



TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Cllr D Aitchison (Chairman)
Cllr D Rowe (Vice Chairman)

Cllr C Franklin
Cllr M Sharman

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE** to be held at **TOWN HALL, FELIXSTOWE**, on **Wednesday 7 October 2026** at **4.30pm**.

Public Attendance

Meetings of the Town Council and its Committees are open to the press and public who are welcome to attend. Members of the public are invited to make representations or put questions to the Committee during the public session.

There is a limit to the number of public attending in-person. If you wish to attend in person, please email townclerk@felixstowe.gov.uk to confirm capacity.

Public are very welcome join via Zoom using the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82769486775>

Alternatively, you may join via the meeting ID 828 9251 3980 or over the telephone by calling 0131 460 1196.

Council has a duty to pay due regard to preventing crime and disorder and to conserve biodiversity in its decision-making and Members are reminded to consider the Council's commitment to climate action.



The Council kindly asks that anyone planning to attend the meeting in-person to consider car-sharing or low-carbon modes of transport to the Town Hall.

Ash Tadjrishi
Town Clerk
2 October 2026

A G E N D A

- 1. Public Question Time**
Up to 15 minutes is set aside to allow members of the public (up to three minutes each) to make representations or put questions to the Committee on any relevant matters.
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
To receive apologies for absence.
- 3. Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations of interest and to consider any requests for dispensations from Members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest.
- 4. Confirmation of Minutes**
To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2026 as a true record.
(Pages 3-4)
- 5. Staff Handbook And Hr Policy Review**
To note the review of the Council's Staff Handbook and associated employment policies and to authorise the necessary revisions to ensure that the Council's employment documentation remains current and appropriate. **(Pages 5-9)**
- 6. Exclusion of Press and Public (Staffing Matters)**
In accord with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1 (2), in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.
- 7. Town Clerk's Appraisal**
To carry out the Town Clerk's Annual Appraisal. **(Confidential Report)**
- 8. Staffing and Training Budget 2027/28**
To consider the staffing and training budget for 2027/28 and make any necessary recommendations to Council. **(Confidential Report)**
- 9. Closure**
To close proceedings and confirm the date of the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 7 April 2027 at 6pm.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

MINUTES of a **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING** held at **TOWN HALL, Felixstowe**, on **Wednesday 1 April 2026** at **4.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr C Franklin (Chairman) Cllr M Deacon
 Cllr D Aitchison Cllr D Rowe

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)

470. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None.

471. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr M Sharman**.

472. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Other Registerable Interests, to which no matters on the agenda were directly related, were noted:

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr M Deacon	All	Other registerable interests (as a Member of East Suffolk Council)

Members were advised that, should any matters arise in the meeting that directly relate to any of their interests, they should make appropriate declarations at that time.

473. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 1 October 2025 be confirmed as a true record.

474. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (STAFFING MATTERS)

Committee agreed that, in accord with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1 (2), due the confidential nature of the business which was to be transacted, it was advisable that the press and public be temporarily excluded.

It was RESOLVED that the Press and Public be excluded and instructed to withdraw.

475. STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Committee received and considered a report regarding the potential implementation of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to support the mental, physical, and financial wellbeing of Council staff and councillors.

Members reviewed the market research conducted by Enlighten and evaluated the four tiers of cover presented, noting the importance of providing professional, confidential support to complement existing internal policies.

Following a discussion on the benefits of a pilot scheme to assess uptake and service value, it was RESOLVED that:

- i. a 12-month pilot programme with Health Hero EAP at an annual cost of £741.00 (plus VAT) be implemented; and,**
- ii. funding for this pilot shall be drawn from the Staffing Earmarked Reserve.**

476. TOWN CLERK'S APPRAISAL

The six-month review of the Town Clerk's Appraisal was carried out and progress against agreed objectives were discussed and noted.

It was RESOLVED that the six-month review of the Town Clerk's Appraisal be noted as carried out.

477. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 5.13pm. It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 7 October 2026 at 6pm.

AGENDA ITEM 5: STAFF HANDBOOK AND HR POLICY REVIEW

Committee is requested to note the review of the Council's Staff Handbook and associated employment policies and to authorise the necessary revisions to ensure that the Council's employment documentation remains current and appropriate.

Background

The Council's Staff Handbook and associated HR policies have been reviewed against recent changes to employment legislation, including the Employment Rights Act 2025, together with current employment practice and guidance.

The Government is implementing the Employment Rights Act 2025 in stages. A number of changes have already taken effect during 2026, including day-one rights to paternity leave and unpaid parental leave, changes to Statutory Sick Pay and strengthened protections relating to sexual harassment. Further changes take effect on 1 October 2026, including the extension of the general Employment Tribunal limitation period from three to six months. Further changes will take effect on 30 October 2026 and 1 January 2027.

The Council's existing documentation provides a substantial HR framework, but the review has identified a number of provisions which contain outdated statutory references or require amendment to reflect changes in employment law and current practice.

The intention is therefore to undertake a controlled update of the documentation rather than make isolated amendments whenever legislation changes.

Key findings

The principal areas identified for amendment are set out below.

1. Statutory Sick Pay

The Staff Handbook retains the previous Statutory Sick Pay arrangements, including the Lower Earnings Limit and waiting days. These provisions changed from 6 April 2026, when the Lower Earnings Limit and waiting period were removed.

The relevant section should therefore be updated to reflect the current statutory arrangements, with the Council's contractual sick-pay arrangements clearly distinguished from Statutory Sick Pay.

2. Paternity and unpaid parental leave

The Handbook retains qualifying-service requirements for paternity leave and unpaid parental leave which no longer apply to the statutory leave entitlements. Both became day-one rights from 6 April 2026.

The qualifying requirements for Statutory Paternity Pay remain and should therefore be clearly distinguished from the entitlement to paternity leave.

The revised provisions should also reflect the current statutory arrangements for unpaid parental leave.

3. Annual leave records

From 6 April 2026 employers are required to retain adequate records demonstrating compliance with the relevant annual leave and holiday-pay requirements for six years.

The Council's HR and payroll arrangements will therefore be checked to ensure that appropriate records are created and retained.

4. Sexual harassment

The Council already has a dedicated Sexual Harassment Policy and risk assessment. The policy covers employees, Councillors, contractors, volunteers and members of the public and provides for training, reporting, investigation and regular review.

Since 26 October 2024 employers have been required to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, with the duty strengthened from 30 October 2026 to require employers to take "all reasonable steps" to prevent sexual harassment. The legislation also introduces an obligation relating to harassment of employees by third parties.

The existing policy provides a good foundation but should be reviewed and the accompanying risk assessment updated to ensure that the Council can demonstrate the preventative measures it has taken, particularly in relation to public-facing work, Councillors, contractors, events and public meetings.

5. Disciplinary and performance procedures

The existing Disciplinary and Performance Review procedures contain a number of provisions and references which should be modernised.

From 1 January 2027, the qualifying period for ordinary unfair dismissal for most employees will reduce from two years to six months. The existing Handbook wording concerning probation and the ability to dismiss without following the Council's procedure should therefore be reviewed.

The intention is not to remove the Council's ability to manage performance or take appropriate disciplinary action, but to ensure that its procedures provide a clear, proportionate and fair framework for doing so.

6. Grievance procedure

The existing Grievance Procedure contains references to historic statutory grievance procedures which are no longer applicable. It should also be updated to reflect the current Employment Tribunal time limits, which increase from three to six months from 1 October 2026.

The revised procedure should also provide an appropriate alternative route where a grievance concerns the Town Clerk, Mayor, Chair of Personnel or another person who would ordinarily be responsible for handling it.

7. Equality, dignity and respect

The Handbook contains historic references to legislation including the Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act and Equal Pay Act. These should be removed and replaced with a modern framework based principally on the Equality Act 2010.

The Council's more recent Dignity at Work and Sexual Harassment policies provide a suitable basis for this work.

8. Flexible working

The Handbook contains historic qualifying-service and procedural requirements for flexible working which should be brought into line with the current statutory regime.

Further changes to the statutory flexible-working regime are expected in autumn 2027, including a requirement for employers to consult with employees before refusing a request and to explain why any refusal is reasonable. The detailed regulations and implementation arrangements are not yet in force.

The Handbook and associated policy should therefore be reviewed to ensure that current requirements are accurately reflected and that the documentation can be updated when the further statutory changes take effect.

9. Whistleblowing and other policies

The Whistleblowing Policy and a number of other sections of the Handbook contain historic legal terminology and references which should be reviewed and updated.

The review has also identified some matters which are not specifically related to the Employment Rights Act 2025, including aspects of the Council's data protection wording. These will be reviewed as part of the wider HR policy exercise where appropriate.

10. Other statutory leave

As part of the wider review, the Council's provisions relating to maternity, adoption, parental, bereavement and other statutory leave will be checked and updated where required.

This will help ensure that the Handbook provides a consistent and current overview of statutory employment rights without unnecessarily reproducing detailed statutory provisions which may subsequently change.

Proposed approach

It is proposed that the Council adopts a controlled HR policy review programme, rather than attempting to retain detailed descriptions of statutory law within the Staff Handbook. Where appropriate, statutory entitlements will be described by reference to the legislation in force at the relevant time. This will reduce the risk of the Handbook becoming outdated whenever statutory rates, qualifying conditions or procedural requirements change. The proposed programme is:

Area	Proposed action	Priority
Statutory Sick Pay	Replace outdated provisions	Immediate
Paternity leave/pay	Update and distinguish leave from pay	Immediate
Unpaid parental leave	Update qualifying requirements	Immediate
Holiday records	Confirm six-year record arrangements	Immediate
Sexual harassment	Update policy and risk assessment	Before 30 October 2026
Disciplinary	Modernise procedure and ACAS references	High
Performance/probation	Introduce clearer probation and performance arrangements	Before January 2027
Grievance	Modernise procedure and remove obsolete statutory references	High
Equality/Dignity	Replace historic equality provisions with modern policy	High
Flexible working	Update current statutory provisions and prepare for further changes	High
Whistleblowing	Update statutory references and related provisions	High
Maternity/adoption/parental/ bereavement and other statutory leave	Review and update	High
Data protection and other HR policies	Wider policy housekeeping	Ongoing

The revised policies will be drafted in a consistent Council format and cross-referenced where appropriate, avoiding unnecessary duplication between the Handbook and individual policies.

Implementation

It is proposed that the Town Clerk undertakes the detailed drafting and implementation of the agreed review programme, including:

- updating the Staff Handbook;
- revising or replacing individual HR policies where required;
- updating the sexual-harassment risk assessment;
- checking associated employment documentation and HR records;
- ensuring that relevant staff and Councillors receive information or training where required;
- ensuring that payroll and record-keeping arrangements reflect statutory changes;
- obtaining specialist HR or legal advice where a particular issue requires clarification; and

- bringing the revised documentation into operation once finalised.

Any changes will remain within the Council's existing employment policies, terms and conditions and statutory obligations. Where a proposed amendment would materially alter an established employment policy or term rather than simply update it to reflect legislation or current practice, the matter will be referred back to the appropriate Council body for consideration.

A consolidated schedule of revised policies can be reported to a subsequent meeting of the Personnel Committee for information, together with any matters requiring a further policy decision.

Financial implications

The proposed work is principally an internal policy and administrative exercise and can be undertaken within existing staff resources. There may be a requirement for limited external HR or legal advice on particular matters. Any such expenditure would be managed within existing approved budgets and relevant delegated financial authority.

Committee is requested to:

- i. **note the review of the Staff Handbook and associated HR policies and the changes arising from the Employment Rights Act 2025 and related employment legislation;**
- ii. **authorise the Town Clerk to undertake and implement the necessary revisions to the Staff Handbook and associated HR policies, including consequential amendments to employment guidance, forms and administrative arrangements, to ensure that the Council's employment documentation reflects legislation and recognised employment practice in force at the relevant time;**
- iii. **authorise the Town Clerk to update the priority areas identified in this report, including Statutory Sick Pay, paternity and parental leave, holiday records, sexual harassment, grievance, disciplinary, performance, equality, flexible working and whistleblowing provisions, together with other statutory employment policies requiring consequential amendment;**
- iv. **authorise the Town Clerk to obtain specialist HR or legal advice where reasonably necessary to clarify the application of employment legislation or the appropriate wording of the Council's policies, within existing budgets and delegated financial authority; and,**
- v. **require a consolidated schedule of the updated HR policies to be reported to a future meeting of the Personnel Committee for information, together with any matters requiring further Committee consideration.**