**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES AND COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE,
HELD ON MONDAY, 28TH JULY, 2025 AT 7.31 PM
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA, CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Chapman BEM (Chairman), Calver (Vice-Chairman), Baker, Guglielmi, Keteca and G Stephenson
Also Present:	Councillors Morrison and Placey
In Attendance:	Katie Wilkins (Assistant Director (People)), Clare Lewis (Careline and Community Manager) (except items 8 and 9), Jo Williams-Lota (Human Resources Manager), Debianne Messenger (Work Based Learning Manager), Marcia Fuller (People Development Manager), Bethany Jones (Democratic Services Officer) and Rebecca Catchpole (Leadership Support Officer)

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman (Councillor Chapman BEM) addressed the Committee with the following announcement:-

"Good evening everyone,

I'm very pleased to share some excellent news with you today. Tendring District Council has recently undergone a full reassessment — a rigorous reaccreditation process — of its Disability Confident Leader status, and I'm proud to announce that we have successfully maintained this accreditation for a further three years.

This is a significant achievement and one that reflects our ongoing commitment to being an inclusive, supportive, and forward-thinking employer.

The Disability Confident scheme, led by the Department for Work and Pensions, is designed to help employers recruit and retain those people with additional barriers to employment. Being recognised as a Leader — the highest level of the scheme — means that we are not only meeting the standards expected, but we are also actively championing disability inclusion both within our organisation and across our wider community.

This recognition is a reflection of our values and our people. I'd like to thank everyone involved in the reaccreditation, and all our staff who contribute every day to making Tendring District Council a place where diversity is celebrated and inclusion is embedded in everything we do.

Let's continue to build on this success and ensure that our workplace remains accessible, welcoming, and empowering for all.

In addition, I'm pleased to share another important development. Members will recall that at its meeting on 25 February, the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee was informed of the Authority's aspirations to become a Fostering Friendly employer through the Fostering Friendly Network.

Following the Committee's support for the adoption of this policy, I'm delighted to confirm that Tendring District Council has now received this accreditation. This further demonstrates our commitment to supporting employees with caring responsibilities and to fostering a workplace culture rooted in compassion, flexibility, and community values.

Thank you."

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Amos (with no substitution).

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was moved by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Guglielmi and:-

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on Monday, 24 February 2025, be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

5. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

No Questions on Notice pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 38 had been submitted on this occasion.

6. CAREER TRACK - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update on the work of the Council's Career Track which included:-

- 48 apprentices were on the programme – 26 of the 48 apprentices were employed at Tendring District Council;
- the current success rate was at 92% for the academic year 2024/25 which was an increase from last year's rate of 89%;
- the Council was still a 'good' provider following an Ofsted inspection; and
- that currently 1 in 5 of the Council's employees were/or had started as a Career Track apprentice.

The Committee endorsed a Member's suggestion to send a letter to the Leader of the Council and to the Chief Executive requesting them to positively advocate the continuation of the Career Track scheme to the new Unitary Authority following the Local Government Reorganisation.

7. REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (FINANCE & IT) & ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PEOPLE) - A.1 - VIBRATION GUIDANCE - BEST PRACTICE FOR MANAGERS

The Committee heard that, the Council's current procedures were fully compliant with the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005, reflecting its ongoing commitment to safeguarding employee health and wellbeing. Those regulations required employers to assess and monitor vibration exposure, implement effective control measures, and provide health surveillance where risks were identified.

Members were told that, the report (A.1) introduced the Vibration Guidance – Best Practice for Managers, a new document developed to further support managers in effectively identifying, assessing, and mitigating the risks associated with employee exposure to vibration in the workplace. The guidance reflected current best practice and had been developed in collaboration with Human Resources, Unison, and relevant service leads.

Officers informed the Committee that, within certain areas of the Council's operations, particularly in services such as Public Realm and Engineering, employees might be exposed to vibration through the use of percussive handheld tools or by operating machinery such as mowers and other vehicles. Regular and prolonged exposure to vibration could result in serious and permanent health conditions, including Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), which could significantly affect an employee's ability to work and overall wellbeing.

The Committee was made aware that, to support compliance, employees in high-risk roles benefited from annual health surveillance assessments carried out by an external provider. This proactive approach enabled early detection of any symptoms and reinforced the Council's commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment.

Members noted that, all equipment was routinely inspected and maintained in line with the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), ensuring it remained safe and fit for purpose. Where a case of HAVS was identified, it was promptly reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), following a thorough investigation by the Council's Health and Safety Team.

The Committee was also told that the introduction of the Vibration Guidance – Best Practice for Managers, whilst not a statutory requirement, reflected best practice by providing managers with clear and practical advice on conducting risk assessments, monitoring and recording exposure, implementing control measures, delivering appropriate training, and ensuring timely health surveillance and reporting. Developed in line with recommendations from the HSE, the guidance was designed to enhance the Council's existing procedures by embedding a consistent and proactive approach to vibration risk management across all relevant service areas.

The Human Resources and Council Tax Committee was asked to approve the implementation of the guidance, in support of the Council's continued commitment to maintaining a safe working environment and promoting best practice in vibration risk management, noting that the Council was already fully compliant with its statutory obligations in that area.

It was moved by Councillor Guglielmi, seconded by Councillor Baker and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee:-

a) acknowledges that the Council remains fully compliant with all relevant statutory obligations in relation to vibration-related risks and therefore approves and adopts the Council's Vibration Guidance – Best Practice for Managers to support the consistent and proactive management of such risks across relevant service areas; and

b) requests that Officers report to the Committee in 12 months' time following implementation to provide an update on how the guidance has operated in practice, including any lessons learned and proposed refinements.

8. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PEOPLE) - A.2 - FAMILY LEAVE AND SUPPORT POLICY (FORMERLY THE COUNCIL'S MATERNITY POLICY) (INCORPORATING MATERNITY, PATERNITY, ADOPTION, SURROGACY, AND NEONATAL CARE PROVISIONS)

The Committee heard that, the Council was committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and supportive working environment. As part of that commitment, the updated Family Leave and Support Policy set out the current rights and responsibilities of employees in relation to maternity, adoption, paternity, neonatal care, and parental leave. The policy reflected the Council's legal obligations under employment and equality legislation and ensured that staff were supported through key life events.

Members were told that, the review had been undertaken in response to recent changes in employment legislation, including provisions introduced in April 2025. Those changes entitled eligible employees to up to 12 weeks paid leave where their baby had been admitted to hospital for neonatal care within 28 days of birth. The policy also expanded adoption leave eligibility to include employees involved in surrogacy arrangements and overseas adoptions, ensuring the Council's approach remained inclusive and legally compliant.

Key areas covered by the policy included:-

- Entitlement to pay, time off, and return-to-work arrangements;
- Employee responsibilities regarding maternity and parental provisions; and
- Managerial guidance and expectations for supporting staff.

Officers informed the Committee that, the policy reinforced the Council's duty of care in safeguarding the health and safety of employees during pregnancy, post-childbirth, and whilst breastfeeding. Employees were expected to notify their line manager and Human Resources to enable timely risk assessments and appropriate workplace adjustments.

The Committee was made aware that recognising that family-related entitlements could be complex, the updated policy provided a clearer and comprehensive framework to support informed decision-making and proactive planning by both employees and managers. It applied to all employees, regardless of working hours or length of service, and reflected an inclusive approach to all family structures, gender identities, and arrangements – including same-sex couples, Foster to Adopt placements, and surrogacy.

Members noted that, to support implementation, employees were encouraged to engage with Human Resources early, to access advice and guidance. Dedicated Human Resources Advisors would be available to provide support to managers in addressing any service-related challenges, whilst they managed the increased statutory entitlements to family-related leave. That might include the need to source temporary cover or relocating internal resources, to ensure continuity of service delivery during an employee's period of absence. Additionally, resources and supporting materials would be made available via the Council's intranet.

The Human Resources and Council Tax Committee was asked to approve the implementation of the revised Family Leave and Support Policy, reaffirming the Council's commitment to supporting staff through key life events and maintaining a fair, inclusive, and legally compliant workplace.

It was moved by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Guglielmi and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee:-

a) adopts the Council's Family Leave and Support Policy (*formerly the Maternity Policy)*, which consolidates and updates various leave and payment arrangements including maternity, adoption, neonatal care, parental, and paternity provisions;

b) authorises the Assistant Director (People), in consultation with the Head of Paid Service, to make any necessary and consequential amendments to associated people policies and procedures arising from the implementation of the updated policy; and

c) authorises the Assistant Director (People), in consultation with the Head of Paid Service, to make any further amendments to the policy (*and any associated policies)* as may be required to ensure compliance with future changes to employment legislation, including those anticipated under the Employment Rights Act, particularly in relation to family leave and support provisions.

9. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PEOPLE) - A.3 - PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Committee heard that the aim of this Officer report (A.3) was to provide Members with an overview of current people development activities across the Council, key achievements, emerging priorities, and future plans. The programme supported the strategic aim to build a skilled inclusive and motivated workforce, whilst ensuring the staff were in the best possible position as Officers prepared staff for the transition through the Local Government Organisation (LGR).

Members were told that the training and development statistics provided within the Officer report were based on the past year, i.e. 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. Training identified would be a combination of mandatory training, employees requesting additional support through learning, and managers recommendations for their team members.

Apprenticeships

Officers informed the Committee that the Council offered apprenticeship training through the use of the Council's successful Career Track programme, but also through the use of external providers where qualifications needed to be gained in specialist areas of work. Those currently included:-

- Level 2 Leisure Team Member;
- Level 2 Horticulture Construction Operative;
- Level 2 Digital Marketing; and
- Level 3 CIPD Learning and Development.

The Committee was made aware that further apprenticeship courses were available through the use of the Government's Apprenticeship Levy. The levy fund had been incorporated into law by Part 6 of the Finance Act 2016, and had come into effect on 6 April 2017. As a larger employer, the Council was able to access those Government funds for apprenticeships through the Council's Apprenticeship Service Account. The account created a funding amount through a levy fund based on the Council's pay bill and contributions to HMRC, which the Council could either:

- spend on TDC own apprenticeship training and assessment costs; or
- transfer up to 50% of the funds to another employer known as levy sharing or levy transfer.

Members were informed that the Council had chosen not to share or transfer the funding available, and had ensured that 100% of the levy funding was invested into the Council's own employees through apprenticeship training, and in some cases had accessed transferable levy funds from other organisations. There was a dedicated list of apprenticeships which could be accessed using the levy fund, and that information was regularly accessed and shared with managers to ensure the courses were utilised wherever possible.

The Council was committed to making full use of their allocated Government levy fund, with 100% of the available funding actively being invested in workforce development through those available apprenticeships. That approach ensured that resources were being used efficiently to enhance the Council's employees' skills, improving service delivery, and contributing to staff development and retention. The Council remained committed to leveraging every opportunity to support learning and development across its service areas, thus providing cost effective training without impacting the Council budgets.

It was reported that current reports stated that, with effect from January 2026 the existing Government levy funding for Level 7 apprenticeships would increase for anyone aged 22 and over. As a result, the Council would ensure that any employees who would like to undertake one of the funded Level 7 apprenticeships was identified, in order to utilise the levy fund whilst it was still available.

E-Learning and Development

The Committee heard that the Council currently had two e-learning platforms, each offering a variety of online training courses accessible to the staff via the Council's Intranet. The systems were called iHasco and Skillgate, and each platform offered the

opportunity for staff to search for relevant training, complete the course online at a time that suited them, and attain a pass mark and for some courses, a certificate.

Members were told that the courses available were easily accessible and supported the continuous professional development of the workforce. The iHasco e-learning platform specialised in offering training relating to health, safety and wellbeing, whereas the Skillgate e-learning platform was more focused on improving skills and knowledge.

Skillgate and iHasco were used to deliver the Council's mandatory training courses to employees, allowing the Council to ensure that it remained a compliant workforce, remaining up to date with ever-changing legislation and best practice. Employees received regular email reminders from the e-learning systems until the mandatory courses had been completed.

iHasco E-Learning Data	
Total number of courses completed during this period:	2,635
Total number of different types of courses accessed:	67
Of those, number of mandatory training courses completed: • Sexual Harassment Awareness • Fire Awareness • Essential Health and Safety Training • Environmental Awareness	 606 205 195 138

Skillgate E-Learning Data	
Total number of courses completed during this period:	2,379
Total number of different types of courses accessed:	345
Of those, number of mandatory training courses completed: • Understanding the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Adults Level 1 and 2 • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity • Environmental Awareness at Work • Lone Working Safety for Home and Remote Workers	 405 376 369 364

Sponsored Qualification Training

The Council actively sponsored its staff to gain professional qualifications aligned with their roles, personal development and aspirations. Through structured training programmes, funding support, and dedicated time for learning, the Council was able to support its employees in developing expertise and to progress their careers. The Council was keen to nurture its existing staff through the use of targeted training to

enable them to progress within career progression pathways, support succession planning and encourage staff retention.

Sponsored qualification training courses which were either completed in the past year, or were within a current period of study included:-

- Msc Environment Health x 2;
- Msc Town and Country Planning x 2;
- Access to HE Diploma;
- AEA Foundation Course x 3;
- Higher Certificate in Food Control;
- AAT Level 3;
- Level 3 Certificate in Housing x 2;
- Level 4 Certificate in Housing;
- Msc Emergency Planning;
- CIH Housing Certificate in Practice;
- Data Protection;
- Bsc Access Module x 2;
- Level 7 Total Leadership; and
- PACE Interviewing.

The Committee noted that all staff had the opportunity to apply to undertake a qualification sponsored by the Council. A Qualification Sponsorship Application Form had to be completed and submitted outlining why the qualification was essential for their role, and how undertaking the course would support the strategic and operational priorities. Section A of the application was completed by the employee, outlining how the qualification would support the competencies for their role and benefit their service area. Section B was completed by the employee's Senior Manager or Assistant Director, endorsing how the requested qualification would meet the development needs of the employee and the service objectives.

Members were made aware that all requests were considered on their merits, the business needs of the Council and the training budget available. Those that were successful, entered into a legally binding Training Agreement with the Council. The agreement stated that an employee would be asked to reimburse the Council for the training costs if they failed to complete the course or terminated their employment within 2 years of completion of their qualification. That agreement acted as an incentive to gain commitment from the employee whilst protecting public funds.

The Council's current training and development programmes played a vital role in supporting Principle E of the Annual Governance Statement 2023-24: 'Developing the Council's entity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it'. Through the use of a planned and structured training programme and continuous professional development, the Council ensured that its staff were equipped with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities needed to deliver a high standard of service. That investment on the Council's workforce strengthened the Council's resilience, supported succession planning, and underpinned good governance practices across the Council.

Workforce Development

Members also heard that the Council was firmly committed to investing in the growth, capability, and career progression of its workforce. Officers recognised that empowering staff through continuous training and development was fundamental to continuing to deliver high-quality services and fostering a resilient workforce who felt confident as the Council prepared for LGR. In addition to e-learning and apprenticeships, the following training courses had been delivered between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025:-

- Mental Health First Aid Training;
- Mental Health First Aid Refresher Training;
- Strategic Emergency Management Course;
- PLPO Training;
- Professional Boundaries Training;
- Customer Care Excellence;
- Freedom of Information Practical Training;
- CSAS Training;
- Vehicle Examination Training;
- MBTI Team Development for Sports and Leisure;
- Effective Complaint Handling;
- Mediation Training; and
- Sexual Harassment Training for Managers.

People Strategy Priorities

The Council's People Strategy 2024 – 2029 set out the Council's aims for the support and development of its staff for the 5-year period. The Strategy aimed to compliment the Corporate Plan and the organisation's key objectives and priorities.

Workforce Planning

The People Development Manager was currently undertaking one-to-one meetings with the Assistant Directors to review their structures, teams, identify critical roles and undertake skills gaps analysis. The review also ensured that career grades were being monitored whilst succession planning was considered.

Members were told that, as LGR would be guiding the Council's organisation into a Unitary Authority over the next 3 years, consideration was being given to the timescale when considering the length of qualification training courses and career progressions.

In response to the ongoing recruitment challenges in key service areas such as Planning and Environmental Health, the Council was committed to a 'grow their own' approach to reduce the Council's budgets, and by investing in staff, the Council aimed to build a more stable, skilled, and cost-effective workforce that could meet the longer-term needs of the organisation. It was therefore essential that where Career Grade Schemes were linked to a specific job role, that the employee in post was encouraged through their performance appraisals, to develop their skills and qualifications to progress through the grade range.

Career Grade Schemes were widely used throughout the organisation, empowering the staff to grow within their roles whilst increasing their contribution to their service. There were currently 389 posts across the Council which had Career Grades Schemes attached to the job description and grade range. The schemes linked clear criteria,

through either gaining additional competencies and skills or by gaining qualifications, to motivate staff to continuously improve and progress. Offering clear pathways of career advancement, encouraged staff to work towards their own progression within their roles, and encouraged staff retention. That approach not only motivated and retained talent but also helped to cultivate the next generation of Local Government Officers and Leaders.

Future Initiatives

It was essential that, over the next 3 years, the Council continued to work closely with Senior Management to create a skilled and resilient workforce, who were able to react positively to the impending changes in Local Government. By prompting continuous learning and development, the Council aimed to prepare employees for the evolving roles and opportunities ahead, ensuring that as an organisation, the Council's workforce was able to adapt to the changes, whilst being attentive to staff welfare as the Council supported them through any transitional challenges.

Through the use of Career Grade Schemes and continued investment in skills and qualifications, the Council aimed to improve staff retention, reduce turnover, retain talent and increase loyalty. The Council aimed to ensure that staff, with the potential to progress, were given those opportunities, within the Council's financial parameters.

It was moved by Councillor Guglielmi, seconded by Councillor Baker and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the contents of the People Development Update Officer report (A.3) be noted.

The meeting was declared closed at 8.11 pm

Chairman