

Notice of Meeting



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Personnel and Standards Committee

Monday 6 July 2026 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices Market Street Newbury

Note: This meeting can be streamed live here: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/personnelcommitteelive>.

Date of despatch of Agenda: 26 June 2026

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Thomas Radbourne (Democratic Services Officer) Thomas.radbourne1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



To: Councillors Matt Shakespeare (Chairman), Biyi Oloko (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Antony Amirtharaj, Jeff Brooks, Laura Coyle, Clive Hooker, Owen Jeffery, Anne Budd and David Southgate

Substitutes: Councillors Martin Colston, Carlyne Culver, Denise Gaines, Ross Mackinnon and Howard Woollaston

Agenda

Part I

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- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any). | |
| 2 | Minutes
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 January 2026. | 1 - 6 |
| 3 | Declarations of Interest
To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct . | |
| 4 | Monitoring Officer's Annual Report 25/26 and Governance Statement | 7 - 18 |
| 5 | Update on HR Activity 2025-26 | 19 - 42 |
| 6 | Date of Next Meeting | |

Sarah Clarke

Sarah Clarke
Executive Director - Resources

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Thomas Radbourne on telephone (01635) 519 502.

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2026**

Councillors Present: Matt Shakespeare (Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Jeff Brooks and Clive Hooker

Also Present: Councillor Laura Coyle (attending remotely), Councillor Vicky Poole, Olimpia Byrne, Nikki Davies (Wellbeing Officer), Vicky Holland (Human Resources Officer), Rebecca Hopkins (Human Resources Officer) and Martyn Sargeant (Service Director (Strategy & Governance)), Councillor Laura Coyle, Councillor Vicky Poole, Olimpia Byrne, Karen Turner and Sam Chiverton (Apprentice Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Antony Amirtharaj

Councillor(s) Absent: Councillor Biyi Oloko

PART I**5. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Adrian Abbs advised that he had been lobbied in relation to various items on the agenda.

7. Actions Arising From Previous Meetings

Members reviewed the actions from previous meetings. The following points were noted:

- Officers undertook to provide a written report to Members on actions from the meeting on 14 January 2025.
- It was noted that an update on the vacant posts would be provided later in the meeting.
- Officers advised that the ideal average UK turnover rate was 14% or lower. This was not specific to Civil Service staff. According to the CIPD, in spring 2025, average annual turnover rate in the UK was 15%. Members asked for further detail on how the turnover rate varied by industry.
- Officers advised that there were 97 internal staff movements between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. Members suggested that this be shown as a percentage of the roles that the authority had filled for future reports.
- It was confirmed that the main reasons for leaving the Council were retirement, followed by work conditions, workload and salary.
- Concern was expressed at the low number of exit interviews completed. Officers outlined the current process with options for both online forms and face-to-face exit interviews. Members requested an action plan to improve participation.

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- Officers confirmed that they were investigating whether iTrent could facilitate maintaining contact with leavers and undertook to report back at the next meeting.
- It was noted that the Employee Value Proposition included information on reward and recognition, which contributed to retention, but there was nothing specific on retention at present.
- It was reported that 31 agency workers were permanently employed in 2023/24 and 20 in 2024/25. Officers agreed to investigate how many agency workers were continuously employed across financial years.
- In relation to sickness absence, officers reported the UK average was 9.5 days per employee (September 2025), with the average for public services at 13.3 days. The council's figures were below this average.
- Officers reported that analysis on mental health sickness by department remained outstanding.
- A briefing had been sent to members on pastoral care and officers summarised the multi-layered approach to employee wellbeing and support.
- Members noted that 19% of survey respondents strongly disagreed that everyone had an equal opportunity to develop. It was noted that this was being discussed through the Employee Engagement Forum. Members asked for further analysis to as to whether diverse employees felt disadvantaged.
- With regards to calculating the cost of staff sickness, officers suggested this would be difficult and suggested focusing on managing the sickness rate itself.
- It was agreed that the Executive Director for Adult Social Care be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on sickness absence.
- It was confirmed that the Executive Director for Resources would be invited to a future meeting to outline the appraisal process.
- Officers indicated that the percentage of staff receiving an appraisal would be included as a KPI for Q1 2026/27
- Testing was underway regarding uploading of appraisal documents to iTrent and officers undertook to provide an update to the next meeting.
- It was noted that some staff were off sick or on maternity leave during the 6 month period over which mandatory training had been monitored. It was confirmed that managers received regular notifications of which members of their teams had not completed their mandatory training.
- Members raised concerns about the number of Microsoft licences versus staff headcount and requested further clarification.

Actions:

- **Provide further breakdown on how turnover rate varied by industry.**
- **Show internal staff movements as a percentage of roles filled.**
- **Develop an action plan to improve participation in the exit interview process.**
- **Investigate how many agency workers were continuously employed across financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25.**
- **Provide further analysis regarding employees' concerns about a lack of equal opportunities for development.**

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- Provide an update on sickness in ASC to the next meeting.
- Provide an outline of the appraisal process to a future meeting.
- Clarification to be provided regarding the number of Microsoft licences purchased across the Council.

8. Statutory Pay Policy 2026/27

Olympia Byrne (HR Services Manager) presented the Statutory Pay Policy. (Agenda Item 5.)

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members raised concerns regarding the completeness, transparency, and governance of the Statutory Pay Policy (SPP), and questioned the use of the term "chief officers", noting that the Localism Act provides a specific definition, whereas the council appeared to use the term more broadly to include service leads and managers. It was suggested that different terminology should be used to avoid confusion. Officers indicated that the terminology was largely prescribed but agreed to consider providing additional clarity in future reports.
- It was requested that senior officer roles and their delegated powers be clearly published and defined, including in the management structure charts and glossary. It was highlighted that Part 12 of the Constitution was inconsistent with the SPP. Officers confirmed that the Scheme of Delegation was in the process of being reviewed and would come to Council for approval later in the year.
- Members asked whether all officer roles with remuneration packages above £100,000 had been approved by Full Council. Officers explained that due to pay awards, some Service Leads' salaries now exceeded the threshold. These would require Full Council approval from April onwards. Members requested confirmation from the Monitoring Officer as to whether the Council was constitutionally compliant regarding approval of these roles.
- Members noted the impracticality of requiring Full Council approval every time a role crossed the £100,000 threshold due to pay inflation, particularly given the frequency of Council meetings.
- Assurance was provided that when the SPP was considered by Council later in the year, officers would bring forward proposals for any new posts falling within the threshold, including those arising from ongoing restructures such as the Business Support Review.
- Members requested that any significant changes to the SPP from previous years be clearly flagged in the introduction to assist Members. Officers confirmed that the main update was to pay grades, reflecting the pay award, and that any further material changes would be highlighted in future.
- Members asked if the £10,000 Market Supplement Policy payment was a one-off or ongoing, and what the process was for awarding it. Officers explained that a separate market supplement procedure existed, and roles must have undergone through two failed recruitment rounds to be eligible. The payment was reviewable, dependent on the role, with details set out in the procedure.
- Further details were sought on costs associated with new Chief Officer appointments, including recruitment and exit costs. Officers stated that such details were not typically included in the SPP due to its prescribed format. It was stated that the Committee's role was not to provide detailed financial breakdowns of personnel

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changes, and that such requests be directed to the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder or Finance Officers.

- Members queried the £3,000 payment referenced in the recruitment and retention section, asking whether it applied to all staff after one year of service. Officers clarified that it applied only to certain hard-to-fill roles within Children and Family Services.

Actions:

- **Publish details of senior officer roles and delegated powers, addressing any inconsistencies between the SPP, the Constitution and other documents.**
- **Monitoring Officer to confirm whether the council is constitutionally compliant regarding the approval of roles with salaries over £100,000.**
- **Monitoring Officer to provide reassurance on the process for Council approval of high-value roles at the next meeting.**

RESOLVED to note the report.

9. **Update on HR Activity Q1 and Q2 - 2025/2026**

Karen Turner (HR Business Partner Manager) presented the HR Activity Report for Quarter 1 and 2 (Agenda Item 6).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- The Committee welcomed the fact that the sickness rate was trending downwards but noted that the turnover rate was increasing slightly.
- Members questioned the value of providing projected annualised turnover figures, since these were subject to seasonal variation, and requested comparison of projected and annual figures in future reports.
- Members requested that future reports provide details of agency workers in care homes, as well as those outside care homes, to give a more comprehensive overview. It was noted that the proportion of agency workers at Birchwood Care Home had reduced to 10%. The reduction in agency worker expenditure was welcomed.
- It was highlighted that previous reports had included a table detailing the number of training courses offered and their uptake, which appeared to be missing from the current report. Members requested that this table be reinstated in future reports, with similar data provided for appraisals.
- The positive trend in job applications was welcomed. However, it was noted that the increase could be influenced by broader economic conditions, not solely the Council's recruitment efforts.
- It was noted that feedback from applicants about the recruitment process had been positive. Members asked about the dropout rate for applicants who started but did not complete the process and suggested that this would be a useful KPI.

Actions:

- **Include actual vs projected turnover in future reports.**
- **Provide the average number of agency workers in care homes, as well as those outside care homes in future report**
- **Reinstate the table detailing the number of training courses offered and their uptake in future reports.**

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- **Provide a table on appraisals completed, in future reports.**

RESOLVED to note the report.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to hold the next meeting Tuesday, 14 July 2026.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Monitoring Officer's Annual Report 25/26 and Governance Statement

Committee considering report:	Council
Date of Committee:	16 July 2026
Portfolio Member:	Portfolio Holder: Strategy and Governance, Commercialisation and Disabled Community Liaison
Report Author:	Nicola Thomas

1 Purpose of the Report

To provide the annual report on matters relating to the standards and conduct and to bring to the attention of Members a summary of complaints or other issues within West Berkshire. The report highlights that standard of conduct by councillors in West Berkshire remains high. Also, to summarise the activities of the Governance Committee for the municipal year prior to its dissolution.

2 Recommendation

Members are to be informed of the contents of the report which will also be circulated to all Parish/ Town Councils in the District for information.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial issues arising from this report. However, the costs associated with external investigations may lead to a budget pressure.
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	There are no legal issues arising from this report. The matters covered by this report are generally requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 in so far as appropriate and the Localism Act 2011 and its supporting regulations.

Risk Management:	The benefits of this process are the maintenance of the Council's credibility and good governance by a high standard of ethical behaviour. The threats are the loss of credibility of the Council if standards fall. Adherence to the requirements of the Code of Conduct also reduce the risk of the Council's decisions being subject to legal challenge.			
Property:	None			
Policy:	None			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Environmental Impact:		x		
Health Impact:		x		
ICT Impact:		x		
Digital Services Impact:		x		

Council Strategy Priorities:		x		
Core Business:		x		
Data Impact:		x		
Consultation and Engagement:	Audit and Risk Committee Martyn Sargeant, Service Director (Strategy and Governance) Sarah Clarke, Executive Director (Resources) Cllr Vicky Poole			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report is the Monitoring Officer's annual report for the Governance Committee, which will be presented to Full Council on 17 July. The report will also be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils.
- 4.2 The key findings of the report are:
- (a) Standards of ethical conduct across the district remain good;
 - (b) The number of gifts and hospitality declared by officers was 51 and the number of gifts declared by Members was three.
- 4.3 This report is an annual summary of the activities of the Governance Committee for 2025-26. The report is for Full Council to provide a summary of key areas that the Committee has considered during the last municipal year as well as some of the actions and changes that have occurred due to the Committee's activities prior to a separating the functions to Audit and Risk Committee and Personnel and Standards Committee.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Localism Act 2011 made fundamental changes to the system of regulation of the standards of conduct for elected and co-opted members of Councils and Parish Councils.
- 5.2 In order to ensure that the process was working effectively locally, Council agreed that the Monitoring Officer should produce an annual report which would be presented to Council and the Governance Committee. The report would set out the number and nature of complaints received and inform Members of any other activity that was taking place around the Code of Conduct regime. With the changes in Committees, this report

will now be considered at Audit and Risk Committee, but this reports on the previous year activity.

Background

- 5.3 During the Municipal Year 2025/26, the Governance Committee was comprised of eleven members (nine District Councillors appointed on a proportional basis and two co-opted non-voting Parish/ Town Councillors, plus one independent member)
- 5.4 The Members Code of Conduct governs the standards of conduct expected of elected Councillors, and this is supported by a number of documents including:
- (a) Gifts and Hospitality Protocol;
 - (b) Complaints procedures for breaches of the Code of Conduct;
 - (c) Dispensations procedure;
 - (d) Social Media Protocol.

Further details can be found in the Constitution at: [Part 13 Codes and Protocols](#)

Independent Persons Proposals

- 5.5 Under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a duty to ensure that it has appointed at least one Independent Person who is consulted before it makes a decision on an allegation it has determined to investigate. It was agreed by Council that the Independent Person may be consulted directly either by the person who has made the complaint or the person the complaint has been made about. Three Independent Persons have therefore been appointed in order to ensure that a conflict situation does not arise.
- 5.6 A person is not considered to be "independent" if:-
- (a) They are or have been, within the last five years, an elected or co-opted Member or officer of the Council or of any Parish Councils within this area. This also applies to committees or sub-committees of the various Councils.
 - (b) They are a relative or close friend of a current elected, or co-opted, Member or officer of the Council or any Parish Council within its area, or any elected or co-opted member of any committee or sub-committee.
 - (c) The definition of relative includes the candidate's spouse, civil partner, grandparent, child etc.
- 5.7 Council appointed Mike Wall MBE, Alan Penrith and Lindsey Appleton as the Council's Independent Persons for the 2025/26 Municipal Year. All three Independent Persons have agreed to remain as Independent Persons for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.
- 5.8 The Council is asked to recognise the significant contribution of the Independent Persons and thank them for their ongoing contributions.

Governance Committee

5.9 The overall purpose of the Governance Committee is to provide effective challenge across the Council and independent assurance on the risk management and governance framework and associated internal control environment to members and the public, independently of the Executive. The Governance Committee is also responsible for receiving the annual Audit Letter and for signing off the Council's final accounts.

5.10 The summary below highlights the key items that have come to the Governance Committee over the previous year and what action was taken as a result of these.

	AREAS OF FOCUS			
	Audit	Finance	Governance	Risk
29 July	Internal audit assurance report	Annual treasury management report; Financial statement and going concern assessment	Annual governance statement	
30 Sept	Internal audit update Q1			Risk register Q4
18 Nov			Constitution updates	
27 Jan	Draft external audit annual report; Internal audit update Q2	Treasury management mid-year review; Financial year end 2025/26		Risk register Q1/2
28 Apr	Internal update Q3		Proposal for an Audit and Risk Committee	Risk register Q3

5.11 The information below sets out briefly some areas of discussion and focus considered by the Committee:

Internal audit:

- (a) Fraud and whistleblowing
- (b) Senior management vacancies
- (c) Financial management systems
- (d) Housing systems and rent backlog
- (e) Software integration
- (f) Home to school transport
- (g) Social care models
- (h) School reserves and rising education costs

External audit:

- (a) Dedicated schools grant
- (b) Transformation programme
- (c) Debt and reserves
- (d) Control deficiencies

Treasury Management

- (a) Borrowing arrangements and requirements
- (b) Property portfolio
- (c) Grant income
- (d) Borrowing costs

Risk

- (a) Review of specific risks
- (b) Mitigation assurance
- (c) Risk appetite

Finance

- (a) Exceptional financial support
- (b) Fair funding review and business rates
- (c) Pension fund commitments

- (d) Impact of schools' deficits
- (e) 2025/26 accounts

Governance

- (a) Annual Governance statement
- (b) Review of contract rules (following implementation of Procurement Act 2023)

5.12 The Committee is also charged with promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the Council. They promote, educate and support Councillors (both District and Parish) in following the highest standards of conduct and ensuring that those standards are fully owned locally. The roles and functions of the Governance Committee are set out in the Constitution (Part 2 Articles of the Constitution).

5.13 The Governance Committee has a special responsibility regarding the 55 Town and Parish Councils within the District. It is responsible for ensuring that high standards of conduct are met within the parishes and that all Parish and Town Councillors are aware of their responsibilities under their Codes of Conduct.

5.14 The District Councillors are therefore supported on the Governance Committee by up to two co-opted Parish Councillors who are appointed in a non-voting capacity, along with substitute councillors. During 2025/26 the Governance Committee included the following Parish Councillors:

- David Southgate (coopted non-voting Parish Councillor)
- Anne Budd (substitute co-opted non-voting Parish Councillor)

5.15 In order to support the effective work of the Committee and provide independent input into meetings, the Governance Committee is entitled to also appoint up to two co-opted but non-voting Independent Members (Audit). In 2025/26, the Independent Member (Audit) was performed by Simon Carey.

5.16 The Council is asked to recognise the contribution of the Parish Councillors and the Independent Member (Audit) and thank them for their contributions.

5.17 The function of the Governance Committee shall, in future, be moved to the new Audit and Risk Committee and Personnel and Standards Committee as agreed at Council on 14 May 2026. Independent members are to be appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee going forward.

The Monitoring Officer

5.18 The Monitoring Officer is a statutory post and in West Berkshire rests with the Executive Director (Resources). The Monitoring Officer (Sarah Clarke) in 2025/265 was supported by two deputies (Nicola Thomas, and Sharon Armour). The Monitoring Officer has a key role in promoting and maintaining standards of conduct. The Monitoring Officer also has a statutory responsibility to establish and maintain a register of interests for members and co-opted members of the authority. The Monitoring Officer acts as legal adviser to the Governance Committee.

5.19 The Monitoring Officer, under delegated authority, granted a dispensation to all West Berkshire Councillors in 2024/25 to speak and vote on any items pertaining to Council Tax.

Local Assessment of Complaints against Councillors

5.20 Quarter 1 – 2025/26

During this period, three complaints resulted in no further action being taken and one complaint resulting in an informal resolution through the sending of an apology letter

5.21 Quarter 2 – 2025/26

During this period, three complaints resulted in no further action being taken and four other complaints resulted in an informal resolution being sought, including through the sending of an apology letter and the provision of guidance by the Monitoring Officer.

5.22 Quarter 3 - 2024/25

During this period, three complaints resulted in no further action being taken and one resulted in an informal resolution being sought.

5.23 Quarter 4 - 2024/25

During this period, all five complaints received resulted in no further action being taken.

5.24 Year on Year Comparison of Complaints

Table 1 –The Number of District and Parish Council Complaints received 2018/19 – 2025/26

Table 1	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
District Councillors	1	9	12	20	16	6	9	7
Parish Councillors	20	5	21	12	6	6	5	10
Co-Optees	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	22	14	33	32	22	12	14	17

Table 2 - Action Taken on Complaints received 2018/19 to 2025/26

	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Withdrawn/not progressed	4	5	7	0	2	0	2	0
No Further Action	14	7	24	28	16	8	10	9
Other Action	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	4
Investigation	2	0	0	3	2	1	0	3
Outcome Awaited	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	22	14	33	32	22	12	14	17

Learning Points Arising from Complaints

- 5.25 The number of complaints has increased in the past year in relation to the standards of Parish Councillors. Whilst the large majority are resolved with no further or other action, there are a higher number of standards complaints that have needed an investigation than in previous years.
- 5.26 The complaints received arose from different circumstances, although many complaints alleged a lack of respect from the subject member. Although the complaints have not yet been upheld, this is a helpful reminder of the need to be respectful when communicating with others and refresher training will be offered.

Register of Interests

- 5.27 Following the election in May 2023 all elected Members of West Berkshire Council completed and submitted their Register of Interest forms, and updates have been received to a number of these since that time. These forms have been published on the Council's website. A number of interests that have been declared by Members have been withheld from publication where the Monitoring Officer has been satisfied that the interest is a sensitive interest in accordance with the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 5.28 District Councillors are reminded to review their interests on a regular basis and to notify the Democratic Services Manager of any amendments.
- 5.29 Parish Councils are reminded via their Clerks to complete and return Declarations of Interest forms to the Monitoring Officer in order that compliance with the Localism Act 2011 is maintained.

Gifts and Hospitality

- 5.30 The Gifts and Hospitality Protocol is incorporated into the Members Code of Conduct within Part 13 of the Constitution (Codes and Protocols).
- 5.31 Officers are also subject to restrictions on those Gifts and Hospitality that are deemed to be acceptable under the Officers' Code of Conduct, which is set out in Part 13 of the Constitution. Like Members, Officers are required to declare gifts or hospitality received.
- 5.32 The intention of the rules governing Gifts and Hospitality is to ensure that the Council can demonstrate that no undue influence has been applied or could be said to have been applied by any service user, supplier or anyone else dealing with the Council and its stewardship of public funds. The rules therefore set out the obligations imposed on Members and Officers to declare relevant gifts and hospitality which have been offered to or received by them.
- 5.33 It should be noted that in addition to the risk that there could be a perception of impropriety, the acceptance of a gift or hospitality could amount to an offence under the Bribery Act 2010.
- 5.34 The Bribery Act 2010 creates a number of offences where a gift or other benefit is given or offered, which may amount to an offence of bribing another person, and/or of being bribed. Therefore, if Members or Officers are offered a 'gift' or other benefit by a third

party, this could amount to an offence not just by the person offering the gift, but also by the Member or Officer concerned and by the Council. It is important to note that offences under this legislation can be committed by a person offering a gift or reward, even if the gift is not accepted.

- 5.35 In view of the above, it is very important that both Officers and Members understand the potentially serious implications of accepting gifts when it is not appropriate to do so.
- 5.36 There were 3 declarations of gifts or hospitality received by Members during the year 2025/26. This represents a decrease on the previous year, although it should be noted that declarations are frequently made of gifts or hospitality received that is below the value that requires that to be declared (i.e. £25). Staff and Members have been reminded of the need to declare any gifts or hospitality received in accordance with the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol. This information is published on the Council website.
- 5.37 There was also an increase in the number of gifts and hospitality declared by officers with 51 declarations made during 2025/26, which is a modest increase from the 47 declared in the previous year, The vast majority of gifts received were small token gifts with the total value of gifts declared being £738.30, and the average value being £14.48.
- 5.38 The number of gifts or hospitality received by each directorate, and the number refused can be summarised as follows:

Directorate	Number of Declarations	Number refused
CEO	29	20
People - Adults	2	0
People - Children	1	0
Place	17	1
Resources	2	0
TOTAL	51	1

- 5.39 In the last municipal year, the majority of gifts and hospitality declared was in the Place Directorate.

Proposals

- 5.40 Members are informed of the content of the report.
- 5.41 It is proposed that this report also be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils for information.
- 5.42 The Governance Committee considered a proposal for its dissolution, with a new Audit and Risk Committee to be set-up. This will have a narrower focus than the current terms of reference, meaning the standards responsibilities would be absorbed into the Personnel Committee’s brief. Having a dedicated Audit and Risk Committee is in line with best practice and was a recommendation of the Local Government Association’s peer review of West Berkshire Council in 2024. Council approved this implementation in May 2026 and therefore, the Governance Committee will cease to exist going forward.

6 Other options considered

Not to produce a report. There is no duty to publish this report. However, it is important that public trust and confidence is maintained in public authorities, and it is considered that this report provides transparency regarding standards and conduct.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 There have been a number of training sessions on the Code of Conduct over the 2025/26 municipal year, and these have been well attended, with Members very engaged with the sessions. This is a positive step by Members and should continue.
- 7.2 There has been an increase in the number of complaints and these appear to be focused with Parish Councillors but these remain lower than previous years. Standards of District Councillors remain very good in West Berkshire. This is a credit to all councillors in the district.

8 Appendices

None

Subject to Call-In: Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: (All Wards);

Officer details:

Name: Nicola Thomas
Job Title: Service Lead - Legal and Democratic
Tel No:
E-mail: Nicola.Thomas1@westberks.gov.uk

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Update on HR Activity 2025/2026

Committee considering report:	Personnel and Standards Committee
Date of Committee:	6 th July 2026
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Vic Poole
Date Service Director agreed report: <i>(for Corporate Board)</i>	5 June 2026
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	18 June 2026 at Executive Briefing
Report Author:	Paula Goodwin, Service Lead - HR
Forward Plan Ref:	N/A

1 Purpose of the Report

This information report updates Personnel and Standards Committee, Corporate Board and Executive Briefing on HR activity for 2025/2026. It also includes annual workforce equality data as at 31st March 2026 and other supporting employment data, excluding schools' workforce data.

2 Recommendation(s)

This is an information report. Personnel and Standards Committee is asked to note the report and provide feedback on its contents.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	None as this is an information only report.
Human Resource:	This is an information only report so there are no direct implications from the outcome of the report.
Legal:	None
Risk Management:	None
Property:	None

Policy:	All information provided in the report take account of the relevant WBC policies and procedures.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		This is an information only report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		This is an information only report.
Environmental Impact:		X		None
Health Impact:		X		None
ICT Impact:		X		None
Digital Services Impact:		X		None
Council Strategy Priorities:		X		This update report provides information that supports the Council’s Strategy and associated KPI’s that relate to the workforce.
Core Business:		X		This update report provides information that supports the Council’s Strategy and

				associated KPI's that relate to the workforce.
Data Impact:		X		None as all data is anonymised.
Consultation and Engagement:	Corporate Board Executive Briefing Service Director, Strategy & Governance Portfolio Holder with responsibility for HR			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This information report provides Corporate Board, Executive Briefing and Personnel and Standards Committee with a year-end update on HR matters for 2025/2026.
- 4.2 The report includes employment and equalities data either as at 31st March 2026 or across the full 2025/2026 year. Each dataset states the relevant date or period. Appendix A provides detailed data on posts, starters, leavers and EDI, giving a broader picture of the Council's workforce.
- 4.3 The report updates on recruitment, training, employee experience and performance management, including casework and appraisals. Key points are:
 - (a) Casework across WBC increased compared with 2024/2025. This includes disciplinary and capability matters, grievances, sickness absence, ill-health retirement and related adjustments, TUPE, restructures and redundancies.
 - (b) Voluntary turnover for corporate staff increased to 13.1%, up from 10.4%. Crude turnover for all leavers increased to 16.08%, up from 12.9%. However there was a higher peak of restructures and turnover as a result which would explain some of the increase.
 - (c) Sickness absence fell to 9.20 days per worker in 2025/26, down from 10.13 days in 2024/25. While sickness absence related case work remains high, this should be considered within the context of a more robust and proactive management approach to attendance being implemented across the Council. This includes increased management oversight, earlier intervention, improved monitoring arrangements and more consistent application of the Workplace Attendance Procedure.
 - (d) It should be noted that the Council's current sickness absence rate of 9.2 days remains below the CIPD public sector benchmark figure of 9.4 days, indicating that overall absence levels continue to compare favourably against wider public sector trends.

5 Employment Data

- 5.1 Appendix A details the employment data and equalities data relating to WBC.
- 5.2 See table below for headcount and post data for the last five years (this data excludes all temporary posts and agency and off contract workers).

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Headcount	1532	1511	1537	1552	1562
Post FTE	1667.93	1731.10	1767.83	1650.95	1673.64
Occupied FTE	1362.10	1357.90	1387.80	1412.92	1419.92
Vacant FTE	305.83	373.20	380.03	238.03	253.72
Individual Vacant Posts	-	-	-	233	257
Number of agency workers	-	-	169	114	122

From 2024/25 posts are recorded as number of vacant posts, which relates to the number of wholly vacant posts rather than part of a post being vacant. Part posts are included in the Vacant FTE. The table below shows the breakdown of the reasons posts are vacant as at the 31st March 2026.

Total vacancy figure breakdown as at 31st March 2026	
No of vacant posts	257
Live adverts	104
In Onboarding/Starting after the 31 st March 2026	69
Vacant posts not accounted for (<i>Note: posts are either on hold, subject to organisational change processes, or are only recently vacant so awaiting instructions on recruitment</i>)	84

Note: Total number of agency workers	122
Agency workers excluding care homes	53

- 5.3 Crude turnover (all reasons for leaving) increased to 16.08% over the past 12 months, up from 12.9%. Vacant posts also increased from 233 to 257 as at 31st March 2026. A further breakdown of vacancy reasons is provided later in the report. Early 2025/2026 CIPD data suggests the average UK annual employee turnover rate is around 15%–19%.
- 5.4 The equalities data in Appendix A is drawn from the HR/payroll system (iTrent), using information provided by applicants and employees through recruitment and employee self-service. Employees are asked to record ethnicity and disability status under the Equality Act 2010, although some choose not to disclose this information. Age data is collected automatically for administrative purposes, including pension administration.
- 5.5 Other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, including sexual orientation and religion, have been added more recently as sufficient recruitment data has become available. However, a high proportion of records remain “unknown” because employees provide this information voluntarily.

5.6 Exit Data

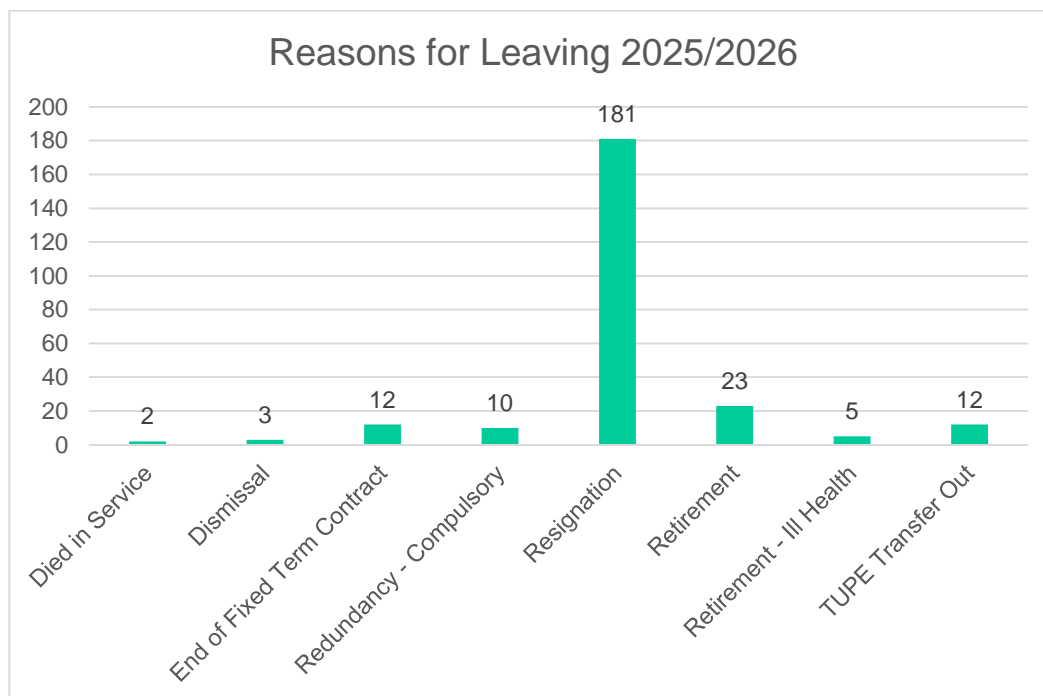
Over the last 12 months there were 181 resignations from employees who left the Council, internal movers are not included in this figure. There were 187 internal moves from staff who changed job roles. See 6.2 for more information. In effect 368 employees left or changed roles at the Council of which 181 left the Council completely and 187 remained at the Council but in different roles. All employees who resigned (left the Council) up to the end of May 2026 were asked to complete an exit questionnaire or take part in an exit interview with the HR Business Partnering Team. Currently, 15% of resigning leavers completed exit interviews/questionnaires. From 1st June 2026, the process has changed to improve data collection and better inform retention activity. 3 new online leaver questionnaires, tailored to reason for leaving, are now issued through iTrent Employee Self Service. This will provide data for all voluntary leavers, internal movers and those that leave the Council within 12 months of starting. This is early days to be able to provide any feedback on the data collected yet.

Understanding voluntary turnover is important in identifying and addressing trends in why staff leave. The revised process, together with reminders and access through Employee Self Service after leaving, is intended to increase completion rates to at least 50% and provide better data to support future retention work. It will also support the reasoning behind why staff choose to stay with the Council and change jobs internally.

In 2025/2026, 23% of voluntary resignations were from employees with less than one year’s service. The data shows an almost even split across the four Directorates for leavers with under 12 months’ service. Again the new leaver questionnaire for this specific set of employees will help inform the reasons for leaving and whether proactive actions are required to reduce such turnover.

- 5.7 The graph below shows the current stated reasons for leaving on the leaver form for

2025/2026 and is for all leavers.



5.8 We are currently reviewing our Probation Procedure following the implementation of the Employment Rights Act 2025 surrounding Unfair Dismissal that comes into force on 1 January 2027 but will be effective from 1 July 2026.

6 Talent Attraction

Recruitment

- 6.1 We have had a total of 227 new starters in the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026. This compares to 214 new starters in 2024/25. These figures are based on new external applicants.
- 6.2 From 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026 187 positions were filled by internal staff moves, which is just over 40% of all roles filled.
- 6.3 We have seen an ongoing increase in traffic to the careers site with a total of 88,000 users in the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026, compared to 31,000 users the year prior.
- 6.4 Visibility of the site has improved; the numbers of users landing on our careers site from online search engines has more than doubled – now 62,000.
- 6.5 The number of abandoned applications improved hugely when we switched to accepting CVs from an average of 63% in April 2023 to an average of 23% last year, and a further reduction to 21% this year.

- 6.6 In the last year we have successfully recruited to a number of key senior posts including Executive Director – Resources, Service Director – Transformation, Customer & ICT, Service Director – Strategy & Governance, and Service Director - Education & SEND. The Council has utilised internal expertise and resources to recruit to all these posts, reducing reliance on external providers and the associated costs. External recruitment agencies have been required in the past to support the appointment of senior management roles, and it is acknowledged that this may be required in the future.
- 6.7 We have now completed a full year of applicant experience survey results, with 267 responses. Of respondents, 77% would consider applying to West Berkshire Council again, around 63% would recommend applying to others, and around 75% said the application process met or exceeded expectations.

Agency

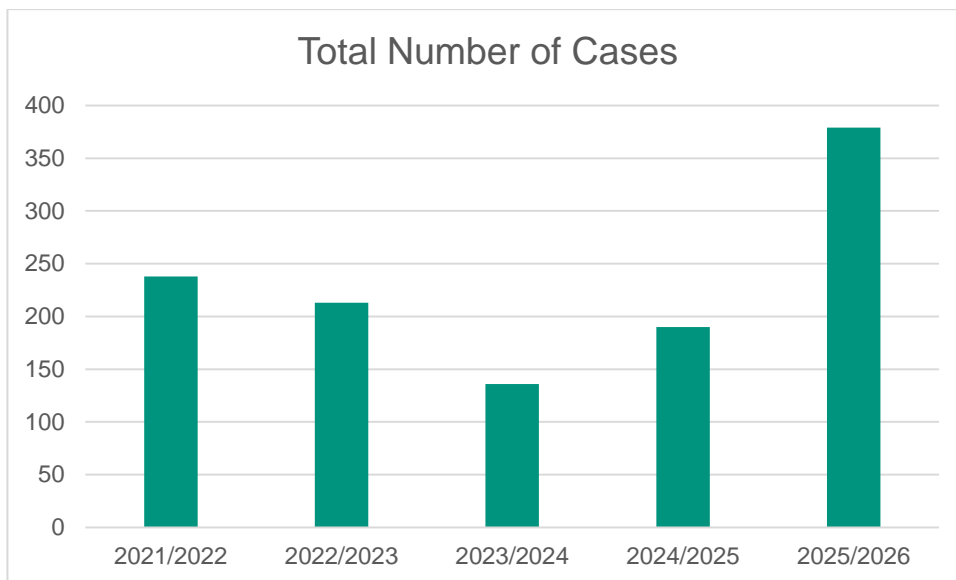
- 6.7 The total number of agency workers at the end of Q4 2025/26 was 122 compared to 114 in 2024/5 and 169 in 2023/24. Of the 122 agency workers, 53 were covering posts not in care homes. Although this is a slight increase from last year, it is snapshot data so can vary day by day.
- 6.8 Comensura agency spend year-on-year is down a further £2M in 2025/26 to £5.5M, compared to £7.5M in 2024/25 and £9.5M in 2023/24.
- 6.9 Total spend against the agency cost centre, including off contract arrangements for 2025/26 was £5.7M.
- 6.10 13 agency workers moved into permanent posts in 2025/26, saving a total of £134,394.00.
- 6.11 The average weekly spend for agency in the year 2025/26 was £100,286 compared to £111,140 in 2024/25.
- 6.12 The Council continues to benefit from use of the Comensura contract to supply permanent candidates for direct employment. This has provided eight successful appointments in hard to fill roles, removing the requirement for more costly temporary agency workers. The roles filled this year were in children’s social work, educational psychology and highways engineering.

7 Performance Management – Casework

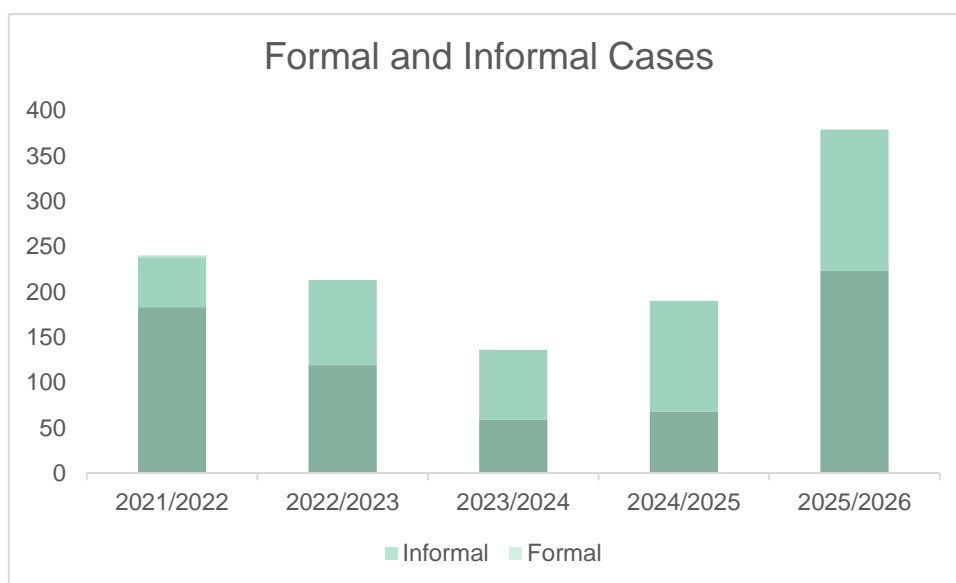
Context

- 7.1 The Council’s HRBP team advises WBC managers on people management matters. For this report, casework includes:
- Disciplinary and capability
 - Grievances
 - Sickness absence, ill-health retirement, and related adjustments
 - TUPE, restructures, and redundancies.

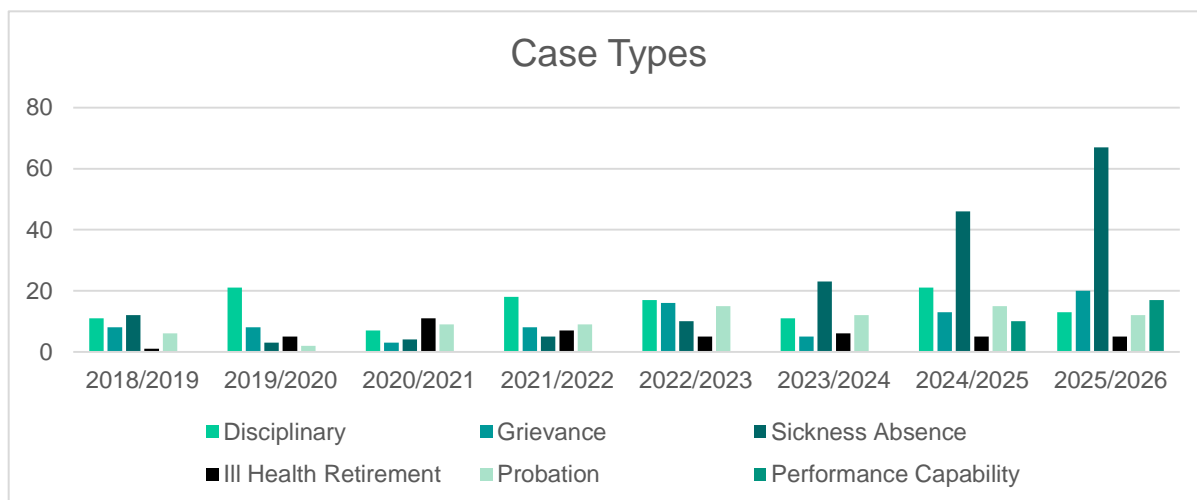
- 7.2 The previous HR update covered the first half of 2025/2026. This report provides the full-year position for 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.
- 7.3 The graph below shows the number of formal and informal cases within corporate (i.e. excluding schools) over five full years. Case numbers increased significantly in 2025/2026 compared with the previous year.



7.4 The next graph shows the split between informal and formal casework. Informal casework increased to 58% of all cases, up from 35% last year, while formal casework fell to 42%, down from 58%. Informal casework is usually the first stage and is managed by line managers with HR advice. If concerns remain unresolved, cases may move to a formal stage, although some procedures allow cases to begin formally depending on the circumstances.



7.5 The third graph shows trends in the main case types over the past five years. Formal sickness absence cases and formal grievances increased this year. While this may appear concerning, it is likely to reflect stronger case management following the introduction of the Performance Management Framework in summer 2024, together with improved manager guidance and training. A higher number of organisational change programmes during 2025/2026 may also have contributed. With further organisational change, including LGR, case numbers may continue to rise. Changes to employment legislation from 2026 onwards may also increase grievances and related complaints, although there is currently no evidence of that.



Sickness Absence

7.6 At the end of quarter 4 of 2025/26, the number of days lost through sickness absence for the whole Council is calculated as **9.20 days** (9% decrease to 2024/25). The table below shows the year end outturn absence figures for the previous 4 years.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Days lost per person	9.95	9.90	10.69	10.13	9.20

Absence by Directorates

7.7 The graph below shows the number of days lost per person by Directorate.



7.8 Compared to 2024/25 the overall Council sickness absence days lost per worker has decreased by 9% however within the Resources Directorate it has significantly increased by 15% and in People ASC significantly decreased by 26%. Place Directorate has also decreased by 6%. The size of the employee population and the roles they carry out within each directorate is broadly identical as previous years. This does suggest, however, that pro-active management intervention may well have a positive effect on absence rates. For reference, the comparison is:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Resources	6.0	6.5	6.2	7.5	8.6
People ASC	12.0	11.6	14.0	15.4	11.4
People Children Services	NA - Included in People ASC	NA - Included in People ASC	NA - Included in People ASC	8.5	8.6
Place	8.6	8.8	7.0	8.5	8.0

Short term vs long term absence

7.9 Long-term absence is defined as a continuing sickness absence of more than 28 consecutive calendar days. During 2025/26, long-term sickness absence was 52.3%

of all sickness absences (7,535.5 days lost); in 2024/25 it was 52.0% (8,204.5 days lost). This shows a significant decrease in the number of long-term days lost, whereas the proportion of long-term absence from all sickness absence remains the same.

7.10 During 2025/26, short-term sickness absence was 47.7% of all sickness absences (6,862.0 days lost); in 2024/25 it was 48.0% (7,561.5 days lost). This shows a significant decrease in the number of short-term days lost, whereas the proportion of short-term absence from all sickness absence remains the same.

Absence Reasons

7.11 The most common reason for long-term absence in 2025/26 was “*Mental health conditions – includes stress, depression, anxiety*” (35.7% of all long-term absence). The most common reason for short-term absence was “*Minor illnesses – includes coughs/colds and flu; sickness/nausea and diarrhoea*” (39.8% of all short-term absence).

7.12 The top three overall reasons for sickness absence in 2025/26 were:

- Mental health conditions – 25.4% (24/25 comparison 33.4%)
- Minor illnesses – 21.5% (24/25 comparison 15.0%)
- Musculoskeletal problems – 15.9% (24/25 comparison 14.4%)

7.13 Overall, absence related to “*Mental health conditions – includes stress, depression, anxiety*” fell by 31%, from 5,269.5 days in 2024/25 to 3,652.5 days in 2025/26. Despite this reduction, it remains the main cause of long-term absence, accounting for 35.7% of long-term absence and 25.4% of all sickness absence, compared with 33.4% in 2024/25.

Benchmarking

7.14 The CIPD Health and Wellbeing At Work Survey published in September 2025 states the following:

The report reveals another record high for absence levels of 9.4 days per employee in 2025 which is up from 7.8 days in 2023. These levels reflect broader social trends, including an ageing workforce and a rise in long-term health conditions.

7.15 WBC offers a wide variety of wellbeing support for employees including Mental Health First Aiders, an Employee Assistance Programme that includes confidential counselling, access to an Occupational Health Service, dedicated information and signposting on the Council’s intranet, education and training sessions for all staff such as Reasonable Adjustments guidance. There are also monthly communications for managers which slides and information to be shared and discussed with teams across the Council based on monthly themes and calendars of events.

8 Workforce Development

Employee Experience

- 8.1 The Employee Experience function within the Workforce Development Team continues to support a positive, inclusive and supportive working environment across the Council. The team leads on employee engagement, wellbeing and equity, directly supporting the Council's aim to be an employer of choice where staff feel valued, heard and supported.
- 8.2 During 2025/26, activity focused on strengthening engagement, wellbeing and inclusion, and developing confident, inclusive leadership. This included completing the first full cycle of the Employee Engagement Forum (EEF), with representatives gathering and reporting employee feedback. New representatives were recruited and inducted for 2026/27 to maintain continuity and two-way communication.
- 8.3 A psychological safety survey was delivered across the organisation, with findings shared with the Senior Leadership Team. This informed SLT-led listening sessions that reinforced leadership visibility and responsiveness. Leadership capability was also strengthened through *Lead with Confidence* sessions for people managers, supporting consistent and inclusive management in line with the Council's Behaviour Framework.
- 8.4 The team continued to support established employee networks and, in response to feedback, launched a Men's Health Network, expanding opportunities for peer support through virtual channels. Work on reasonable adjustments also progressed through updated procedures and guidance, supported by targeted learning for managers.
- 8.5 Employee voice and recognition were further embedded through support for the Council's first Annual Employee Conference, delivered as part of the Senior Leadership Team's commitment to better communication. Feedback from the event was shared with senior leaders. A peer-to-peer recognition process and manager guidance were also introduced to encourage a positive culture that values contribution and reinforces organisational values.
- 8.6 Taken together, these activities support workforce engagement, wellbeing and inclusion, and help position West Berkshire Council as a supportive, values-led employer. This work contributes to attracting, retaining and developing a committed, high-performing workforce.

Early Careers

8.7 Work Experience:

Early Careers have continued to actively support local schools and students through work experience, T-Level placements, and paid internships.

With placements taking place in Lambourn Library, HR and the Public Protection Partnership to name a few.

Additionally, our CEO Joseph Holmes and Executive Director Sarah Clarke welcomed a total of 48 students from St Bart's and Trinity School across two work experience shadow days in the Council Chamber. These sessions provided interactive activities on topics such as Devolution and emergency planning and gave students the opportunity to engage with council members, including the Leader of the Council.

We also partnered with the **DWP and local Job Centre** to host a careers fair in the Council Chamber, where local businesses showcased employment opportunities to residents. This event was supported by MP Lee Dillon.

8.8 Apprenticeships:

The Council continues to support apprenticeships through use of the levy for both schools and corporate employees. However apprenticeship reforms for 2026 mean a change to the way apprenticeships can be funded and types of apprenticeships standards. The focus is on creating a more flexible, employer-led system with increased funding for young people and a shift toward shorter, high-tech training modules. Key changes include replacing the levy with a "Growth and Skills Levy," reducing funds expiry to 12 months, and introducing new, shorter training courses in AI and digital skills.

Key Changes to Apprenticeship Funding and Structure (2026)

- **Growth and Skills Levy (April 2026):** The Apprenticeship Levy becomes the Growth and Skills Levy, enabling funding for shorter, modular, and "apprenticeship units" rather than only full, long-term programs.
- **Levy Expiry & Top-up:** Levy funds will expire after 12 months instead of 24. The 10% government top-up to monthly levy funds will end on August 1, 2026.
- **Non-Levy Paying SMEs (August 2026):** Training for 16-24-year-olds will be fully funded by the government, removing the previous 5% co-investment cost for these employers.
- **Reduced Government Co-investment:** If an employer's digital account runs out, they must pay 25% of training costs (previously 5%), with the government paying 75%.
- **Level 7 Funding Restrictions (January 2026):** Government funding for Level 7 (Master's level) apprenticeships will be restricted to those under 21, or under 25 for care leavers/EHCP holders.
- **New "Foundation" Apprenticeships (April 2026):** Introduction of new entry-level foundation apprenticeships for 16–21 year olds in hospitality, retail, engineering, and manufacturing.
- **Shorter Assessments (2025/2026):** The end-point assessment (EPA) system is being overhauled for a more flexible model allowing assessments to happen throughout the program, not just at the end.

Minimum Wage Increase (1 April 2026)

- **Apprentice Rate:** The apprentice minimum hourly rate will rise to £8.00.
- **Ages 18-20:** New rate of £10.85.
- **Ages 21+:** New rate of £12.71.

Key Dates for 2026

- **January 1, 2026:** Level 7 funding restrictions take effect.

- **April 1, 2026:** New flexible courses, AI Level 4, and new wage rates come into effect.
- **August 1, 2026:** Full, new funding rules apply to levy funds, including 12-month expiry, 25% co-investment, and SME funding for under 25s.

Defunding of 16 apprenticeship standards from September 26 onwards, to include Team Leading Level 3, Operations Manager Level 5 and Coaching Level 5 which are some of our most utilised apprenticeships for WBC. See table below for full list of defunded apprenticeship qualifications from September 2026.

This is a change for all employers and apprenticeship providers that is taking a little time to get into place but will ensure that better use of the levy is seen and can support the government’s ambition to provide more opportunities for younger people in the future.

APPRENTICESHIPS IDENTIFIED FOR DEFUNDING

Standard	Level	Funding band	Starts 24-25	Starts 25-26 Q1	Number of providers
Team leader	3	£5,000	12,670	3,680	450
Operations manager	5	£9,000	12,530	4,060	398
Coaching professional	5	£5,000	3,580	1,080	102
Chartered manager	6	£22,000	2,930	1,460	67
Lead practitioner in adult care	4	£7,000	2,240	700	119
Improvement practitioner	4	£6,000	950	280	48
Security first line manager	3	£5,000	410	90	9
Facilities management supervisor	3	£5,000	390	120	21
Learning and skills mentor	4	£5,000	380	80	54
Cleaning hygiene operative	2	£5,000	200	60	10
Learning and skills assessor	3	£5,000	130	60	29
Custody and detention professional	3	£4,500	110	30	4
Professional security operative	2	£6,000	80	30	4
Improvement leader	6	£15,000	70	30	13
Public sector compliance investigator and officer	3	£4,000	70	40	1
Outdoor learning specialist	5	£13,000	40	20	5

Source: DWP, Skills England



There are currently 9 dedicated apprentice posts in place at the Council and 109 employees undertaking apprentice funded qualifications. We have supported local businesses through **levy transfers**, enabling their staff to develop in roles such as:

- Specialist Teaching Assistant
- Multi Channel Marketing
- Early Years Lead Practitioner

We continue to see WBC schools making excellent use of the apprenticeship levy to train early years educators, teaching assistants and teachers.

9 Appraisals

- 9.1 The current WBC performance management procedure requires employees to have an annual appraisal, ideally between May and June, subject to some exceptions. Appraisals and performance development plans help align Council and service objectives while supporting staff development. Progress against objectives should also be reviewed during regular 1:1s throughout the year.
- 9.2 Managers can currently record the date of completed annual appraisals in iTrent.
- 9.3 At the time of writing the report, the Council is within the current appraisal window following conclusion of the previous appraisal cycle ie March to June each year. As a result, finalised appraisal completion figures are not yet available for reporting purposes.
- 9.4 It is also recognised that, while appraisal conversations may be taking place, there are gaps in managers updating iTrent with dates of completion which impacts on the data being reported.
- 9.5 Targeted management communications and actions are therefore being implemented to reinforce expectations around both the completion of appraisals and the timely recording of outcomes within iTrent. An updated position and revised completion figure will be provided as part of the next report.

10 Training

- 10.1 The Corporate Training Programme includes both mandatory and non-mandatory training. Some mandatory training contributes to corporate KPIs reported centrally. Training is delivered through a blended approach, including e-learning, virtual sessions (Zoom or Teams), face-to-face training and drop-in sessions, depending on the subject.
- 10.2 Corporate training is commissioned annually and managed by HR with the relevant budget. Each Directorate also holds a development budget for personal learning, and a dedicated resource supports Social Care training because of its larger mandatory and non-mandatory requirements. This section covers corporate training only, not qualifications or training arranged locally by departments. Employees are expected to have a Personal Development Plan so learning needs can be identified and discussed with their line manager.

10.3 The figures below show the number of courses run, these consist of mandatory and non mandatory courses, and completed through the HR Team over the last five years:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of employees who completed at least one course.	1097	1475	1517	1466	1508
Percentage of employees completing any course (<i>inclusive of all training including mandatory</i>) (e-learning or classroom)	89.00	97.61	98.69	94.2	95.4
Total courses completed	7722	9517	8926	11437	10249

10.4 The table above shows courses recorded on iTrent, but it does not capture all training and development activity at WBC. Departments also hold budgets for specialist training, such as CPD for lawyers, which are managed by Executive Directors and approved locally.

10.5 The *Lead with Confidence* sessions for people managers continue to be well received, with more than 130 attendees so far. Feedback has been very positive. Workshops have covered workplace attendance and wellbeing, recognition, and reasonable adjustments, with more subjects and sessions planned for next year.

10.6 Following the success of last year’s Learning at Work Week, another week will run from 18th to 22nd May, with the theme “Many ways to learn”. Last year’s theme was “Get Connected”, and around 325 employees attended sessions, including an AI webinar from ICT and a coaching workshop from the Coaching Hub.

10.7 In 2026, training is likely to focus on managing change and helping staff respond effectively to ongoing organisational change. Leadership and management development will also continue to expand.

11 Conclusion

11.1 The report shows a number of positive developments in people management, including more internal moves, reduced agency spend, more agency workers moving into permanent roles, and continued use of the Comensura contract to recruit permanent staff. Sickness absence has fallen, and increased use of informal performance management may reflect better manager support, education and training. Key areas of ongoing focus remain sickness absence, improved exit data to support retention, implementation of apprenticeship reforms as guidance becomes available, and further leadership and management development in 2026/2027. At the time of writing, it is not yet known whether LGR will affect future employment matters. This report does not

address that in detail, but the HR function will continue to support any future large-scale organisational change and the Council’s people KPIs.

12 Appendices

Appendix A Employment and Equalities Data

Background Papers:

Not applicable

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council’s position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: not applicable

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Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

HR Update – Corporate Board Report

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

Appendix A

WBC Employment Data and Equalities Data as at 31st March 2026

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Headcount	1532	1511	1537	1552	1562
Post FTE	1667.93	1731.10	1767.83	1650.95	1673.64
Occupied FTE	1362.10	1357.90	1387.80	1412.92	1419.92
Vacant FTE	305.83	373.20	380.03	238.03	253.72
Individual Vacant Posts	N/A	N/A	N/A	233	257

Starters and Leavers – 5 years (1st April 2021 to 31st March 2026)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Number of starters in year	210	247	219	214	227
Number of leavers in year	220	242	190	201	248
Turnover (%)	14.30%	15.9%	12.47%	12.9%	16.08%
Voluntary turnover (%)	13.00%	14.86%	11.09%	10.4%	13.13%
Average length of service of leavers	7y	5y 9m	7y 7m	8y	6y 6m
Average length of service of employees employed at year end	8y 9m	8y 10m	8y 9m	8y	8y 5m
Stability index (% employees at year end with 12 or more months' service)	89.43%	86.3%	89.13%	86.79%	86.72%

Percentage % of Starters by Age Range – 5 years (2021 to 2026)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Under 25	20.95	9.72	11.42	4.88	6.62
25-34	22.86	25.10	33.33	27.42	25.15
35-44	23.33	25.91	25.11	26.90	30.35
45-54	21.90	21.05	20.09	25.26	22.44
55-64	9.52	17.00	8.22	15.09	13.67
65+	1.43	1.21	1.83	0.45	1.77

Percentage (%) of all leavers during the last 5 years by age range

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Under 25	9.09	5.79	5.26	3.98	3.61
25-34	12.73	23.97	16.32	17.91	22.49
35-44	19.55	21.07	21.58	22.39	15.26
45-54	22.73	19.83	24.21	15.92	18.07
55-64	21.36	19.83	17.37	21.39	24.90
65+	14.55	9.50	14.74	18.41	15.66

Equalities Data as at 31st March 2026

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Female	77.48	77.30	77.41	75.82	75.99
Male	22.52	22.70	22.59	24.18	24.01
Disability	3.79	4.24	4.58	2.89	4.16
Ethnic Minority	7.77	8.27	9.36	11.45	13.06
Under 25	4.18	3.04	2.69	2.25	1.79
25-34	14.69	15.09	16.76	16.98	16.07
35-44	22.32	21.84	21.94	21.67	23.05
45-54	29.57	29.78	27.90	28.49	28.49
55-64	24.02	24.69	25.02	25.53	25.22
65+	5.22	5.56	5.70	5.08	5.38
Bisexual	1.57	1.59	1.64	0.84	1.34
Gay/Lesbian	0.85	0.86	1.18	0.84	0.77
Heterosexual	61.16	62.74	63.52	27.52	42.64
Other	0.91	0.93	1.11	0.39	0.45
Prefer not to say	5.94	6.29	7.01	1.67	2.88
Prefer to self-describe	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.00
*Unknown	29.50	27.53	25.47	68.81	51.92
Agnostic	2.09	2.32	2.42	1.54	2.30
Atheist	5.42	5.82	6.09	3.86	4.48
Buddhist	0.13	0.26	0.20	0.19	0.19
Christian	32.11	32.76	32.74	14.66	20.29
Hindu	0.26	0.86	0.98	0.51	0.70

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Jewish	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Muslim	0.52	0.33	0.39	0.51	0.64
Sikh	0.39	0.33	0.33	0.13	0.19
None	23.04	23.23	24.10	9.07	16.33
Other religion/belief	1.31	1.52	1.64	0.64	0.70
Prefer not to say	5.81	5.82	6.29	1.67	3.39
*Unknown	28.85	26.74	24.82	67.20	50.77

*High percentages of unknown EDI information affect the figures in all categories. HR are encouraging staff to complete their EDI data in iTrent. Communications have been sent and this is ongoing.

Census Data 2021 for West Berkshire - Equality

	Headcount of population	% of total population
Disabled under the Equality Act	23671	15%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	137777	85%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	5991	4%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	2030	1%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	3856	2%
White	148384	92%
Other ethnic group	1186	1%

Applicant Equalities Data as at 31st March 2026

	Applicants	Shortlisted	Recruited
Female	3441	665	250
Male	1805	306	88
Unspecified	312	39	5
Disability	296	83	24
Ethnic Minority	1752	273	55
Under 25	514	74	16
25-34	1708	302	88
35-44	1260	276	90
45-54	1015	267	82
55-64	584	171	54
65+	53	17	7
Unspecified	424	44	6
Bisexual	136	35	9
Gay/Lesbian	121	27	3
Heterosexual	4651	953	287
Other	13	3	0
Prefer not to say	244	66	19
Blanks	393	67	25
Agnostic	117	32	14
Atheist	174	44	17
Buddhist	32	5	1
Christian	1953	411	113
Hindu	271	32	4

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Jewish	8	1	0
Muslim	303	38	9
Sikh	38	7	1
No religion	1869	433	136
Any other religion	46	13	3
Prefer not to say	276	60	23
Blanks	466	73	21