

BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting of the Council on 20th May 2026

Delivery of the People Strategy

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Resources

Classification	This report is Public
Contact Officers	HR Business Partner Chief Executive

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report is split into 4 parts, as follows:

- **Annual Leave Entitlement** - To consider and approve an uplift in the Council's annual leave entitlement for Council employees from 23 to 25 days at appointment and from 28 to 30 days after five years' service, while retaining the existing 3.5-day Christmas closedown. The proposal aligns the Council with Derbyshire peer authorities and supports the Council's approach to recruitment and retention, wellbeing and equality objectives.
- **Armed Forces Covenant** – To consider and approve a commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant Policy as part of the Council's commitment to reservists, cadet personnel and their families, and to assist with the Council's ambition to achieve the Armed Forces Covenant Silver Award.
- **Compassionate Leave** - To consider and approve the introduction of a paid compassionate leave provision for Council employees.
- **National Joint Council Pay Spine** – To consider and approve moving employees from Bolsover District Council's own independent pay spine to the National Joint Council National (NJC) pay spine in readiness for Local Government Reorganisation.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 On 2nd March 2026, Executive approved the Council's new People Strategy for 2026-28 (attached at **Appendix 1**). The strategy sets out the need to ensure the Council is able to continue to attract and retain high quality employees over the next two years against the backdrop of Local Government Reorganisation. Consequently, a number of improvements to employee's Terms and Conditions have been identified for consideration and review. These proposals will ensure the Council's employees are placed on an equal footing with other Derbyshire Councils.

- 1.2 In addition, there is also a desire for the Council to do more to promote and support those connected with the armed forces and to strive to achieve the 'Silver' status of the Armed Forces Covenant. To this end a policy has been drafted (See **Appendix 2** attached).

Annual Leave

- 1.3 The Council currently provides 23 days annual leave on appointment, rising to 28 days after five years' service, plus 3.5 days for the Christmas close down. Members of the Senior Leadership Team receive 32 days plus 3.5 closedown days; the Chief Executive receives 34 days plus 3.5 close down days.
- 1.4 Recent labour market conditions, recruitment challenges for key roles, and our recently adopted People Strategy highlight the need to remain competitive in recruiting and retaining key staff.
- 1.5 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is currently scheduled for implementation in 2028. There is a significant risk that, without action, employees could transfer into the new authority with less annual leave entitlement than colleagues from other councils. This disparity would create employee relations challenges and perceptions of unfairness. Ensuring competitive leave now mitigates this risk and positions the Council as an equitable employer ahead of LGR.
- 1.6 The table below shows the comparison of annual leave entitlement for Councils across Derbyshire:

Employer	Leave at Start	Leave after 5 Years
Bolsover District Council (current)	23	28
North East Derbyshire DC (G1-9) – (Enhanced rates for G10 and above)	30	35
South Derbyshire DC	25	34
Amber Valley BC	23	31
Derbyshire Dales DC	26	30
High Peak BC	28	33
Chesterfield BC	23	32
Erewash BC	29	33
Average (Derbyshire Councils)	27.2	32.2

1.7 A summary of the proposals for annual leave is as follows:

To uplift NJC annual leave to 25 days on appointment and 30 days after five complete years of service.

- Retain the existing 3.5-day Christmas closedown.
- No change to SLT or Chief Executive entitlements.
- Effective from 1 June 2026 for all eligible staff; pro-rated for part-time employees.

Armed Forces Covenant

1.8 Bolsover District Council is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and is committed to ensuring those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and with respect. The Council currently holds ERS Bronze status and wishes to formalise and strengthen its commitment in order to meet the **Silver Award** requirements. This policy provides a clear framework for delivering that commitment.

1.9 The proposed policy at Appendix 2, outlines the Council's commitments to the Armed Forces community, including:

- Supporting Reservists through clear mobilisation arrangements with up to ten additional paid days' leave for Reserve training or exercise.
- Ensuring fair and inclusive recruitment and selection practices for members of the Armed Forces community.
- Promoting Armed Forces-friendly policies across the organisation.
- Supporting Cadet Force Adult Volunteers through flexible working arrangements.
- Maintaining active engagement with Armed Forces representatives and exploring opportunities to support recruitment and employment initiatives.

1.10 The policy also sets out arrangements for implementation, monitoring, and review, with oversight by nominated officers including HR personnel, and reporting through appropriate governance channels.

Compassionate Leave

1.11 Compassionate leave is intended to support employees experiencing significant personal distress, most commonly before or following bereavement or during serious family illness or other difficult circumstances. While the Council currently seeks to support employees through a combination of managerial discretion, annual leave, unpaid leave and flexible working arrangements, there is no clear, consistent corporate entitlement to paid compassionate leave. A paid provision is in line with other neighbouring Councils.

1.12 The absence of a defined entitlement can lead to inconsistency in application, uncertainty for employees at an already difficult time, and reliance on individual

managerial judgement. This can inadvertently result in perceived inequity across services and teams.

- 1.13 The Council has a clear commitment to supporting employee wellbeing, promoting a positive employment culture and being a fair and responsible employer. Introducing a formal paid compassionate leave entitlement would provide clarity, consistency and reassurance to employees while reinforcing these commitments.
- 1.14 It is proposed that the Council introduce a policy entitlement for compassionate leave of up to five working days paid compassionate leave for eligible employees.
- 1.15 Compassionate leave would be approved in exceptional compassionate situations at the discretion of managers. Clear guidance would be developed to support consistent decision-making while retaining flexibility to reflect individual circumstances.
- 1.16 The proposed entitlement would be in addition to statutory rights and would not replace other forms of leave or support, such as annual leave, unpaid leave, flexible working arrangements or access to employee wellbeing services.
- 1.17 Eligibility would be limited to employees who have completed a minimum of six months' continuous service with the Council. This ensures that the entitlement is targeted at established employees while maintaining a proportionate and sustainable approach.
- 1.18 The policy would be communicated clearly to managers and employees, with HR support provided to ensure appropriate and sensitive application.

National Joint Council Pay Spine

- 1.19 The Council's Pay Agreement confirms that the national "Single Status Agreement" was adopted from 1 April 2009, using a local job evaluation scheme and moved to a localised pay structure. It is thought that this happened to initially support an equal pay agenda, implement Single Status, adopt local job evaluation, gain local pay flexibility and manage costs.
- 1.20 As the Council moves toward Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), it is essential that our employment framework supports a smooth transition into the future unitary authority model. One critical component of this is the alignment of our pay structure with the National Joint Council (NJC) pay spine. Transitioning employees from the Council's exclusive pay spine to the NJC pay spine will ensure consistency, fairness, and long-term workforce stability during and beyond the reorganisation period.
- 1.21 Moving to the NJC pay spine aligns the Council with the pay framework used by the majority of neighbouring authorities. This alignment supports:
 - Consistency across councils, reducing complexity when integrating workforces.
 - A harmonised approach to pay and grading, which will help minimise discrepancies and avoid internal inequity within the new authority structure.
 - Futureproofing as the NJC framework is nationally recognised and resilient to organisational changes.

- 1.22 As the Council prepares for structural change, workforce stability is vital. The NJC structure supports this by:
- Embedding a well-understood national pay framework, improving our attractiveness to external candidates already familiar with NJC pay.
 - Reducing the risk of losing employees to neighbouring councils offering a more predictable national pay model.
 - Providing a clearer organisational goals around development and talent retention outlined in the People Strategy.
- 1.23 The NJC pay structure will reduce administrative complexity by using a streamlined, externally governed pay spine, managed nationally rather than requiring local negotiation. It will support clearer long-term workforce cost modelling, which is particularly important in the lead up to LGR.
- 1.24 Aligning pay now reduces the scale and complexity of harmonisation that would otherwise fall to the new unitary authority post-LGR. Early alignment removes a risk for the new organisation, which will already face substantial operational and cultural integration challenges. It will demonstrate organisational maturity and preparedness, positioning the Council as a proactive partner in the transition.
- 1.25 In summary, transitioning to the NJC pay spine ahead of LGR is a strategic, fair and future-focused decision that aligns the Council with regional and national practice, and it will support staff morale and retention. It will minimise risk for both the current and future authority. It will strengthen transparency, fairness and good governance in pay. Making this change now will reduce complexity later and positions the Council strongly for the upcoming transformation.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

Financial Implications written by the Section 151 Officer

Annual Leave

- 2.1 For areas within the Council where staff are predominantly office-based, there will be no real cost to increasing the annual leave entitlement as proposed in the report. Most services are able to manage leave without the need for additional staff. However, in frontline services such as Streetscene, Housing Repairs & Maintenance, and Leisure, where casual staff are used to cover annual leave, there may be a cost. A comprehensive costing exercise undertaken by the HR & Payroll Manager, estimates the maximum cost to be approximately £53k per annum.

Armed Forces Covenant

- 2.2 It is expected that any additional cost arising from this part of the report will be minimal. Additional leave to support reservists is likely to be the only cost. It is not known with any certainty whether any of the Council's current staff are reservists.

Compassionate Leave

- 2.3 This part of the proposal is likely to have similar implications for the Council as the annual leave part, although the approval for this leave only being in exceptional compassionate situations, would mean the cost is likely to be minimal.

National Joint Council Pay Spine

- 2.4 Again calculated by the HR & Payroll Manager, the table below gives the cost of converting our current pay structure to align with the NJC pay spine:

	Salary	National Insurance	Pension	Total
General Fund	£79,262.33	£11,889.35	£16,486.56	£107,638.24
Housing Revenue Account	£29,371.22	£4,405.68	£6,109.21	£39,886.11
Total Cost	£108,633.55	£16,295.03	£22,595.77	£147,524.35

The table shows there will be a cost of implementing the NJC pay spines to general fund of £108k, and to the housing revenue account of £40k in the first year. In subsequent years there will continue to be an extra cost compared to our current budgets, as the NJC pay spines are higher than our BDC ones. It is considered for the 2 years until LGR takes effect, this can be afforded from the NNDR Growth Protection Reserve and HRA Reserves.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Approving these changes will ensure the Council's terms and conditions are in line with other Derbyshire Authorities. The changes will assist the Council with recruitment and retention of staff at a time where there is uncertainty.

4. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Annual Leave provision - maintain the existing leave provision for employees on the basis that, following Local Government Reorganisation, all affected local councils are likely to review terms and conditions as part of a bigger exercise after the transfer of staff. This has been rejected as the Council is at risk of recruitment and retention difficulties in the meantime.
- 4.2 Armed Forces Covenant - the Council could maintain its existing approach which has been to respond to requests for leave and support them on an ad hoc basis without reference to a policy. The Council would not meet the requirements for the Silver Award status.
- 4.3 Compassionate Leave - maintain the Council's existing approach for employees to use other leave provision available to them such as accrued

flexitime, annual leave and unpaid leave to assist them. This has been rejected as the Council is at risk of recruitment and retention difficulties.

- 4.4 Alignment of Pay to NJC Pay Spine - maintain the local pay spine for employees on the basis that, following Local Government Reorganisation, all affected local councils are likely to review terms and condition as part of a bigger exercise after the transfer of staff. This has been rejected as the Council is at risk of recruitment and retention difficulties in the meantime.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council approves (subject to consultation and agreement with our Trade Unions):

- (1) The uplift of the Council's annual leave to 25 days on appointment and 30 days after five years' service, effective 1 June 2026 (pro rata).
- (2) The Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant Policy at Appendix 2 and the aim to achieve 'Silver' status.
- (3) The introduction of a maximum five day paid compassionate leave entitlement for employees who have completed six months' continuous service with the Council.
- (4) The alignment of the Council's pay spine back to National Joint Council Pay Spine as set out within the report and financial implications.
- (5) The Medium-Term Financial Plan be updated with the financial implications of this report as part of the 2026/27 budget refresh in the Autumn of 2026. This to include the increased annual leave cover, and the movement to the NJC pay spine.

Approved by Councillor Clive Moesby, Portfolio Holder for Resources

IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Risk	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Details: As detailed within the specific section of the report.		
On behalf of the Section 151 Officer		

Legal (including Data Protection)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Details: The Council will need to consult with Unison and Unite in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.		

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing Yes No

Details:

The implications for staff have been set out within the report. Any changes to staff terms and conditions will be subject to formal consultation with trade unions and all relevant Council policies and procedures will be followed where required.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

Equality and Diversity, and Consultation Yes No

Details:

None arising directly from this report.

Environment Yes No

Details:

None arising directly from this report.

DECISION INFORMATION

Is the decision a Key Decision?

A Key Decision is an Executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more wards in the District, or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: -

Yes No

If the decision is a key decision, please indicate which threshold applies:

Revenue (a) Results in the Council making Revenue Savings of £75,000 or more or **(b)** Results in the Council incurring Revenue Expenditure of £75,000 or more.

(a) **(b)**

Capital (a) Results in the Council making Capital Income of £150,000 or more or **(b)** Results in the Council incurring Capital Expenditure of £150,000 or more.

(a) **(b)**

<p>District Wards Significantly Affected: <i>(to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District)</i></p> <p>Please state below which wards are affected or tick All if all wards are affected:</p>	<p>All <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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<p>All key decisions are subject to Scrutiny call-in unless the call-in period is to be waived, however, exemption from call-in is only with the agreement of the Monitoring Officer)</p> <p>Is this Key Decision subject to Scrutiny Call-In? (leave blank if not applicable)</p> <p>If No, has the Monitoring Officer agreed?</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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<p>Consultation carried out: <i>(this is any consultation carried out prior to the report being presented for approval)</i></p> <p>Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deputy Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Executive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Details: - Trade Union</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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<p>Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, Environment, Housing</p>
<p>The report has resulted from the Council's People Strategy which was included as a Customers Council Ambition target.</p>

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title
1	People Strategy
2	Draft Commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant Policy

<p>Background Papers <i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive, you must provide copies of the background papers).</i></p>