

Potential Redundancies - Establishment Changes

Committee considering report: Executive

Date of Committee: 29 January 2026 TBC

Portfolio Member: Councillor Iain Cottingham

Report Author: Sarah Clarke

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Council, like many upper tier authorities is facing significant financial challenges. These require that the Council be structured in a manner that enables operations to be undertaken in an effective and efficient manner and supports the achievement of Council priorities to support our communities.
- 1.2 There is also significant legislative and policy change impacting how councils will operate, such as those proposed by the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, the Fair Funding 2.0 reforms, as well as Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.
- 1.3 A number of internal restructures have been consulted upon to ensure that the Council will continue to be able to operate in accordance with its statutory duties, and ensuring that front facing services are prioritised. This report seeks approval for a number of potential redundancy payments.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Executive are asked to authorise the redundancy payments more fully detailed in the Part II **Appendix**.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The total cost of the potential redundancies is set out in the Part II report, but is circa £1.095m including pension costs. In the interests of transparency, this includes details of all potential redundancies that are proposed at this time, but the final figure is anticipated to be lower than this.

	<p>The restructures will deliver annual savings of circa £460k.</p> <p>In the past year, 37.45 FTE of vacant posts have also been deleted or are proposed for deletion from the establishment to deliver savings of £1.64m.</p> <p>Employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) will automatically be paid their pension (with no reduction and no enhancement in the amount due) if they are aged 55 or over on the date that their employment ends due to redundancy.</p> <p>There have been previous, unsuccessful, attempts by Government in respect of a statutory restriction on exit payments made to employees working in the public sector to a maximum value of £95k. However, guidance issued by government in 2021 stated: "For the avoidance of doubt, it is still vital that exit payments deliver value for the taxpayer and employers should always consider whether exit payments are fair and proportionate". It is considered that the payments proposed in this report meet the test of being fair and proportionate.</p> <p>The sum above details the 'worst case' scenario and assumes that none of the employees can be redeployed into alternative employment within the Council.</p>
Human Resource:	<p>There are significant human resource implications associated with this report and the the proposals are being implemented in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy.</p> <p>The establishment is kept under review by Departments and changes will routinely be made to meet the needs of the business. This is managed by reviewing vacant posts, and ensuring that all recruitment activity undertaken meets the needs of the business.</p>
Legal:	<p>Under the Council's Constitution the power to issue notice to an employee to cease employment by reason of redundancy rests with the Service Director. However the power to authorise any associated redundancy payment (and early retirement costs where appropriate) rests with the Executive (with limited delegation to the Chief Executive).</p>

Risk Management:	None directly			
Property:	None directly			
Policy:	As noted above, the proposals are being implemented in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy.			
	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:	<p>The proposals will be implemented in line with the Council's organisational change policy which requires consultation with those impacted.</p> <p>A number of proposals have already been subject to consultation with officers impacted. This includes briefings and consultation meetings with officers and teams impacted by the proposals.</p> <p>Unions have and will be consulted regarding the proposals detailed in this report.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 Local government is currently undergoing major reform and the Council, like all upper tier councils, also faces unprecedented financial pressures arising from increasing demand, complexity of cases, and the impact of the increased cost of commissioned services.
- 4.2 To set a balanced budget in 2025/26 with appropriate levels of reserves as recommended by the Council's Chief Finance Officer, the Council requested Exceptional Financial Support from the Government in early 2025.
- 4.3 The Local Government Finance Settlement announced in December 2025 will leave West Berkshire Council amongst the most negatively impacted councils in the country. In order to ensure that the Council can operate effectively having regard to legislative and policy changes, a number of internal restructures have therefore taken place.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The purpose of this report is to set out details of potential redundancies that may occur, as a result of restructures and the need for services to deliver savings. This report seeks approval from Executive to make the redundancy (and if appropriate, retirement) payments associated with the required staffing changes.
- 5.2 The information contained within this report has been sourced from information held by HR, Finance and Payroll.

5.3 The information presented is the maximum cost to the Council, which may reduce as redeployment opportunities arise in the Council during any consultation and notice periods.

Background

5.4 Local government is currently undergoing major reform through Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, proposed changes through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, and across Children's Services, Adult Social Care and SEND. Children's services are being reshaped through the Families First programme, introducing multidisciplinary family help teams, statutory multi-agency child protection teams, and mandated family group decision-making.

5.5 Local government is having to manage significant and increasing financial pressures from rising demand for services (for example in social care and SEND), inflation and rising costs, and reduced government funding. This has resulted in an increasing number of authorities issuing a s114 Notice or becoming reliant on requests for Exceptional Financial Support.

5.6 The Local Government Finance Settlement announced in December 2025 will leave West Berkshire Council amongst the most negatively impacted councils in the country. Under the proposals, the Council's Revenue Support Grant, a key source of Government funding, will fall sharply from £27 million to £16 million in two years. Under the terms of the proposed settlement, by 2029, the Council's core spending power will be £191 million. With inflation at 3%, the cost of essential services such as adult and children's social care, waste services and debt repayments will consume almost all of this.

5.7 The Council will require additional Exceptional Financial Support to ensure that it can set a balanced budget and operate within that. Exceptional Financial Support is an accounting treatment that permits an authority to apply capital funding to revenue budgets. The borrowing cost of these funds must be met by the Council from its revenue budgets.

Proposals

5.8 The changing policy landscape combined with the challenging financial position means that it is essential that the Council is structured in a manner that will best support it to operate as efficiently as possible whilst protecting essential front-line services.

5.9 As noted above, 37.45 FTE of vacant posts will have been deleted from the establishment by the end of March 2026, delivering savings of £1.64m.

5.10 Restructures have also taken place in several Departments, including Finance, Property and Procurement, and Children's Services. These restructures result in a number of posts being deleted, and post holders being placed at risk of redundancy. Under the proposed restructures, a number of new posts are also created which those placed at risk of redundancy may apply to move to.

5.11 A review of Finance, Property and Procurement was undertaken by the Service Director as the Services in question had not been comprehensively reviewed in a number of

years. The proposed structure will ensure that the department operates in a manner that is scalable, and responsive to the needs of the organisation.

- 5.12 The strategic restructure of Children's Social Care will enable West Berkshire to fully implement the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP). This is a national initiative led by the Department for Education (DfE), launched in April 2025 as part of the wider *Stable Homes, Built on Love* reform strategy.
- 5.13 Where appropriate, the proposals will be subject to consultation with officers in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy.
- 5.14 Where staff are at risk of redundancy, the Council will seek to support those officers by redeploying them to suitable alternative employment. That support will be offered where relevant as part of these proposals. The Council also supports officers who are redeployed into roles which are at a lower grade than their existing post, by offering salary protection for 18 months.
- 5.15 As these proposals may result in a number of post holders being made redundant, this report seeks authority if necessary to make the associated redundancy payments. It should be stressed that the potential redundancies are a worst-case scenario, for circumstances where employees in posts that will be deleted, do not find suitable alternative employment.

5.16 In summary, the proposals aim to:

- Align resources with statutory and priority functions.
- Reduce non-essential roles to achieve savings.
- Maintain organisational resilience while meeting budget targets.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Consideration was given to not proceeding with the proposals. This option was ruled out as there was a clear business need to ensure that Departments are appropriately structured to meet statutory duties and to respond effectively to support the Council priorities. The existing structures do not support this so doing nothing is not an option.
- 6.2 The proposed changes could be delayed. This is not recommended as it will have an adverse impact on the operation of the teams in question and will also negatively impact the Council's ability to deliver savings.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council must operate in a manner that enables it to work effectively in meeting the needs of our communities.
- 7.2 The proposed redundancies are considered essential to enable the Council to operate as effectively as possible in the discharge of its duties serving the communities of West Berkshire.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Potential Redundancies – EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

This Appendix is **not for Publication** by virtue of exempt information of the description contained in Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. These are:

Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual

Paragraph 2 – information identifying an individual

Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person

8.2 Appendix B - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers:

None

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 Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Wards affected: Not applicable

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