

## Notice of Meeting

### Employment Committee

Councillor Pickering (Chair),  
Councillor Gillbe (Vice-Chair),  
Councillors Allen, M Forster, Frost, Neil, McLean, P Thompson,  
Webb and C Thompson

**Wednesday 9 October 2024, 7.30 pm**

**Microsoft Teams**



### Agenda

*All councillors at this meeting have adopted the Mayor's Charter  
which fosters constructive and respectful debate.*

Item	Description	Page
1.	<b>Apologies</b>	
	To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members.	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	<p>Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p>Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.</p> <p>Any Member with an affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.</p>	
3.	<b>Minutes from previous meeting</b>	3 - 6
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 July 2024.	
4.	<b>Urgent Items of Business</b>	
	Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.	
5.	<b>Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee</b>	
	A verbal update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee.	

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS**

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6.	<b>Minutes of Sub Groups</b>	7 - 10
	The Committee is asked to note the minutes of the Local Joint Committee held on 11 July 2024.	
7.	<b>NJC Pay Award Update</b>	11 - 16
	To provide an update and overview of the current situation on the 2024/25 NJC pay award negotiations which, when agreed, will be effective from 1 April 2024. <b>Reporting:</b> Paul Young, Assistant Director HR, OD and Payroll	

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Jamie Beardsmore, 01344 352500, [jamie.beardsmore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.beardsmore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk), so that any special arrangements can be made.

Published: 1 October 2024

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**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**  
**11 JULY 2024**  
**7.30 - 7.46 PM**

**Present:**

Councillors Pickering (Chair), Allen, P Thompson and Webb

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Gillbe, M Forster, Frost and Neil

**Present Virtually:**

Councillor Mclean

**4. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5. Minutes from previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 07 February 2024 were approved.

**RESOLVED**, with the addition of the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the Annual Meeting of the Committee held on 15 May 2024 were approved.

**6. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**7. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee**

The Committee was advised that the Local Joint Committee had discussed item 7 on the agenda. There had been no objections raised to the HR Policy Review and the Local Joint Committee had indicated they were supportive of the recommendations being approved.

**8. Minutes of Sub Groups**

The Committee received and noted the minutes of the Local Joint Committee held on 07 February 2024.

**9. HR Policy Review**

The Committee received the latest revised policies from the HR Policy Review for consideration. The HR team have an established programme in place to review/update existing HR policies/procedures and guidance. As part of this process, policies and procedures are being consolidated, wherever possible, and new policies and procedures created to reflect changes to legislation or best practice.

The process for reviewing the policies had included engagement with; stakeholders, trade unions, the equalities group and DMT.

The following amendments had been made to HR policies:

#### **Paternity & Maternity Support Leave Procedure:**

- Procedure created to consolidate different guidance documents.
- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement.
- Amended to reflect changes to legislative changes on the taking of paternity leave and notice required which are effective from April 2024: Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- Inclusion of reference to Parental Bereavement Leave – Section 9.0.

#### **Agile Working Policy:**

- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement.
- Guidance on working abroad (Section 12 of the policy) expanded to include the requirement for employees to check if the country is safe and that ICT may restrict countries from which it is considered safe to work due to security information.
- The requirement that new starters/leavers are required to attend Time Square to collect/return ICT equipment being added, following cases where IT equipment has been shipped at the Council's expense to employee's homes.
- Strengthened wording around departments that cannot Agile Work.
- Reference to Lone Working policy.

#### **Smoke Free Workplace Policy:**

- The policy has been renamed from No Smoking Policy to reflect the greater scope of the policy.
- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement
- Inclusion of other forms of smoking within the policy, such as vaping, e-cigarettes.
- To reflect increase agile working, policy amended to include requirement to refrain from smoking/vaping when working away from office and attending virtual meetings on Teams/Zoom, etc.

#### **Maternity Pay & Leave Policy**

- The policy has been created to provide more concise guidance - previously two separate guidance documents existed.
- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement
- Amendment have been made to reflect legislative changes for the taking of neonatal leave and parental bereavement leave.
- Breastfeeding guidance incorporated.

#### **Organisational Change Policy**

- Moved to new template which incorporates the BFC equality statement
- Amendments to reflect legislative changes to give greater protection for employees who are pregnant or on maternity leave.
- Clarification on the selection process and when At Risk letters are issued

- A draft consultation document template and a Sequence of Events timeline added for greater clarity.
- Guidance added on employee support and family leave protection.
- Organisational design principles included.

#### **Flexitime Scheme Procedure**

- A procedure has been created to supplement the intranet page, which was previously the only source of reference/guidance for the Council's Flexitime scheme.
- Procedure is on the BFC standard template, which incorporates an equality statement.
- Amendment to the requirement to take breaks which are in line with Working Time Regulations (1998) i.e. a minimum 20-minute break after 6 hours working. The BFC Flexitime procedure requires a 30-minute break after 6 hours to support employees' health and wellbeing.
- Simplifying of the rules around number of hours required to work in a day
- Referenced to Agile Working policy.

#### **Managing Absence Policy**

- Moved to new template which incorporates the BFC equality statement
- Additional guidance included on reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability/long-term condition – Section 7.0. This includes the recording of time off for medical treatment (Section 7.1).
- Updated guidance on handling repeated long-term sickness i.e., 20 days or more, and the handling of such absences under performance improvement and capability procedure.

In discussion the following point was raised:

- The early implementation of paid neonatal leave ahead of new legislation was welcomed.
- A minor change in wording of paragraph 6.1 of the Smoke Free Workplace Policy was needed to clarify that the policy did not apply to those working from home.
- The abbreviations OML and AML would be added throughout the Maternity Pay and Leave Policy, to ensure continuity in language.

**RESOLVED**, that having reviewed the policies, the Employment Committee agrees the revised policies for:

- 1) Paternity and Maternity Support Leave Procedure
- 2) Agile Working Policy
- 3) Smoke Free Workplace Policy
- 4) Maternity Pay & Leave Policy
- 5) Organisational Change Policy
- 6) Flexitime Scheme Procedure
- 7) Managing Absence Policy

#### **10. 2024 Pay Award Update**

The Committee received an update on the 2024/25 pay settlement for workers.

The trade unions had submitted their pay claim. This claim had included:

- A £3k or 10% pay rise, whichever was greater
- A reduction in working week of 2 hours
- An additional day paid leave for wellbeing
- A review of pay gaps to tackle inequality
- A phased approach for to reaching a minimum £15ph wage for all staff.

In response the National Employers had given a final offer off:

- A pay rise of £1,290 per year for all NJC pay points 2 to 43.
- A 2.5% pay rise for all those above NJC pay point 43.

Following ballots UNISON and Unite had decided to reject the pay offer whilst GMB had agreed to accept the pay offer.

Following questioning the Committee noted the following points:

- It was normal for there to be delays in agreeing the pay award at the start of a financial year, with the previous years dispute having only been settled in November 2023.
- It was important to remember this was a national dispute, not a dispute between the Trade Unions and Bracknell Forest Council.
- The requested phased implementation of a £15 per hour minimum wage for local authorities could be overtaken by rises in the living wage set by the government.

**CHAIRMAN**



**LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE  
11 JULY 2024  
4:00PM – 4:17PM**

**Present:**

Councillors Allen, Pickering and P Thompson  
Angie Rolfe, UNISON

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Gillbe

**1. Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Minutes from Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 07 February 2024 were approved.

**3. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**4. Employment Committee: Agenda and Related Matters**

**HR Policy Review**

The Sub-Committee received the latest revised policies from the HR Policy Review for consideration. The Assistant Director: Human Resources & Organisational Development, Paul Young advised the Sub-Committee that the Human Resources team have an established programme in place to review/update existing HR policies/procedures and guidance. As part of this process, policies and procedures have been consolidated, wherever possible, and new policies and procedures created to reflect changes to legislation or best practice.

The process for reviewing the policies had included engagement with; stakeholders, trade unions, the equalities group and DMT.

The proposed changes to HR policies were as follows:

**Paternity & Maternity Support Leave Procedure:**

- Procedure created to consolidate different guidance documents.
- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement.

- Amended to reflect changes to legislative changes on the taking of paternity leave and notice required which are effective from April 2024: Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
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#### **Agile Working Policy:**

- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement.
- Guidance on working abroad (Section 12 of the policy) expanded to include the requirement for employees to check if the country is safe and that ICT may restrict countries from which it is considered safe to work due to security information.
- The requirement that new starters/leavers are required to attend Time Square to collect/return ICT equipment being added, following cases where IT equipment has been shipped at the Council's expense to employee's homes.
- Strengthened wording around departments that cannot Agile Work.
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#### **Smoke Free Workplace Policy:**

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- Clarification on the selection process and when At Risk letters are issued
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- Simplifying of the rules around number of hours required to work in a day
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- Moved to new template which incorporates the BFC equality statement
- Additional guidance included on reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability/long-term condition – Section 7.0. This includes the recording of time off for medical treatment (Section 7.1).
- Updated guidance on handling repeated long-term sickness i.e., 20 days or more, and the handling of such absences under performance improvement and capability procedure.

It was highlighted that the local authority was implementing paid neonatal leave in advance of it being implemented by legislation in 2025.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- A re-wording of paragraph 6.1 of the Smoke Free Workplace Policy was necessary to clarify that the policy did not apply to those working from home.
- The policies around the need for employees to notify the council 15 weeks before childbirth were guiding principles, not absolute requirements, particularly in circumstances such as unexpected pregnancies.

The trade unions raised no objections to the changes.

### **Pay Award Update**

The Sub-Committee received an update on the 2024/25 pay settlement for workers.

The trade unions had submitted their pay claim. This claim had included:

- A £3k or 10% pay rise, whichever was greater
- A reduction in working week of 2 hours
- An additional day paid leave for wellbeing
- A review of pay gaps to tackle inequality
- A phased approach for to reaching a minimum £15ph wage for all staff.

In response the National Employers had given a final offer off:

- A pay rise of £1,290 per year for all NJC pay points 2 to 43.
- A 2.5% pay rise for all those above NJC pay point 43.

Following ballots UNISON and Unite had decided to reject the pay offer whilst GMB had agreed to accept the pay offer. The National Employers would now discuss the position with the NJC and agree on how to proceed.

Paul Young confirmed he would keep the Sub-Committee updated on any developments that emerged prior to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

Following questions, the following point were noted:

- The requested phased approach to £15 per hour, was over 18 months, so would fall out of the usual negotiation timelines.

5. **Matters to be Raised by Trade Unions**

There were no matters raised by Trade Unions.

**CHAIR**

**Employment Committee  
9 October 2024**

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## **NJC Pay Award Update Executive Director of Resources**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides an update and overview of the current situation on the 2024/25 NJC pay award negotiations which, when agreed, will be effective from 1 April 2024.

### **2 Supporting Information**

- 2.1 The majority of Council employees are employed under the NJC Terms & Conditions of Service. As such, pay awards are negotiated between the NJC and Unions (GMB, Unite and Unison).
- 2.2 Appendix A of this report outlines the current position of both the NJC and the Unions in relation to the pay award and the additional changes to terms and conditions of employment which for part of the Unions pay claim.
- 2.3 Whilst GMB have accepted the award proposed by the NJC, both Unite and Unison have rejected the NJC offer and are balloting their members for industrial action. The ballots are due to close on 16 October 2024.
- 2.4 There are separate pay negotiations for Soulbury, which cover a small number of roles in education and the Chief Executive. The pay negotiations for Chief Officers, which covers executive and assistant directors, are subject to different negotiation and this has been agreed and implemented at 2.5%.

### **3 Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 3.1 Not required for the purposes of this report.

### **4 Strategic Risk Management Issues**

- 4.1 Having a competitive pay and reward strategy is important element of the council's workforce strategy. As the Council is part of the national negotiation arrangements any pay disputes of this kind will be based on a national dispute rather than targeted at Bracknell Forest Council alone. Whilst some of the neighbouring authorities have decided to opt out of these national negotiations, the fact that may continue means that the council are at no disadvantage locally.

### **5 Climate Change and Ecological Impacts**

- 5.1 No direct implications have been identified

Background Papers

Appendix A – Pay Award Update Slides

Contact for further information

Paul Young, AD of HR/OD and Payroll  
[Paul.Young@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.Young@bracknell-forest.gov.uk),  
01344 354060

Alison Beswick, Head of HR  
[Alison.beswick@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Alison.beswick@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)  
01344 351256

# Pay award update



Green Book workforce - Includes majority of council staff with exception of:

- Chief Executives
- Executive Director/Assistant Directors – *pay award agreed*
- Soulbury Officers



# Trade union claim



National Joint Council pay claim 24/25:

- £3k or 10% (whichever is greater)
- reduction in working week of 2 hours
- one additional days leave for wellbeing
- reviews of pay gaps for equality
- phased approach for reaching £15 ph



# National Employers response

- an increase of £1,290 (pro rata for parttime employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive.
- 2.5% on all pay points above pay point 43
- 2.5% on allowances



# Latest developments



- Trade unions request a review
- National Employers confirm offer is full and final
- Unison and Unite – membership voted to reject pay offer (balloting for industrial action)
- GMB – membership voted in favour to accept pay offer

