will assess the candidate's fitness for the particular post and whether any further medical information is required. Some candidates may have a disability, and if necessary the OHA may make recommendations for reasonable adjustments. Information regarding a candidate's

health is confidential and will not be revealed to the manager or Human Resources unless the candidate gives their permission.

Internal candidates who have previously been medically cleared will not be subject to further medical clearance.

12.3 Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS)

Certain posts will require a DBS check. These posts have been identified in accordance with DBS guidelines and Human Resources can advise whether a particular post requires the check.

12.4 Right To Work processes

HR will be responsible for obtaining proof of identity to satisfy the Right To Work legislation. Candidates will be asked to bring their documents to their interviews and Customer Services will take photocopies of them (dating them individually), completing a summary sheet for each group of interviewees, and returning all documents to Human Resources.

On confirmation of an appointment, the successful candidate's documents will be filed on their personal file and the unsuccessful candidates' documents will be destroyed.

HR will be responsible for recording Right to Work checks for all appointments, including staff who have been employed previously and are 'returning'.

For non-British citizens, HR will be responsible for carrying out an on-line check using the Home Office Right to Work checking Service saving a PDF copy to the individual's personnel file.

13. START DATE

Once the manager has received confirmation from Human Resources that the necessary checks have been completed, the start date can be agreed with the candidate. For internal candidates the contractual period of notice applies unless both managers agree to an earlier or later start date.

Human Resources will notify unsuccessful candidates as soon as the interview panel has made its decision and the successful candidate has accepted the verbal offer of appointment. The manager will offer the unsuccessful candidate's feedback on the interview, if requested.

There will be no discrimination in the terms offered to disabled applicants, but reasonable adjustments can be made to the contract, e.g., standard hours may be reduced or rearranged where the disabled person has difficulty with public transport.

Under no circumstances can an employee start before references, medical clearance and DBS checks have been completed to T&MBC's satisfaction.

14. INTERVIEW EXPENSES

Candidates will not normally be offered reimbursement of interview expenses.

15. USING CONSULTANTS

Where the Council is proposing to offer a consultancy agreement to an individual rather than an employment contract, the individual concerned will normally be self-employed and the nature of the agreement should reflect this. However, the distinction between employee and self employed is a fine one and there is no one factor which will be decisive.

If a consultant is being appointed, his or her terms of appointment need to set out clearly not just the remuneration and other similar details but also what his/her objectives are, the deliverables, how the project will be monitored, its length, the responsibilities of the consultant and the Council and how the agreement may be terminated.

The Council needs to establish, to its own satisfaction, that the person it intends to appoint has the necessary skills and experience to carry out the proposed assignment and also the resources to do so successfully. If the Council is expected to find some of the resources, e.g., secretarial help, this too should feature in the agreement. Further advice can be sought from Human Resources or Legal Services.

16. PROCEDURE CHECKLIST

Recruiting manager = M

Human Resources = HR

Chief Officer = CO

Customer Services = CM

Task or Activity	Who
Resignation received – send resignation email/letter to HR as soon as possible	M
Complete Termination Form (note annual leave for the remainder of the notice period will need to be agreed before this can be sent). Deadline 3 rd working day of the month in which the employee is leaving.	M
Review or create Person Specification and Job Description	M
Request Job Evaluation where necessary	M
Obtain authorisation from Management Team to fill vacancy (where applicable)	CO
Meet with HR to agree recruitment process	M
Agree advertising media (where appropriate)	M/HR
Prepare advert and send to Manager for approval	HR
Agree closing date, interview and assessment dates and panel	M
Advertise on internet sites	HR
Place advert in press/external websites (if applicable)	HR
Receipt of applications on-line / by post	HR
Enter applications received onto Recruitment Monitoring spreadsheet	HR
Send applications to manager	HR
Arrange meeting of panel to agree criteria and short list	M

For psychometric testing, agree testing date with PS	M
Short list, record on short listing scoring sheet, and return to PS	M
Advise candidates of interview/assessment/test date time and place and take up references where permitted	HR
Where candidates with disabilities need reasonable adjustments to attend interview, participate in testing, ensure arrangements in place	M/HR
Book suitable room and any aids for presentations	M
Advise reception of names of candidates and appointment times	HR
Make admin arrangement to meet and greet candidates	M
Copy and date Right to Work documents and return header sheet and copies of documents to HR	CS
Interview candidates	M
Assess candidates and complete assessment scoring sheet	M
Obtain evidence of qualifications	M
Call successful candidate with conditional offer	M
Advise unsuccessful candidates and give feedback where requested	M
Negotiate terms with successful candidate including provisional start date	M
Send appointment form to HR	M
HR carry out Home Office Right to Work check for non-British citizens, taking PDF copy for filling.	HR
Obtain employment reference, medical clearance and DBS check and share with Manager where appropriate.	HR
Advise manager of completion of reference checks	HR
If references unsatisfactory, send withdrawal of offer	HR
Prepare and send contract	HR
Obtain acceptance of formal offer	HR
Make arrangements for Induction including organising appointments with identified officers, identity card, and IT facilities	M
Appointment corporate induction arranged and confirmed	HR

Human Resources May 2026

APPENDIX 1

A guide on how to recruit – for hiring managers



General Purposes Committee

10 June 2026

Part 1 - Public

Matters Taken Under Delegated Powers



Cabinet Member	Not Applicable
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield - Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive
Report Author	Mathew Brooks – Head of HR & Development

Workforce Development Strategy Progress Update 2025/2026

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of progress made during the first year of the Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2028. It sets out delivery against the agreed Year 1 priorities, highlighting key achievements in embedding the Council’s core behaviours, introducing a revised appraisal approach, strengthening workforce processes, and promoting employee wellbeing.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to provide assurance that the Strategy is being effectively implemented, to highlight areas where further development is ongoing, and to seek Member endorsement for the continued delivery of the Strategy, including progression into Year 2 priorities.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 This report provides Members with the first annual update on the implementation of the Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2028. It outlines progress made against the agreed Year 1 (2025/26) priorities.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Note the progress made in delivering the Year 1 priorities of the Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2028.
- 3.2 Endorse the continued delivery of Year 2 priorities as set out in the Workforce Development Strategy.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2028 (**Annex 1**) was approved by the General Purposes Committee in March 2025.
- 4.2 The Strategy provides the framework for how the Council will support, develop and manage its workforce to deliver its corporate priorities. It is structured around four key pillars:
- i. talent and development
 - ii. recruitment and retention
 - iii. wellbeing and recognition
 - iv. ensuring staff are prepared for change
- 4.3 As part of its approval, it was agreed that progress would be reported to this Committee on an annual basis, supported by ongoing monitoring through Management Team.
- 4.4 This report provides the first annual update, setting out progress against Year 1 priorities and highlighting key workforce issues.

5 Progress 2025/2026

- 5.1 The Year 1 targets in the Workforce Development Strategy were stated as follows:

Year 1 (2025-2026):

- Embedding the new core behaviours across the Council.
- Launching and embedding the Council's new and updated online appraisal form.
- Launch a training programme for all new managers on managing employee policies.
- Revise the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedure to ensure that it can be adaptable to recruit to nationally recognised hard to fill vacancies across Local Government.
- Revise the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedure to ensure that opportunities for our staff are maximised.
- Manage and target vacant posts covered by agency staff to look to look at alternative ways to deliver what is needed by the post.
- Increase the promotion of employee wellbeing initiatives to promote mental and physical health.
- Roll out a variety of core behaviour initiatives to ensure they are integrated across the organisation.

- 5.2 **Core Behaviours:** Key achievements during Year 1 include the introduction of the Council's core behaviours, the launch of the online appraisal system, and progress on recruitment and wellbeing initiatives.
- 5.3 The introduction of the Council's core behaviours represents a significant step in establishing a consistent organisational culture, with early work focused on communication, awareness and initial integration into people processes. While progress has been made, embedding these behaviours fully across the organisation remains an ongoing objective requiring continued reinforcement through leadership, appraisal and engagement activity.
- 5.4 The Council's values and behaviours have also been embedded through key people processes. The updated appraisal framework requires employees to demonstrate how these behaviours are applied in practice, ensuring they are reflected in day-to-day performance.
- 5.5 In addition, all nominations for the Council's Excellence in Action awards must clearly identify the relevant values and behaviours demonstrated, reinforcing expectations and promoting consistent recognition across the organisation.
- 5.6 **New Appraisal System:** The launch of the updated online appraisal system has provided a more structured and consistent approach to performance management. This has enabled clearer alignment between individual objectives and organisational priorities, and improved identification of learning and development needs across the workforce.
- 5.7 Appraisal completion rates for 2025/26 show a significant improvement compared to previous years. The October 2024 staff survey indicated that 74% of employees had received an appraisal within the preceding 12 months. By contrast, analysis of the 2025/26 cycle indicates that approximately 93% of staff have now had a recorded appraisal.
- 5.8 This represents a strong uplift in compliance and reflects the positive impact of introducing the new online appraisal form, improved visibility of completion rates, and increased focus from managers.
- 5.9 Looking ahead, the appraisal process for 2026/27 has been formalised into a defined annual window of April to June. Establishing a single, consistent appraisal period is a positive step, as it will enable clearer alignment between individual objectives and annual service delivery plans, improve the robustness of corporate monitoring and reporting, and provide a more consistent experience for staff across the organisation.
- 5.10 It will also support more effective workforce planning, including training and development, succession planning, and timely escalation of any incomplete appraisals, strengthening overall assurance and accountability.

- 5.11 **Project Management and Leadership:** During 2025/26, the Council made good progress in strengthening project management capability across the organisation.
- 5.12 Basic project management training was delivered to around 50 members of staff between September and December 2025, supporting the introduction of a more consistent corporate approach and new project management templates.
- 5.13 Feedback from those attending has been positive, with a 50% survey response rate and an overall template rating of 8.4 out of 10, indicating that staff find the tools effective in supporting project planning and delivery. This initial phase has helped establish a common framework and improved confidence in project delivery across services.
- 5.14 Building on this, the Council is now moving to a more targeted second phase of development, focusing on more advanced project management skills. A tailored “8 Challenges to Project Management” training programme is planned for delivery in June/July 2026, aimed at staff who have already completed the introductory training.
- 5.15 Alongside this, a project management reference library has been developed to provide ongoing learning resources, ensuring continued development of skills and supporting a more consistent and embedded approach to project management across the organisation.
- 5.16 In support of strengthening leadership capability, a Management Essentials Programme and a Senior Development Programme are currently being developed. This work is being led by the recently appointed Learning and Development Manager and will form a central component of the Council’s approach to supporting and developing managers.
- 5.17 A key principle of these programmes is to ensure that the Council’s vision, values, behaviours and corporate priorities are clearly embedded. This will help ensure that management practice is consistently aligned with the Council’s strategic direction, supporting delivery of key outcomes and reinforcing the expected behaviours across the organisation.
- 5.18 The programmes will offer a broad range of development opportunities, with a particular focus on building core management capability and supporting managers to understand and develop their individual leadership styles.
- 5.19 **Recruitment and Selection:** The Recruitment and Selection Policy is currently being updated to ensure full alignment with the Council’s Workforce Development Strategy and to reflect evolving organisational priorities. This includes responding to ongoing challenges within the external labour market, strengthening workforce planning, and ensuring the Council is well positioned to manage structural change associated with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

- 5.20 The proposed revisions retain the Council's established principles of fair, transparent and merit-based recruitment, while introducing greater flexibility within a clear governance framework. This includes the ability, in defined and objectively justified circumstances, to undertake internal-only recruitment to support redeployment, succession planning and retention, alongside measures to strengthen the quality and consistency of selection processes.
- 5.21 Collectively, these changes are intended to support recruitment and retention, enhance workforce resilience and ensure a more responsive and adaptable approach in a competitive employment market.
- 5.22 **Employee Wellbeing:** There has been an increased focus on promoting employee wellbeing initiatives. This includes targeted health and wellbeing activity such as wellbeing days and awareness sessions led by the Council's One You team including health checks, exercise taster sessions and a planned information morning on cancer awareness in July 2026.
- 5.23 The Council also has a well-established Employee Assistance Programme, which is promoted through induction, appraisal processes and ongoing manager support.
- 5.24 In addition, initiatives such as the menopause café, flexible working arrangements, employee benefits (including discounted leisure membership and health-related provision), and a clear approach to annual leave usage contribute to a broader package of support for staff.
- 5.25 There is also a continued focus on strengthening communication and engagement around wellbeing, including increased promotion through staff briefings and Staffnet.
- 5.26 **Workforce Development Strategy – Priorities for 2026/27**
- 5.27 Building on the progress made during year one of the Workforce Development Strategy, a clear set of priorities has been identified for 2026/27, with a strong emphasis on preparing the workforce for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and supporting organisational change.
- 5.28 The priorities for 2026/27 are:
- Provide learning and development opportunities on devolution and change management
 - To prepare staff for local government reorganisation.
 - Continue to revise recruitment strategies to attract key talent, particularly in high demand roles.

- Develop succession planning frameworks to mitigate risks associated with an aging workforce.
 - Expand internal mobility programmes to improve talent retention and development.
 - Strengthen recognition and award mechanisms to encourage buy-in to core behaviours.
- 5.29 A key development has been the recent appointment of a Learning and Development Manager, providing dedicated capacity to lead and deliver a more structured and strategic learning offer.
- 5.30 There will be a particular focus on delivering learning and development activity to support LGR, organisational change and wider transformation, alongside embedding and further progressing the initiatives already introduced. This will include a broadened offer of learning opportunities for staff at all levels, moving beyond traditional classroom-based training to incorporate a wider range of development approaches, including digital learning, peer learning and targeted development interventions.
- 5.31 In addition, the Council is working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities through the West Kent Learning and Development Manager network. This group is focused on developing a consistent and shared approach to key development areas, including Microsoft 365 and digital skills, project management, change management, transformation and service design. This will help ensure a coherent and cost-effective approach to building capability across West Kent in preparation for LGR.
- 5.32 The Council is also supporting the recruitment of a dedicated Microsoft 365 Trainer through a shared arrangement with West Kent partners. This role is currently being recruited to by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, with the vacancy advertised across partner authorities.
- 5.33 Once appointed, the role will play a key part in developing digital capability across the workforce, delivering a structured programme of Microsoft 365 training aligned to organisational needs and staff feedback.
- 5.34 This initiative represents a tangible investment in improving digital skills and supporting more efficient and effective ways of working, particularly in the context of ongoing transformation and preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 5.35 Further work is also planned to strengthen internal workforce development arrangements. This includes reviewing the approach to supporting professional qualifications, with a clearer expectation that learning is aligned to organisational priorities and contributes to service improvement.

- 5.36 Alongside this, there will be an increased focus on internal mobility and career development opportunities, supporting retention and enabling staff to broaden their skills and experience across the organisation.
- 5.37 The Council will also continue to refine its recruitment strategies to attract and retain talent, particularly in hard-to-fill and high-demand roles, and to develop succession planning frameworks to mitigate risks associated with an ageing workforce.
- 5.38 In parallel, work will be undertaken to strengthen recognition and reward mechanisms, encouraging engagement with the Council's core behaviours and supporting a positive, high-performing organisational culture.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 A dedicated annual training budget of £120,000 per annum for the next two financial years will fund the full range of learning and development initiatives. This is met within the existing annual training budget and training reserves.
- 6.2 Following a favourable financial outturn in 2025/26, and in recognition of the increased level of learning and development activity required as the Council prepares for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), Officers and Cabinet have agreed a £100,000 contribution to the training reserve.
- 6.3 This investment will support the expansion of the Council's learning and development offer, including initiatives to build organisational capability in key areas such as digital skills, leadership and change.
- 6.4 A proportion of this funding will be used to support the delivery of the shared Microsoft 365 and digital training programme, ensuring a cost-effective approach while maximising the benefit of enhanced training provision for staff.
- 6.5 The Council will continuously monitor spending and assess the impact of these initiatives through regular reviews.

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 The Council lists recruitment and retention issues on the Strategic Risk register.
- 7.2 The Workforce Development Strategy should, in part, help to minimise risk in this area by implementing targeted initiatives designed to attract, retain, and develop a skilled and engaged workforce.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Supports the Council's legal duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010.

9 Consultation and Communications

9.1 The Council actively engages with staff to communicate the strategy's objectives and initiatives. Staff input will be sought to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy and to identify any emerging priorities.

10 Implementation

10.1 The current Workforce Development Strategy covers 2025-2028.

11 Cross Cutting Issues

11.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

11.1.1 A moderate source of emissions is likely to be maintained at current levels or increased.

11.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

11.2 Equalities and Diversity

11.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

11.3 Other If Relevant

- Human Resources
- Procurement
- Business Continuity / Resilience
- Health and Safety
- Healthy Lifestyles

Background Papers	None
Annexes	1. Workforce Development Strategy 2025-2028



Workforce Development Strategy 2025-2028

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01 Introduction

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03 Workforce Profile

04 Summary of Staff Survey Results

05 Embedding the new core Behaviours

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07 Actions & Milestone 2025-2028 and Reporting

08 Funding the Workforce Development Strategy

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Workforce Development Strategy

The Workforce Development Strategy sets out how Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council will support, develop, and manage its workforce to ensure the successful delivery of its strategic priorities.

The Council recognises that our staff are our most important asset. Their skills, dedication, and performance are the driving forces behind the successful delivery of services to our residents and businesses.

By investing in our employees, we foster a motivated and capable workforce that is empowered to deliver the Council's strategic objectives. This Workforce Development Strategy reflects our commitment to valuing and supporting our staff, ensuring they have the resources and opportunities to succeed.

We believe that by prioritising our people, we will enhance service delivery, drive innovation, and sustaining a positive, collaborative working culture. Adopting a new well-defined Workforce Development Strategy is crucial in maintaining a motivated, skilled, and engaged workforce that can meet the challenges of the future. By fostering a strong organisational culture and embedding our values, we will ensure that staff are equipped to continue to provide high-quality services to our residents and businesses across the borough.

The overarching aim of our Workforce Development Strategy is focussed on four key pillars:

Talent and Development

Develop Talent: By investing in targeted learning, we create opportunities for staff growth and progression.

Recruitment and Retention

Attract and Retain skilled employees: Adaptable approaches to recruitment strategies and clear career pathways for staff development.

Wellbeing and Recognition

Enhance Employee Wellbeing and Recognition: Providing a positive, supportive work environment which recognises its employees, improving job satisfaction, productivity, and service delivery.

Ensuring Staff Are Ready for Change

Prepare for Future Challenges: Ensuring staff have the skills and adaptability to navigate change, particularly in relation to local government reorganisation and evolving service demands.

By aligning our people practices with the Council's corporate objectives, we will continue to have a workforce that is resilient, adaptable, and committed to delivering high-quality

services.

2. Alignment with the Corporate Strategy and other Corporate Priorities

The Workforce Strategy cannot exist in isolation; to be truly effective it must embed and be strongly linked to the Council's Corporate Strategy and other key corporate priority areas.

Our Vision

To be an innovative and forward-thinking council, that leads the people and businesses of the borough towards a vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Our Values

- **Innovation:** Embracing new ideas and technology and proactively finding solutions that improve our services to residents.
- **Transformation:** Adapting so we can meet the standards residents, businesses, and all those involved with the borough council rightly expect.
- **Delivery:** Ensuring we set ambitious targets that we strive to meet, in order to provide high-quality public services for our residents.

Our Priorities

1. Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council
2. Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment
3. Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance
4. Investing in our local economy to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth

New Core Behaviours

TMBC employees are expected to demonstrate the following core behaviours and values in their daily work:

- **Teamwork:** Working collaboratively and sharing knowledge to achieve the best outcomes.
- **Can-Do Attitude:** Embracing challenges, adapting to change, and striving for continuous improvement.
- **Respect:** Treating colleagues and customers with courtesy and professionalism.
- **Integrity:** Maintaining trust through transparency, honesty, and accountability.

Alignment with the Corporate Strategy and Staff Feedback

This Workforce Development Strategy supports the delivery of TMBC's Corporate Strategy by ensuring our workforce is equipped, empowered, and motivated to meet the key priorities of the organisation.

By aligning our people practices with these priorities and fostering a culture of **Innovation, Transformation, and Delivery**, we will ensure that TMBC remains an agile, effective and high performing organisation.

Insights from the **Staff Survey Action Plan 2025** have been incorporated to address workforce concerns and opportunities for improvement.

3. Workforce Profile

TMBC employs 268 employees across various functions, dedicated to providing high-quality services to the community.

The overall staffing number is not anticipated to change significantly between 2025 to 2028.

However, the Council’s Management Team regularly considers issues related to staffing capacity and reviews staffing structures to identify opportunities for re-aligning operational practice with available resource. Any changes or increases to the Council’s permanent staffing structure need approval from the General Purposes Committee.

Workforce gender and full time/part time profile

Total number of Employees	268
Female	175
Male	93
Full time employees	184
Part time employees	84
Female full time / part time	98 / 77
Male full time / part time	86 / 7

Workforce age profile

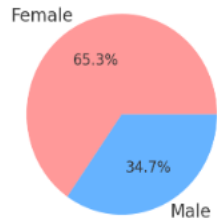
Age range	Total employees	Female	Male
60 +	37	21	15
55-59	56	38	18
50-54	45	29	16
40-49	72	51	22
30-39	39	21	18
20-29	19	15	4
Under20	0	0	0

Workforce pay profile

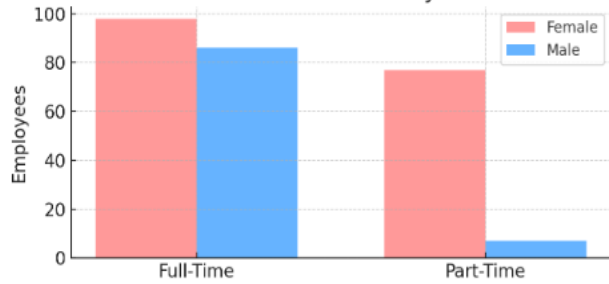
Pay grade	Total employees	Female	Male
M Grade	90	40	50
Main pay scale	178	135	43

Workforce profile graphical summary:

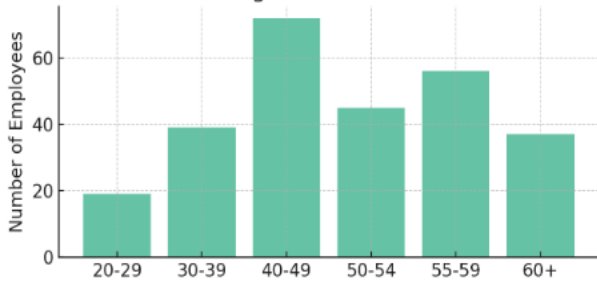
Gender Distribution



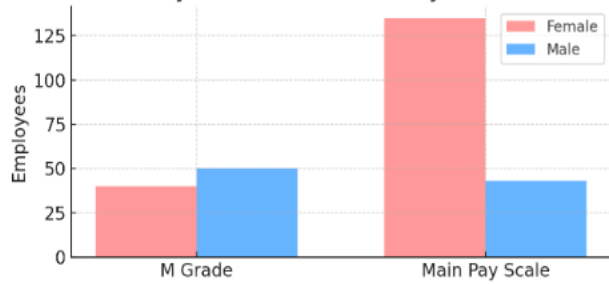
Full-Time vs Part-Time by Gender



Age Distribution



Pay Grade Distribution by Gender



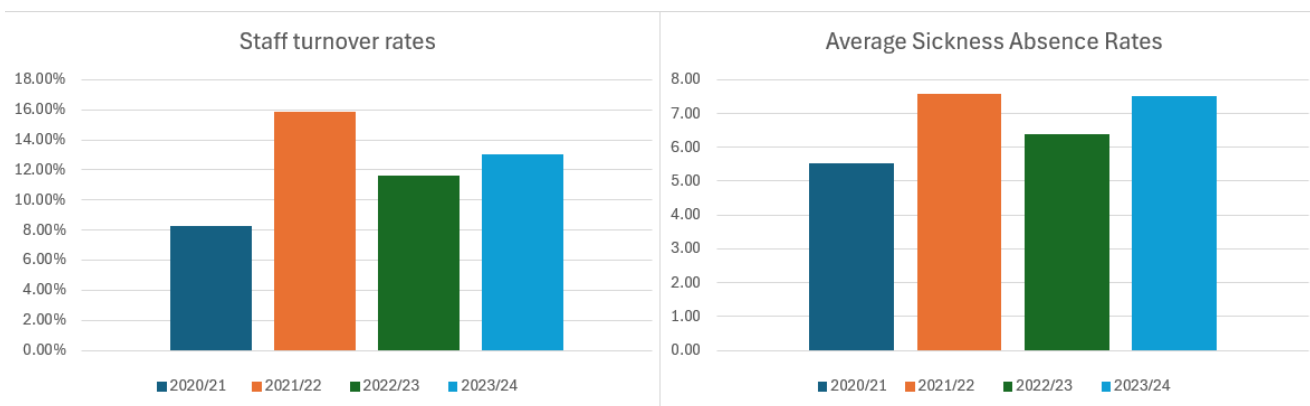
Staff turnover rate 2023/24

Year	Turnover Rate
2020/21	8.30%
2021/22	15.90%
2022/23	11.60%
2023/24	13.00%

Staff sickness absence

Year	Average sickness (days) per employee
2020/21	5.52
2021/22	7.59
2022/23	6.39
2023/24	7.50

Staff turnover and staff sickness absence rates graphical summary:



Workforce analysis

1. Gender Distribution

The workforce consists of 268 employees, with 175 females (65%) and 93 males (35%).

There is a clear female-majority workforce, with nearly two-thirds of employees being women.

Full-time employment is more evenly distributed (98 females, 86 males), but part-time work is heavily dominated by females (77 females, 7 males).

Key observations & issues:

The large percentage of women working part-time could indicate a lack of flexible full-time opportunities or barriers preventing women from working full-time (e.g., caregiving responsibilities).

If part-time roles offer fewer career progression opportunities, this could impact the gender balance at senior levels.

2. Age Profile

The Council clearly has a significant number of its workforce in the higher age ranges.

There are 37 employees (14%) aged 60+.

There are 56 employees (21%) in the 55-59 age range and 45 employees, 17% in the 50-54 age range. Over 50% of the Council's workforce is aged over 50.

Employees under 30 make up only 7% (19 employees) of the organisation, and there are no employees under 20.

Key observations & issues:

Aging Workforce: With over 50% of employees aged 50 and above, a significant portion of the workforce has the potential to look to retire in the near future.

There is a lack of younger employees, the low number of employees under 30 suggests possible succession planning challenges.

It is clear that strategies will need to be put in place ensure the transferring of knowledge, to

avoid the loss of expertise.

Gender Distribution in Age Groups: Women outnumber men in all age groups, except for younger employees (30-39), where numbers are more balanced.

3. Pay Grade Distribution

M Grade (Higher Pay Level): 90 employees – 40 females, 50 males.

Main Pay Scale (Lower Pay Level): 178 employees – 135 females, 43 males.

Key Observations & Issues:

The Council has a significant gender pay gap with men more likely to be in higher-paid roles (M Grade), despite women making up nearly two thirds of the workforce.

There are a significant number of more women concentrated on the lower main pay scale (135 out of 178).

Workforce Demographics:

Understanding the composition of our workforce is crucial in ensuring that we have the right skills, diversity, and talent to meet future challenges.

Several key areas require focused attention:

- **Succession plans:** A significant portion of our workforce is nearing the age where they may consider retirement, posing risks of knowledge loss and skills shortages. There is a need to develop succession plans for critical posts and ensure knowledge transfer is given a high consideration.
- **Gender Representation:** Women are not as well represented compared to men in senior posts. The establishment of a **Women's Network** can play a crucial role in supporting career progression and mentoring opportunities.
- **Skills Gaps and Future Workforce Needs:** An refreshed and revised recruitment policy, in-house training programs, and management development initiatives will play an important tools in addressing future workforce needs.
- **Flexible and Hybrid Working Patterns:** Reviewing and refining policies related to flexible working, remote working to ensure alignment with operational needs and employee expectations.
- **Health and Wellbeing Considerations:** Expanding employee wellbeing programs, promoting Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP), and regularly organising wellbeing events.

By trying to address these workforce demographic areas, the Council can create a future-ready workforce that aligns with our strategic goals.

4. Summary of Staff Survey Results

The Staff Survey, undertaken in October 2024, provides valuable insights into the experiences, engagement, and priorities of our workforce. Understanding these results allows us to make informed decisions and tailor our Workforce Strategy to better support

staff, ensuring they feel valued, motivated, and equipped to contribute effectively. The results underpin this strategy by highlighting key areas for development, such as career progression, wellbeing, and leadership engagement.

The Council is committed to conducting an **annual staff survey** to track progress and identify emerging challenges. This will enable us to adapt our approach, refine our initiatives, and ensure continuous improvement in our people practices. By embedding staff feedback into our strategy, we will create a more dynamic, responsive, and inclusive workplace that aligns with the needs of both employees and the wider organisation.

Results of Staff Survey

The latest **Staff Survey results from October 2024**, achieved an impressive **77% response rate**. The survey provides valuable insights into employee engagement, satisfaction, and areas for improvement.

Key findings include:

- **Engagement and Values Alignment:** 83% of staff agree that they understand and align with TMBC's priorities and values.
- **Workplace Culture:** 79% of employees feel positively about the organisation's culture and working environment.
- **Leadership and Communication:** 91% of employees feel well-informed about the Council's priorities, while 75% believe there is effective two-way communication between staff and leadership.
- **Recognition and Wellbeing:** 86% of employees feel that their work is appreciated, with 95% recognising the importance of employee wellbeing initiatives.
- **Career Development:** 74% of employees reported satisfaction with their career progression opportunities, highlighting an area for further development.

Key actions derived from the survey results include:

- Strengthening career development initiatives, including a **new online appraisal system** and enhanced **internal job vacancy promotion**.
- Implementing a **formal staff awards scheme** to improve staff recognition and morale.
- Expanding leadership visibility through **regular staff briefings**, and further **engagement events** with management team.
- Enhancing employee wellbeing initiatives, including continued promotion of the **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** and new **wellness-focused staff events**.

These survey results directly inform this Workforce Strategy, ensuring that the Council's workforce remains engaged, motivated, and aligned with TMBC's strategic priorities.

5. Embedding the new Core Behaviours

The Council has developed a set of new core behaviours during the early part of 2025. All staff are expected to demonstrate the following core behaviours and values in their daily work:

- **Teamwork:** Working collaboratively and sharing knowledge to achieve the best outcomes.
- **Can-Do Attitude:** Embracing challenges, adapting to change, and striving for continuous improvement.
- **Respect:** Treating colleagues and customers with courtesy and professionalism.
- **Integrity:** Maintaining trust through transparency, honesty, and accountability.

These new core behaviours will take time to embed. It will be important to ensure these core behaviours are fully embedded across the organisation, this be achieved by implementing the following:

- **Leadership Development:** Ensure managers understand the behaviours and they are able to model and reinforce these behaviours in their teams, ensuring expectations are clear and consistently upheld.
- **Recognition:** Introduce an employee recognition programme that highlights and celebrates staff who consistently demonstrate TMBC's core behaviours.
- **Behaviour-Based Appraisals:** Align all staff appraisals with core behaviours, ensuring that employees are assessed not just on outcomes but also on how they work collaboratively and ethically.
- **Employee Engagement Initiatives:** Continue to prioritise engagement surveys and feedback mechanisms to understand how well these behaviours are being demonstrated and identify areas for further improvement.
- **Induction Programme Updates:** Revise the onboarding process to ensure that new employees understand and adopt these behaviours from day one.
- **Cross-Team Collaboration Projects:** Encourage employees from different departments to work together on projects that reinforce our behaviours.
- **Regular Staff Communication:** Use all-staff briefings, staffnet, and all internal platforms to continually promote and reinforce the importance of core behaviours.

6. The four Key Pillars of the Workforce Strategy

Introduction

The following four key pillars are the essential themes and priorities which form the foundation of our newly updated Workforce Development Strategy and are critical to ensuring that TMBC continues to be a forward thinking and high performing organisation.

The themes have been developed by taking into account the Council's Corporate Strategy and priorities, the current workforce demographics, the new core behaviours expected of all staff and the staff survey results.

The four key pillars of **Talent and Development, Recruitment and Retention, Wellbeing & Recognition and Ensuring Staff Are Ready for Change** are all interconnected, reinforcing our commitment to developing a high-performing workforce that is engaged, valued, and equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

Investing in our workforce is key to achieving the Council's broader objectives. By nurturing talent, we enable employees to grow and take on new and more senior roles, ensuring that TMBC has the right skills in place to deliver services effectively. Recruitment and retention approaches are essential in a competitive job market, the Council must focus on attracting and keeping the best talent through a strong employer brand, career development pathways, and clear progression opportunities.

Staff wellbeing and recognition remain central to our Workforce Strategy. We aim to create a working environment where employees feel supported, recognised, and empowered to balance their professional and personal lives effectively. This is essential for maintaining motivation, productivity, and overall job satisfaction.

Finally, as local government continues to evolve, ensuring our workforce is ready for change is more important than ever. Change management, resilience training, and employee engagement initiatives will help staff navigate future challenges confidently.

Key pillar 1: Talent and Development

The development of our workforce is fundamental to ensuring TMBC continues to deliver high-quality services to our residents. By equipping employees with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to grow, we create a resilient and adaptable workforce capable of meeting future challenges. Investment in talent and development ensures that staff are engaged, motivated, and able to progress in their careers within the organisation.

- Establish a **robust learning and development framework** to identify what the key corporate priorities across the organisation are focusing on enhancing leadership, technical, and soft skills.
- Identify critical posts and develop a **succession plan** across the organisation to address the risks of an aging workforce and ensure knowledge retention.
- Implement a **new online appraisal system** that aligns staff ambitions with career development plans.
- Ensure all training and development activities align with our values of **Innovation, Transformation, and Delivery** to foster a forward-thinking and adaptable workforce.
- Develop a **comprehensive suite of training programme for all new and inexperienced line managers**, covering managing performance, sickness management, and recruitment best practices.
- Establish **mentoring and coaching programs**, to help develop clearer career pathways to aid with succession planning.
- Encourage knowledge-sharing and capture through **peer learning networks** and cross-departmental projects.

Key Pillar 2: Recruitment and Retention

Recruiting and retaining the right people is fundamental to be able to continue to deliver high-quality services at the Council. A clear and adaptable approach to recruitment ensures that we attract diverse and skilled talent, while robust retention initiatives create an environment where employees feel valued and have clear career progression opportunities. By focusing on employer branding, induction & onboarding, and professional development, we can position TMBC as an employer of choice and build a workforce that is resilient, motivated, and aligned with our organisational values.

- Update the Council's **Recruitment and Selection policy** to ensure that is adaptable to attract diverse talent and fill critical skill gaps.
- Provide a greater focus on **clear career progression pathways** ensuring the Council can promote and retain top talent.
- Modernise recruitment processes to **reduce the time-to-hire** and improve candidate experience.
- Adopt on an "**always on approach**" to recruitment by ensure vacant positions are always available online for staff to apply.

- Improve the **induction and onboarding processes** to ensure new employees feel engaged and supported from day one by developing a **comprehensive welcome pack** for new starters and develop a new brochure for prospective employees to highlight why the Council is an excellent place to work and progress.
- Ensure the Council's **Women's Network** can evolve to support career growth and leadership opportunities in underrepresented senior positions.

Key Pillar 3: Wellbeing and Recognition

Creating a positive and supportive work environment is essential for employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. TMBC is committed to ensuring that staff feel valued, recognised, and supported in both their professional and personal lives. By offering competitive benefits, mindful health initiatives, and work-life balance policies, we aim to foster a culture of wellbeing and recognition that aligns with our organisational values and enhances overall employee engagement.

- Ensure regular promotion of **mental health and wellbeing initiatives**, including counselling, flexible working options, and resilience training.
- Review and look to enhance the Council's **benefits packages** to ensure TMBC remains competitive in attracting and retaining talent.
- Promote **work-life balance** through hybrid working options, flexible scheduling, and family-friendly policies.
- Implement **financial wellbeing support programs**, including pension guidance and financial literacy training.
- Encourage **peer recognition and appreciation initiatives** to create a culture of positivity and engagement.
- Introduce a **formal staff award scheme** linked to TMBC's Vision and Values, with regular recognition events.
- Ensure that we continue to identify and nominate colleagues and teams for recognition at **external and professional awards ceremonies**
- Enhance the **long-service awards scheme**, ensuring all staff are recognised at key milestones linked to important anniversary of service dates.
- Expand **peer-to-peer recognition platforms**, allowing staff to highlight colleagues' achievements on StaffNet.
- Regularly promote the expanded **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** to support staff mental and physical wellbeing.
- Run regular **employee wellbeing events**, focusing on mental health, physical fitness, and work-life balance.

Key Pillar 4: Ensuring Staff Are Ready for Change

As local government continues to evolve, it is crucial that TMBC staff are equipped with the skills, confidence, and adaptability to embrace and manage change effectively. Preparing staff for change ensures that they remain engaged, resilient, and proactive in responding to organisational shifts, such as Local Government Reorganisation. Through structured training, enhanced communication, and employee engagement initiatives, we will create a workforce that is prepared for future challenges while maintaining high levels of service delivery and collaboration.

- Prepare staff for **Local Government Reorganisation** by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to transition successfully.
- Provide **change management training** to help employees navigate restructuring and organisational shifts.

- Implement **internal mobility programs** to support career development and adaptability in an evolving public sector landscape.
- Develop **resilience and adaptability training** to support employees through periods of change and uncertainty.
- Continue to establish **regular staff engagement forums** to provide updates on organisational changes and address concerns proactively.
- Increase leadership visibility by ensuring **regular staff briefings, Q&A sessions, and directorate-wide meetings**.
- Establish a **staff suggestion scheme** to gather employee feedback and drive continuous improvement.
- Regularly communicate **good news stories and achievements** from across Council services to enhance engagement.

7. Specific Actions & Milestones (2025-2028) and Reporting

The Workforce Development Strategy positions TMBC's workforce to successfully support the Council's strategic priorities while embracing change, fostering development, and ensuring staff are motivated and engaged. By embedding our **Vision and Values**—Innovation, Transformation, and Delivery—throughout our people practices, we will create a resilient, high-performing organisation that delivers exceptional public services.

Regular feedback, staff engagement, and performance reviews will ensure this strategy remains dynamic and responsive to any emerging challenges and opportunities.

Year 1 (2025-2026):

- Embedding the new core behaviours across the Council.
- Launching and embedding the Council's new and updated online appraisal form.
- Launch a training programme for all new managers on managing employee policies.
- Revise the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedure to ensure that it can be adaptable to recruit to national recognised hard to fill vacancies across Local Government.
- Revise the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedure to ensure that opportunities for our staff are maximised.
- Manage and target vacant posts covered by agency staff to look to look at alternative ways to deliver what is needed by the post.
- Increase the promotion of employee wellbeing initiatives to promote mental and physical health.
- Roll out a variety of core behaviour initiatives to ensure they are integrated across the organisation.

Year 2 (2026-2027):

- Provide learning and development opportunities on devolution and change management to prepare staff for local government reorganisation.
- Continue to revise recruitment strategies to attract key talent, particularly in high-demand roles.
- Develop succession planning frameworks to mitigate risks associated with an aging workforce.
- Expand internal mobility programmes to improve talent retention and development.
- Strengthen recognition and award mechanisms to encourage buy-in to core behaviours.

Year 3 (2027-2028):

- Provide targeted training initiatives for different staff groups to ensure they are well prepared for the changes linked to Local Government reorganisation, including preparing for recruitment and selection processes.

Reporting on Progress of the Workforce Development Strategy

To ensure transparency and accountability, the Council's Management Team will receive biannual updates on the progress of the Workforce Development Strategy.

Additionally, an annual report will be presented to the Members of the General Purposes Committee, providing a comprehensive update on progress, as well as any modifications or additions to the Workforce Development Strategy itself for their consideration.

How We Will Measure Success and What We Will Report

Progress on the Workforce Development Strategy will be assessed using a range of key indicators, including:

- Further feedback from future staff engagement surveys
- Insights from learning and development activities
- Key performance indicators related to workforce effectiveness
- Regularly updated workforce reports
- Staff turnover and absence rates
- Feedback and data on recruitment processes

It is hoped that providing updated information on these metrics will provide valuable insights into workforce trends, helping to shape future workforce planning and development initiatives.

8. Funding the Workforce Development Strategy

To ensure the successful delivery of the initiatives outlined in this Workforce Development Strategy, the Council is committed to providing the necessary resources and financial investment.

A dedicated **Learning and Development Plan** will be costed annually, with a total funding allocation of **£120,000 per annum for 2025 to 2028 (made up of annual approved budget allocation and use of Training Reserve)**. This will factor in training identified during the appraisal process.

This funding will support a wide variety of learning and development initiatives. These will include formal training programmes, management and leadership development, post qualification training, career progression initiatives and change management programmes to equip staff with the skills needed to meet current and future challenges.

In addition to the Learning and Development budget, annual financial provisions will continue to be allocated to support:

- **Employee Wellbeing Initiatives:** Funding will continue for mental health and wellbeing programmes, including access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and regular wellbeing events. (Budget of £3,150 in 2025/26).
- **Recognition and Award Schemes:** There is no new funding required for any of the proposed recognition programmes, such as the staff awards scheme. There is a commitment to review the long-service awards to ensure staff are recognised for their long service whilst employed at the Council. There is no anticipated rise in costs to the long-service awards as we look to recognise and award long service in new ways. (budget **TBC**)

The Council is committed to continually improve the culture of appreciation and recognising achievement.

The Council will regularly review and assess the budget to ensure it meets the evolving needs of the workforce while delivering value for money. This sustained investment underlines TMBC's commitment to prioritising staff development, wellbeing, and engagement.

Finally, in terms of recruitment and retention, the Council adopted a market supplement policy in September 2023. The Council's medium term financial strategy from 2025/26 includes provision for the payment of market supplements to the value of (up to) £150,000 per year.

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Agenda Item 10

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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Agenda Item 11

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

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INFORMATION**

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Agenda Item 13

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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