

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 4 March 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chair)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Rob Pattenden

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

31 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

32 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 21 November, 3 December and 10 December 2025 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

33 Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that she would be standing down at the forthcoming elections in May and thanked Committee members for their work and support during her time as a member and Chair of the Committee. The Chair paid particular tribute to Councillor Coton as Vice-Chair of the Committee and thanked officers for their help and support.

34 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

35 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

36 **Policy Review Updates**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to eight HR policies: Parental Leave Policy; Paternity Leave Policy; Probation Policy; Compassionate Leave Policy; Annual Leave and Bank Holiday Policy; Court Attendance Policy; Honorarium Policy; Health and Safety Policy.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, explained that the Policies were part of a rolling programme of updates that aimed to review policies on a 3-year cycle to ensure that they remained compliant and reflected current practices.

In response to a question regarding whether there were any operational challenges to implementing and maintaining HR policies within the organisation, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that work was ongoing to ensure that policies were up to date with government legislation and could be easily comprehended and utilised. They were important in providing guidance to staff, and where there were issues there was flexibility to amend as needed.

In response to a question regarding the inclusion of more gender neutral and inclusive terms within the Parental and Paternity Leave policies the Assistant Director Human Resources confirmed that the HR team would review, and amend where considered appropriate, the current terminology, .

Resolved

(1) That, having given due consideration, the following policies be approved for implementation:

- Parental Leave Policy
- Paternity Leave Policy
- Probation Policy
- Compassionate Leave Policy
- Annual Leave and Bank Holiday Policy
- Court Attendance Policy
- Honorarium Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

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Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 3 of 2025-26

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to update the Committee on Cherwell District Council's workforce as at the end of quarter 3 of 2025/26, including measuring staff well-being and highlighting the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, advised that there were no issues, risks or concerns to highlight.

In response to a question regarding the effects of staff absences on the waste collection department, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that there were issues relating to both staff absence as well as vacancies that have been impacting the service, but that HR Business Partners were working with department managers to rectify and recruit.

In response to a question regarding reasons provided by staff leavers, and whether there were any follow up actions or tracking for patterns, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that several measures were in place to monitor responses to exit interviews and should any concerns arise they were escalated appropriately.

In a follow up question regarding the low completion rate of exit interviews and whether interviews were held in an impartial manner, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that exit interviews were not mandatory but encouraged, and that interviews were undertaken by a member of the HR team to ensure that they were open and impartial.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce profile statistics for quarter 3 of 2025/26 (financial year dates) be noted.

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Gender Pay Gap Report

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report which provided the Committee with the latest Gender Pay Gap report for information ahead of it being published on the council's website by 30 March 2026.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder Corporate Services advised Members that the Gender Pay Gap report outlined a mean difference in pay between men and women of 3.1%, with men earning an average of £0.65 more an hour than women. For the fourth year in a 4-year period, there had been no median pay difference between men and women. Even with a mean difference of 3.1% CDC remained significantly lower than the national public sector mean pay gap of 12.3%, and the median pay gap of 13.5%.

In response to a question regarding management development and training for female staff and whether processes were in place to encourage equal

opportunities for senior roles within the organisation, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that the Council was a equal opportunity employer and that the recruitment process was under review with the aim to understand and remove barriers that may prohibit progression and opportunities for all staff.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Gender Pay Gap Report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.18 pm

Chair:

Date: