

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 3 December 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Rob Pattenden

Officers:

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

20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

21 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

23 Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no requests to address the meeting.

24 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business.

25 **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: Grievance Policy; Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure; Maternity Leave Policy; Adoption Leave Policy; Parental Leave Policy; Shared Parental Leave Policy; Time off for Dependants; and Domestic Abuse 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.

Members were advised that the following updates had been made The Grievance Policy now included protection for third party harassment providing clear protection and a strong framework for protection; the Sickness Absence Policy had been updated to include support for Neurodivergent staff, enabling an inclusive and supportive environment through reasonable adjustments; the Maternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policies were updated to reflect changes to the EV Salary Sacrifice Scheme; The Domestic Abuse Policy had been updated following details and feedback from the Councils Lived Experiences Group.

No significant changes had been made to the Shared Parental Leave Policy and the Time off for Dependants Policy.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the following policies be approved for implementation: Grievance Policy; Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure; Maternity Leave Policy; Adoption Leave Policy; Parental Leave Policy; Shared Parental Leave Policy; Time off for Dependants; and Domestic Abuse Policy.

26 **Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 2 of 2025-26**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to update the Committee on Cherwell District Council's (CDC) workforce as at the end of quarter 2 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 upward trend of staff sickness within quarter 2 and whether measures were in place to address this increase, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that a similar trend was reflected within the same quarter of the previous year. Measures were in place to assess members of staff that may need ongoing support to ensure that they were able to return to work as soon as practicable.

In response to a question regarding Covid-19 related staff sickness and whether staff were still reporting that as a reason for absence, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that as testing for Covid-19 was no longer mandatory, it was hard to pinpoint individual cases, and that due to similar symptoms instances may be reported as cold and flu.

In response to a question regarding changes to Government Levy funding for apprenticeships and the impact on apprenticeship opportunities for staff, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that officers had been aware of the proposed changes to apprenticeship funding and had been monitoring the budgets to ensure that sufficient funding was available.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce profile statistics for quarter 2 of 2025/26 (financial year dates) be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.59 pm

Chair:

Date: