**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES AND COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE,
HELD ON THURSDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 2026 AT 7.30 PM
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA, CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Chapman BEM (Chairman), Guglielmi, S Honeywood, Keteca (items 13 (part) - 15), Smith and G Stephenson
Also Present:	Councillor P B Honeywood
In Attendance:	Katie Wilkins (Director (People)), Marcia Fuller (Head of People), Debianne Messenger (Work Based Learning Manager), Katie Moss (Democratic Services Officer) and Rebecca Catchpole (Leadership Support Officer)

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Calver (Vice-Chairman) (with no substitute).

10. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on Thursday, 30 July 2026, be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

12. 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.

13. CAREER TRACK - VERBAL UPDATE

The Work Based Learning Manager provided a verbal update on the Career Track apprenticeship programme. It was reported that there were currently 53 active apprentices enrolled on the programme, of whom 25 were employed by Tendring District Council. Members were advised that one in five current Council employees were either current or former Career Track apprentices.

The programme continued to successfully attract young people, with 26% of apprentices aged 16 to 18 and 60% aged 19 to 24.

It was further reported that the programme was delivered in partnership with a number of local authorities, including Colchester City Council, Braintree District Council, Maldon

District Council, Suffolk County Council, Kent County Council and the London Borough of Hounslow. Apprenticeships currently offered included Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in Customer Service, Business Administration and Public Service Operational Delivery Officer, with a new Level 2 Administration Assistant apprenticeship having been introduced in August 2026.

Dedicated funding for Career Track had been included within the 2026/27 budget, resulting in 17 new apprentice starts during the year, with a further six apprentices expected to commence shortly.

Members noted that apprentices had been recruited across a range of service areas, including the People Team, People Development' Leisure Centres, Parking, Information Technology, the Contact Centre, the Print Unit, Governance, Elections and Housing Solutions/Compliance.

The Work Based Learning Manager advised that the programme continued to perform strongly, maintaining a 95% success rate for the 2025/26 academic year and retaining its Ofsted rating of "Good".

The Chairman requested that a report on the 3-year funding received for the Career Track programme be submitted to the Committee's programmed meeting on 8 July 2027, in order that a follow-up review could be undertaken.

The Chairman of the Committee read out the following statement:-

"The Committee has consistently recognised the value of Career Track and the important contribution it makes to developing local talent, creating opportunities and supporting the Council's future workforce.

I would also like, on behalf of the Committee, to place on record our sincere thanks to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for their continued support for Career Track. When this Committee asked for their support in advocating for the continuation and future development of the programme, they responded extremely positively, and we are very grateful for their continued commitment.

It is particularly encouraging to see the wider support and investment that Career Track has received across the Council, enabling the programme to grow and create more opportunities for local people to develop their skills and careers, while also supporting the development and progression of our existing workforce. The Committee very much welcomes this and is proud to continue championing Career Track and the opportunities it provides."

The Committee noted the foregoing.

14. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE - A.1 - RETIREMENT AND FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT POLICY

It was reported that the revised Retirement and Flexible Retirement Policy established a single, clear and consistent framework for the management of standard and flexible retirement arrangements. It was confirmed that the Council did not operate a compulsory retirement age and that the Policy reflected the relevant requirements of

employment and equality legislation and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The principal provisions of the revised Policy were as follows:

- The introduction of a standard Retirement/Flexible Retirement Notification Form, with employees expected, wherever possible, to provide at least three months' written notice.

- A five-stage process covering early discussion, the provision of pension information, formal notification, confirmation of arrangements and completion of the Council's leaver process.

- A requirement for employees to obtain appropriate pension information and consider the financial implications before making a final decision, recognising that the Council was unable to provide financial advice.

- Eligibility criteria for flexible retirement, which could be available to eligible permanent employees who were active LGPS members and had reached the applicable normal minimum pension age, subject to a permanent reduction in contractual hours of more than 25%, a reduction of at least one grade, or both.

- Consideration of each flexible retirement application on its individual merits, having regard to business continuity, service provision, operational impact, affordability, workforce and succession planning, recruitment implications, knowledge retention and any relevant precedent.

- Consideration of the application by the relevant Corporate Director, followed by submission to the Workforce Panel, comprising the Section 151 Officer and the Head of People. The Panel could endorse the application but had no delegated decision-making powers. The formal decision would be taken by the relevant Corporate Director in accordance with the delegations set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, having regard to the Panel's advice. Any proposal involving regrading, restructuring or a change in staffing levels, or falling outside the approved Policy, would be referred to the Head of Paid Service or determined through the appropriate constitutional route.

- A requirement that flexible retirement should normally be at no additional cost to the Council, including no pension strain cost, with any early access to pension benefits potentially subject to actuarial reduction.

Members were reminded that flexible retirement was not an automatic entitlement. There was no general trial period and, once pension benefits had been brought into payment, reversal would not normally be available. The Policy nevertheless preserved the Council's ability to consider exceptional circumstances pragmatically and through the appropriate constitutional decision-making route. Employees would have the option to either remain in, or rejoin, the LGPS to build up further benefits, including through the 50/50 section where appropriate. Where an application was refused, the employee would be able to invoke the Council's Grievance Appeals Procedure.

It was felt that the implementation of the revised Policy would provide a clear and consistently administered route through retirement and flexible retirement. The proposed notice and notification arrangements would allow sufficient time for the Essex Pension Fund Team and the Council's Payroll and Payments Team to obtain estimates and complete the necessary pension and employment processes.

The revised arrangements would support business continuity, service provision and effective workforce and succession planning. They would also facilitate knowledge transfer and the retention of skills and experience where operationally appropriate, while promoting fair, transparent and consistent decision-making across Council services.

The Policy also defined the respective responsibilities of employees, managers, the People Team and the Payroll and Payments Team, thereby strengthening compliance with employment, equality and LGPS requirements and reducing procedural and financial risk.

It was moved by Councillor Guglielmi, seconded by Councillor Keteca and **RESOLVED** that the Committee:

a) approves the Retirement and Flexible Retirement Policy attached at Appendix A to the Officer report (A.1);

b) notes that flexible retirement applications would be considered in line with the approved Policy and determined in accordance with the delegations set out in the Council's Constitution; and

c) authorises the Director of People to implement the approved Policy and, in accordance with the Council's delegated arrangements, to make any minor, consequential or legislative amendments to associated procedures, guidance and documentation that did not materially alter the Policy.

15. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE - A.2 - ANNUAL UPDATE ON CURRENT MARKET FORCES SUPPLEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Members were aware that the Council was committed to the principles of equal pay for work of equal value. The National Job Evaluation and Grading Scheme provided an analytical and non-discriminatory method of evaluating jobs by assessing the size, nature and level of a post, rather than the individual postholder, and remained the foundation of the Council's pay and grading framework.

Market Forces Supplements sat outside the evaluated grade of a post and were therefore regarded as exceptional, temporary and objectively justified. They could only be considered where there was clear evidence that external labour market conditions were materially affecting the Council's ability to recruit or retain employees with the skills, knowledge and experience required for the role.

The Council's Discretionary Market Forces Policy had last been reviewed and updated in 2024. That review had clarified decision-making responsibilities, evidence requirements, review arrangements and reporting expectations, ensuring that the framework remained clear, practical and aligned with current organisational needs.

The revised Policy confirmed that decisions relating to the approval, continuation, variation or withdrawal of individual Market Forces Supplements were operational employment matters delegated to the Head of Paid Service, following consultation with the Director of People and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee. The Committee's role was to receive collated information on current arrangements, enabling it to monitor the use of the Policy and seek assurance that supplements remained evidence-based and proportionate, whilst maintaining the distinction between strategic oversight and officer decision-making.

Under the Policy, any request to approve, continue, vary or withdraw a Market Forces Supplement was required to be supported by a detailed business case and objective evidence. This included consideration of the relevant labour market position, recruitment and retention risk, service need, affordability, alternative resourcing options, review arrangements and the equal pay implications of the proposed payment. The business case was also required to clearly record the objective justification for the decision, ensuring that supplements remained exceptional, proportionate and time-limited, and were capable of being varied or withdrawn where the evidence no longer supported their continuation.

Members had previously received updates on Market Forces Supplements outside of the formal Committee cycle, where relevant. It was reported that the report established a structured annual reporting arrangement under the revised Policy, with Appendix A setting out the current arrangements by service or professional area.

It was moved by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Guglielmi and **RESOLVED** that the Committee:-

a) notes the current Market Forces Supplement arrangements across the organisation, as set out in Appendix A to the Officer report (A.2);

b) notes that this report formalises the structured annual reporting arrangements under the Council's Discretionary Market Forces Policy; and

c) notes that decisions relating to the approval, continuation, variation or withdrawal of individual Market Forces Supplements are delegated to the Head of Paid Service, following consultation with the Director of People and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee, and subject to the evidence and review requirements set out in the policy.

The meeting was declared closed at 8.24 pm

Chairman

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