

PAY AWARD 2026/2027

Item GP 26/5 referred from General Purposes Committee of 21 January 2026

The report of the Chief Executive provided Members with information to recommend to full Council, the Borough Council's pay award for employees for 2026/27.

The Chair proposed and it was seconded by Councillor Boughton and agreed unanimously by the Committee that Council Procedure Rule 10.11 be suspended, to allow a representative of UNISON to address the Committee on behalf of its members, during which concerns were raised regarding the long-term impact of inflation accumulated over the past years and the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges faced by the Borough Council. Furthermore, suggestion was made for the Council to permanently adopt the Real Living Wage and attain the accreditation as a Real Living Wage employer. Following the statement from UNISON, Council Procedure Rules were reapplied.

Members noted that the Borough Council employees had a term in their contracts which read "Salaries will be revised on 1 April each year by an amount determined by the Authority having regard to movements in the Retail Price Index, comparative pay settlements and prevailing economic conditions" and the Borough Council therefore determined its own pay awards without being tied into the national process of collective bargaining. The Borough Council's current salary scales were attached at Annex 1 of the report and UNISON's pay claim for 2026/27 at Annex 2.

During discussion, Members were reminded of the acute recruitment and retention difficulties faced by the Borough Council, particularly for professional M grade roles. Additionally, the reasons why the suggested adoption of the Real Living Wage could not be supported were acknowledged. These included concerns about how it would affect the Council's ability to recruit for entry-level positions, the need to maintain fair pay differentials across the pay scale, the importance of keeping flexibility in making local pay awards, and the substantial costs involved, especially in light of the recent government announcement of the provisional finance settlement which indicated a significant reduction in funding for the Council in the coming years. Moreover, the overall wider benefits of working for a local government compared to the private sector were also recognised.

The Chair proposed, seconded by Councillor McDermott, that a pay award of 4% be applied to all salary scales, with effect from 1 April 2026. Following a formal vote, the motion was carried with 5 Members voting in favour and 5 Members abstained from voting.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) a pay award of 4% be commended to full Council for application to all salary scales, with effect from 1 April 2026.

***Recommended to Council**