Report to: Strategy, Performance & Finance

Decision Date: 25 November 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Peacock

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Customer Services & Organisation Development

Lead Officer: Sarah Lawrie, Business Manager - HR & Training

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Non Key Decision
Report Title	HR & Training Resources Report
Purpose of Report	To notify of sustained increase in workload, upcoming changes to employment law and future project work (including LGR) supporting a request for changes to the team structure and establishment on a permanent basis.
Recommendations	To approve changes to the structure removing 2 temporary posts and creating 2 permanent posts.
Alternative Options Considered	Considered continued with temporary posts but this is not suitable as business needs have now changed and the skills required are different.
Reason for Recommendation	To support current and future workload ensuring capacity to meet the needs of the organisation and the community plan objectives alongside future requirements for LGR.
Decision Taken	Proposal to make changes to the structure removing 2 temporary posts and creating 2 permanent posts is approved.

1.0 <u>Background</u>

1.1 The HR & Training team was restructured in 2024 to separate operational and strategic activity to ensure adequate progress on both operational and strategic activity. Prior to this the reactive nature of the operational services took precedent, this had an impact on our ability to move forward with strategic change and also made for a pressured and unhealthy working environment. We now have dedicated resource to focus on moving forward with strategic workstreams although much of the resource is temporary to support the R&R project.

1.2 Once the R&R project is complete, there will be some additional work required within the Strategy Team to maintain the quality of job design and job evaluation achieved. We have also identified during the project that when a job is reviewed the wider team will need to be considered to prevent unintended consequences as identified in a number of service areas during the R&R project leading to additional work to support restructures and job changes.

1.3 The Operational Team have been experiencing a sustained increase in case management activity over the past 12 months or so, and this is expected to continue and is challenging to manage and co-ordinate within normal working time. The increase in case work is caused by a number of internal and external factors and cases are becoming more complex with multiple strands on a number of cases.

1.4 There has been a sustained increase sickness absence for short and long term sickness which is generating more workload supporting managers to deal with the cases. Particularly with long term sickness absence, a number of staff have been seriously ill leading to medical capability and ill health retirement. A large proportion of the increases in short and long term sickness absence has been due to reported stress at home and work which also contributes to a increase in the number of stress risk assessments and capability procedures.

1.5 Future Workstreams

- **The Employment Rights Bill**
  Adding to future planned strategic workloads and the likelihood of additional operational activity, Central Government have released their plan to Make Work Pay. Consultation with the Department for Business and Trade has commenced and it is expected to receive Royal Assent in Autumn 2025

  This will encompass changes to a whole raft of employment law elements such as TU activity, Sick pay, collective consultation, family friendly policies, whistleblowing, Gender Pay Gap and Menopause, Terms and Conditions changes, tribunals, harassment, unfair dismissal – day 1 right to complain to an Employment Tribunal, zero hours contracts, agency workers, flexible working, rights of pregnant workers, equal pay, ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting. Key dates for change are:

- **Autumn 2025**
  Changes to Trade Union rules

- **April 2026**
  Changes to Paternity and Parental Leave / Collective Redundancy / Whistleblowing / Gender Pay Gap / Menopause / Trade Union / Fair Work Agency

- **October 2026**
  Changes to Dismissal and Rehire / Harassment / ET Time Limits / Trade Union rules / Public Sector Outsourcing / Social Adult Care Negotiating Body

- **2027**
  Changes to Unfair Dismissal (day 1 right) / Pregnancy and Maternity / Bereavement / Zero Hours Contracts / Compensation for Cancelled Shifts / Flexible Working / Harassment / Collective Redundancy / Trade Union Laws / Regulation of Umbrella Companies

This means a complete re-write of a number of policies and procedures, educating managers on implementation of the changes, delivering solutions to any operational impacts and administration of any new monitoring activity.

For example, the proposed changes to Zero Hours contracts, whilst this element hasn't completed the approvals process as yet, the latest iteration suggests that workers on zero hours contracts who do regular hours over a specific reference period must be offered guaranteed hours during the next reference period. This may change; however, this could mean a significant change to the way we use and monitor the use of relief workers impacting Environmental Services and Heritage & Culture Business Units.

- **New GDPR legislation, data storage and retention**
  The new Data Use and Access Act requires us to declare the data and people now have the right to make a formal complaint about the way in which their data is being used.

  The planned move to SharePoint next year enables better data management and automation of data cleansing in line with the data retention arrangements in place.

  This project will require significant officer time to ensure that we have the right data in the right place and it is held securely and is able to be accessed only by those requiring it.

- **LGR**
  We are expecting a significant amount of work to support the LGR program, at the moment it is undetermined however, HR's role will be central and multifaceted, ranging from hands-on operational tasks to high-level strategic advice. The work that will be generated for HR will be intensive, requiring capacities in legal expertise, change management, communication, analytics, and leadership development, all aimed at securing a stable, effective, and future-ready workforce. A further request will come to SLT at the appropriate time alongside an organisational wide request for LGR support.

1.6 Current Establishment

The HR & Training team currently has a headcount of 12 and an establishment of 12.26 FTE, including 2 x FTE in temporary posts for the R&R project and 1 x FTE Apprentice, which is due to be filled on 03/11/25 funded from the Central Apprentice Budget.

Currently 4 posts report into the HR Business Partner and the remaining 8 posts report into the BM.

2.0 Proposal

2.1 Create a new permanent post of HR Operations Team Leader reporting to the Business Manager from 01 December 2025 at NS13 to take line management responsibility of the operational team members and to have proactive oversight of case management to deal with complex issues early on and help reduce impact of complex cases and identify early resolution options. To work alongside the HR Business Partner to analyse issues within Business Units and Directorates to address common themes and help improve manager capability.

This post will reduce the amount of time the BM spends on operational activity, create headroom to focus on strategic direction/LGR activities and give additional capacity to deal with the most complex casework and reduce the length of cases and their impact.

2.2 Create a new permanent post of Senior HR Officer – Projects/Systems from 01 December 2025 at NS11 reporting to the HR Business Partner. This post will support additional job evaluation and job design activity to maintain the progress achieved as a result of the R&R Project. The post will also carry out policy reviews and training for managers following the deployment of the Employment Rights Bill and other project activity to support delivery of the Workforce Development Strategy. Additionally, the post will have some dedicated time focussed on HR systems to carry out regular auditing, testing and implementation of system updates, develop the existing systems to improve system performance, investigate faults and work with system suppliers to apply temporary and permanent fixes. The establishment of this new post will provide capacity on the strategic side of the service for the implementation of genuine enhancements in HR service delivery, the ability to drive continuous improvement, and to better align our services with the evolving needs of the Council and our workforce. They will also be able to support the occasional Investigation or Hearing for the HR Operations Team.

2.3 Move the line management of the L&D officer under the HR Business Partner from 01/04/2026 (after R&R has completed) creating further headroom for the BM and improving resilience of L&D and other wider strategic projects. This can be accommodated in the current grading for the HRBP and would not lead to an increase in grade but does provide a broadening of responsibility which will assist the postholder during any forthcoming LGR re-organisation activity.

2.4 Move line management of the L&D Apprentice to the L&D Officer with immediate effect, affording an opportunity to develop the skills of the L&D Officer with some line management experience which will assist the postholder during any forthcoming LGR re-organisation activity. This can be accommodated under the current grade for this post, whilst there is an increase in points for this addition it remains within the current NS11 grade.

2.5 Proposed Establishment

This proposal will take our permanent establishment from 01/12/2025 to 12.26 FTE with a perm / temp split of 11.25 FTE perm / 1 FTE temp (Apprentice).

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Y	Equality & Diversity	Y
Human Resources	Y	Human Rights	n/a
Legal	n/a	Data Protection	n/a
Digital & Cyber Security	Y	Safeguarding	n/a
Sustainability	n/a	Crime & Disorder	n/a
LGR	n/a	Tenant Consultation	n/a

Financial Implications (FIN25-26/160)

4.1 The table below details the budget adjustments required to implement the proposed structure. If approved, these changes will be incorporated into the budget-setting process. The team currently comprises 12.26 FTEs, which will remain unchanged for 2025/26. However, from 2026/27 onwards, the FTE count will increase by 2. As outlined in section 2.6 of the report, which provides a breakdown of role changes, additions, and reconfigurations, the table reflects the corresponding increase to the revenue budget.

	2025/26	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**
Current Structure Costs	558,320	578,250	599,817	620,560
Proposed Establishment	578,460	598,440	619,690	641,630
Change in Budget required	**20,140**	**20,190**	**19,873**	**21,070**

4.2 All roles included in both the current and proposed staffing budgets have been costed to include National Insurance contributions and Superannuation costs.

4.3 The additional cost of £20,140 in 2025/26 relates to the new Human Resources Operations Team Leader post covering the period from 1 December 2025 to 31 March 2026. The FTC budget continues to fund the new Senior HR Officer – Projects & Systems through the end of 2025/26. Positive salary variances within the Customer Services and Organisational Development Directorate are available to offset this additional expense.

4.4 At the time of writing the report is not known how much work would be carried out by the new post on the HRA, this will be reviewed with the Director of Housing Health and Wellbeing.

HR Implications & Equality & Diversity HR2526/2375 SL

4.5 In Q1 & Q2 of the current financial year, the Council's permanent establishment increased by 12.48 FTE, this proposal would increase the permanent establishment by a further 2 FTE.

4.6 If approved, the proposal above represents positive change and opportunities for growth for some members of the team and ensures that we can continue to provide good quality services to the Council and meet the needs of the organisation now and in future with the forthcoming LGR program.

4.7 All recruitment will be carried out in line with policy and procedure giving due regard to Equality and Diversity isuues.

Digital Implications

4.8 An additional laptop may be required for a short period should the post advertised externally start before the FTC expires and the employee leaves in January 2026.

Background Papers and Published Documents
Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None