

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Personnel Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 31 March 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 10.59 am

21 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 28th January 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

22 Declarations of interest

None.

23 Public speaking

None.

24 Matters of urgency

None.

25 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None.

26 Health and Safety update quarter 3

The Assistant Director for Environmental Health had provided the committee with a review of the Council's performance in relation to Health and Safety and the work undertaken by the Corporate Health and Safety Team during the third quarter of 2025/26. Highlighted work included:

- Implementation of the new Corporate Safety and Lone Worker systems are progressing well.
- Meeting of Central Joint Safety Panel on 18/11/25. Currently reviewing membership criteria before arranging next meeting.
- No reportable (to HSE) accidents in Q3. Other accidents and violent incident reports reviewed and investigated as necessary.
- Significant amount of training delivered in Q3.
- Site audits carried out. Significant progress in addressing issues.
- Fire and blue light drills up to date.
- Service risk assessments currently being updated.

The Vice Chair welcomed the report and the improvements made over recent months, particularly in light of the time resource required for aspects such as detailed risk assessments.

RESOLVED that the third quarter report be noted.

27 **People Data**

The Corporate Lead – People and Information presented her report, highlighting key data from the period up to end January 2026:

- Headcount increased from 565 to 569; FTE rose from 529.34 to 532.52, moving closer to the budgeted establishment.
- 10 posts currently attract market supplements, covering 21 employees (down by one this period). The annual review for market supplements is scheduled for April 2026.
- Vacancy administration alignment work with Finance still ongoing; figures expected to change once completed. Recorded vacancies reduced from 67 to 57; further reductions are expected after Assistant Director review.
- Recruitment Activity stood at 24 posts actively being recruited; 13 appointments made and pending start. 34 posts were under review as part of vacancy reconciliation work.
- Agency-filled positions reduced from 29 to 20 following iTrent data cleansing.
- Average time to hire increased to 84.73 days (short-period fluctuation).
- Longer-term trend remains stable at between 58 and 62 days, within acceptable margins.
- Year-to-date voluntary turnover at 7.82%, projected 9.38% by year end (improved from earlier 10.42%);
- 58 leavers by end of January (2 fewer than same period last year) with the main drivers being retirement (28%) and career moves (27.1%).
- Involuntary Turnover increased to 2.67% from 1.78% same period last year; still within expected norms.
- Sickness Absence
- The projected year-end absence: 10.60 days per FTE (improved from July's 11.42); Work-related stress remains main long-term cause, mirroring national trends. Without long-term sickness, projected absence would be 5.13 days per FTE. To mitigate this, targeted wellbeing and management support interventions ongoing.

Comment from the committee included congratulating on the improving figures.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the People Data report.

28 **HR update**

The Corporate Lead – People and Information outlined her report to the committee that set out an overview of key areas of activity across the organisation in relation to people activity.

People Strategy & Staff Survey: A staff briefing was held on 11 March which included the people strategy. Following the survey feedback, the key priorities were on greater visibility and communication.

Further work on the delivery of the strategy has included:

- Mentoring Programme framework developed following strong demand from staff and the scheme is expected to go live April 2026;
- Coffee & Connect initiative launched to encourage networking post-Covid. A successful event was held for International Women's Day and further sessions are planned;
- Total Reward Information: one-stop resource for all reward/benefits developed and due to be launched on One Team East Devon hub; with an external version to follow for recruitment.
- Staff survey feedback would be incorporated into People Strategy Action Plan, and each directorate had agreed and is communicating three priority areas to their teams;

- Two staff-led groups had been established: “How We Connect” and “Safe & Supported” with their terms of reference completed and first meetings scheduled;
- Review underway on Performance Excellence Reviews and 1-2-1 meetings to ensure alignment with new behaviours and the people strategy. The annual timing of PERs under consideration due to operational challenges;
- Major legislative update implemented across 2026–27 in relation to the Employment Rights Act 2025, including ensuring compliance and updating policies as stages of the new act roll out.
- A team of four will represent EDDC at the South West Challenge on 26 March, participating in strategic simulations for leadership development.

On learning and development, it was reported that:

- 14 active apprentices; 9 completions between April 2025–March 2026.
- No levy funds expired; average spend £7,887/month.
- Government’s 10% levy top-up removed from April 2026—minimal impact expected.
- Learning and Development Plan being shaped around the 70:20:10 learning model; with greater focus on blended learning and shorter (½-day) sessions.
- Positive pilot of change & resilience workshops—now incorporated for 2026/27.

The committee were also updated on the Streetscene workforce:

- Improved resourcing through integration of permanent/seasonal needs and reduced essential criteria (e.g., removal of driving licence requirement for some roles); with a new accessible application form created.
- Recruitment fair held 13 March at Camperdown Depot (15 expressions of interest); Manstone Depot event planned for April.
- Induction pack currently being reviewed for consistency and quality.

A new employee benefit – Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) would be available from May 2026, providing tax and NI savings for staff and NI savings for the Council. A suggestion from the committee included consideration of the contribution saving to the Council under the scheme being passed onto the employee, as happened in some private sector businesses.

In response to a question, the committee would also be kept updated on work specifically relating to assisting staff during the period of preparation for local government review. The committee welcomed the comprehensive update and specifically highlighted the success of the apprentices.

The Chair welcomed the national campaign for recruitment to local government, and thanked the Corporate Lead – People and Information and her team for their continued work.

RESOLVED that the HR update report be noted.

29 **2025 LGA Survey results**

The committee considered the Local Government Association’s published data on the national picture of the local government workforce. This gave the committee some benchmarking data and helpful information of the national picture, including:

- Changes in size of the workforce;
- Factors impacting sourcing staff;
- Apprenticeships;

- Staff age groups across sectors;
- Staff ethnicity;
- Staff disability status;
- Gender breakdown and pay gap;
- Average salaries;
- Total staff bills;
- Collective bargaining for pay awards.

The report would be disseminated to all Councillors for information.

RESOLVED to note the LGA government workforce report for 2025.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

E Rylance (Chair)
J Loudoun (Vice-Chair)
P Arnott
K Blakey
V Bonetta
T Dumper

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

S Westerman
R Collins

Officers in attendance:

Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health
James Docherty, Assistant Director Governance & Legal
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Gemma Roberts, Corporate Lead People and Information Governance

Councillor apologies:

A Bailey
B Bailey
J Brown
J Heath
N Hookway
Y Levine
E Wragg

Chair

Date: