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AGENDA

Meeting: **Staffing Committee**

Date: **22nd July 2026**

Time: **7.30 p.m.**

Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham, Essex**

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

To be present: Councillors -

P.	Barlow	(Chair)	B.	Fleet
J.	Martin	(Vice Chair)	P.	Heath
L.	Barlow		R.	Playle

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 18TH NOVEMBER 2025

To receive the minutes of the meeting held 18th November 2025 (previously circulated).

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY AGREEMENT

To receive an update on the Local Government Services Pay Award, attached at page 3 .

5. POLICIES

To receive and update the following policies:-

- a) Staff Handbook (previously circulated)
- b) Employer Discretions Policy attached at page 4 .
- c) Staff Code of Conduct attached at page 9 .
- d) VDU Policy attached at page 15.

To receive and approve the following policy:-

- e) Extreme Weather Policy, attached at page 17.

6. ESSEX PENSION FUND

To receive a report about Essex Pension Fund valuations, attached at page 21 .

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

TO RESOLVE At this point, the Chair will move the following resolution: Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

8. STAFFING UPDATE

To receive an update on Staffing Matters.

9. STAFFING PROPOSAL

To receive an update on Staffing Proposals.

NS/JB/09.07.2026

Officer Report: **NJC Pay Claim 2026/2027- current position**

Background – unions’ pay claim for 2026/27

On 1 December 2025 the recognised trade unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) submitted their NJC pay claim for 2026/27 covering council and school staff in England, Cymru and Northern Ireland. The relevant elements of the claim for a one-year settlement are:

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (whichever is greater) on all NJC spinal column points.
- A minimum hourly rate of £15 for the NJC pay spine.
- A two-hour reduction in the working week.
- An additional one day of annual leave.

The unions also indicated that, if a multi-year settlement were proposed, they would seek different headline increases.

Employers’ pay offer for 2026/27

On 24 March 2026 the NJC National Employers met and made a one-year, “full and final” pay offer for 2026/27 to NJC “Green Book” employees. The key elements of the offer are:

- A 3.30% increase to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 3 to 43 inclusive.
- A 3.30% increase on all locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer, in line with Green Book Part 2 paragraph 5.41.
- A 3.30% increase on all NJC allowances listed in the 2025 pay agreement circular

The offer does not include the other elements of the unions’ claim such as a £15 minimum hourly rate, reduced working hours or additional annual leave.

Trade-union response and current status

UNISON’s NJC Committee and other unions have publicly stated that they reject the Employers’ 3.3% offer and consider it to fall significantly short of the unions’ claim.

Current union actions include:

- UNISON and other unions are consulting members on the offer and preparing for industrial action ballots, including potential strike action, if members vote to pursue a better award.
- Regional and local briefings to council and school staff are underway, explaining the offer and the unions’ campaign for a higher settlement and the non-pay elements of the claim.

Budget Implications

Witham Town Council budgeted for a 4% pay increase in 2026/27; the current 3.3% NJC pay offer can therefore be met from within existing budget provision.

Advice: To receive and note.

Witham Town Council: Employer Discretions Policy

Policy Overview

The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations define the details of the scheme for members, employing authorities and the administering authority (Essex Pension Fund). This document sets out the Town Council's position on both mandatory and non-mandatory discretionary policies.

Status of the Policy

This policy is adopted to meet the Council's obligations as an LGPS employer and to support consistent, lawful and transparent decision-making.

Nothing in this policy creates a contractual entitlement to the exercise of any discretion. Each case will be considered on its own merits, taking account of the applicable regulations, the Council's fiduciary and public law duties, the financial impact on the Council, the interests of council taxpayers, the operational needs of the service, equality considerations and any relevant guidance from the Essex Pension Fund.

The policy must not be applied in a way that unlawfully fetters discretion. The Council may set out its normal approach, but must retain the ability to depart from that approach where the circumstances of a case reasonably justify doing so.

Mandatory policy discretions

Regulation 31 – Award of additional pension

The Council will not normally award additional pension under Regulation 31. It may consider doing so only in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear and evidenced business, workforce or compassionate justification, and where the financial implications have been fully considered.

Any decision will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Staffing Committee and will take into account affordability, value for money, fairness to other employees and the wider public interest.

Regulations 16(2)(e) and 16(4)(d) – Shared Cost Additional Pension Contributions (SCAPC)

The Council will not normally contribute to a member's Additional Pension Contributions where the discretion is optional. It may consider doing so only in exceptional circumstances and only following a written business case and consideration of cost.

This statement does not override any circumstance in which the regulations require the employer to fund a SCAPC arrangement. Mandatory cases under the regulations will be dealt with in accordance with the scheme rules.

Regulation 30(6) – Flexible retirement

The Council will consider requests for flexible retirement from eligible employees on a case-by-case basis. The Council will not normally agree to flexible retirement unless it is satisfied that the proposal is affordable, supports service delivery, and is in the interests of the Council as employer.

Relevant factors may include:

- The operational impact of the proposed reduction in hours or grade.
- The cost to the Council, including any pension strain cost.
- The ability to reorganise duties effectively.
- Workforce planning and retention considerations.
- Any compassionate or welfare-related factors relevant to the request.

Applications must be made in writing and will be determined by the Staffing Committee unless delegated otherwise.

Regulation 30(8) – Waiver of actuarial reduction on flexible retirement

The Council will not normally waive any actuarial reduction on flexible retirement. It may consider waiving all or part of the reduction only in exceptional circumstances, including where there are compelling compassionate, welfare, organisational or business reasons and where the cost is judged to be justified.

Any waiver will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Council may decide to waive none, part or all of the reduction, depending on the circumstances.

Transitional Regulations, Schedule 2, paragraph 1(1)(c) and paragraph 2(1) – Switching on the 85-year rule

Where the regulations allow the Council to switch on the 85-year rule, the Council will not normally do so. It may consider doing so only in exceptional circumstances and after taking account of cost, fairness, any compassionate grounds, operational issues and the overall merits of the case.

This policy does not apply where the regulations provide that the rule is automatically applied.

Other discretionary policies

The Council also adopts the following policy positions on other LGPS discretions to support consistency and good administration. These statements describe the Council's normal approach and do not remove the need to consider each case lawfully and reasonably.

Regulation 17(1) – Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contributions (SCAVC)

The Council will not normally contribute to a Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution arrangement. It may consider doing so only in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear and evidenced justification and affordability has been considered.

Regulation 22(8) and (9) – Extension of time to elect to keep separate deferred local government benefits

The Council will not normally extend the 12-month election period. It may consider an extension where the member can show that they were not given the relevant information in a timely way, were materially misled, or there are other exceptional circumstances justifying an extension.

Regulation 100(6) – Extension of time for transfer-in of non-LGPS pension rights

The Council will not normally extend the 12-month period for electing to transfer pension rights into the LGPS. It may consider an extension where there is evidence of delayed or defective information, administrative error, or other exceptional circumstances.

Regulation 22(7) – Extension of time to elect not to aggregate concurrent LGPS benefits

The Council will not normally extend the 12-month period. It may consider an extension where there is evidence that the member did not receive the necessary information in time or where other exceptional circumstances apply.

Regulation 10(6) of the 2014 Transitional Regulations – Extension of time to aggregate pre-1 April 2014 deferred benefits

The Council will not normally extend the 12-month period. It may consider an extension where there is evidence that the member was not properly informed, or where other exceptional circumstances justify the extension.

Regulation 9(3) – Determination of employee contribution band

The Council will allocate employees to contribution bands based on their pensionable pay in accordance with the LGPS regulations and payroll practice. Contribution bands will normally be reviewed when there is a material change to contractual pay or hours and at any other review point required by the regulations or administering authority guidance.

The Council will not normally recalculate contribution bands solely because of one-off non-contractual payments unless the regulations or administering authority guidance require otherwise.

Regulation 21(4)(a) – Inclusion of regular lump sum payments in assumed pensionable pay (APP)

The Council will include a regular lump sum payment in APP only where it is pensionable, regular and contractual, and where inclusion is consistent with the regulations and administering authority guidance.

Regulation 21(5) – Substitution of a higher level of assumed pensionable pay

The Council will not normally substitute a higher level of assumed pensionable pay. It may consider doing so where the regulatory conditions are met and there is a clear and justifiable reason to depart from the standard approach.

Regulation 64 – Exit credits

If the Council is ever in the position of determining whether an exit credit should be paid to an exiting employer, and the amount, it will do so in accordance with the applicable regulations, administering authority guidance and public law principles. Any such decision will take account of all relevant factors and will not be made on an arbitrary basis.

McCloud remedy and underpin protection

The Council acknowledges its responsibilities in relation to the McCloud remedy and underpin protection under the LGPS. Eligible members must be treated in accordance with the applicable regulations and guidance, and this policy is not intended to override those legal requirements.

Requests, records and communication

Requests under this policy should normally be made in writing and supported by relevant information. Decisions will be recorded with reasons, and the Council will provide the member with written confirmation of the outcome and any relevant next steps.

The Council will publish this policy and will provide a copy to the Essex Pension Fund. If the policy is amended, the revised policy will be published and a copy sent to the administering authority within one month of the change.

Complaints and appeals

This policy does not replace any statutory pension dispute route. Where a member wishes to challenge a pension decision, they should be directed to the appropriate LGPS Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP), in addition to any informal route the Council may offer to resolve queries at an early stage.

10. Review

The Council will keep this policy under review and will normally review it at least every three years, or sooner if there are changes in law, guidance, administering authority requirements or the Council's own governance arrangements.

Agreed at Minute 23 of Staffing & Accommodation Meeting held 02/12/2019

Reviewed: 22nd July 2026

Review: July 2030

POLICY NO: WTC/006 - STAFFING COMMITTEE



WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT

FOR WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

Introduction

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for local government. This Code outlines existing laws, regulations and conditions of service and provides further guidance to assist Witham Town Council and their employees in their day-to-day work. This Code should be read alongside the Council's disciplinary, grievance, equality, safeguarding, health and safety, data protection, whistleblowing, social media and procurement policies.

The Code is intended to support public confidence in the Council, promote high standards of behaviour, and reflect the Seven Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Status of the Code

This Code has been adopted by Witham Town Council as its staff Code of Conduct. It is a local document that sets out the minimum standards of behaviour expected of employees and aims to help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism.

The Code is informed by national guidance on conduct in local government and by the principles of public life, but it does not constitute a national scheme or create contractual rights beyond employees' existing terms and conditions of employment.

Who the Code is aimed at

The Codes applies to all employees of Witham Town Council, including permanent, temporary and part-time staff and may be applied to agency workers and volunteers where appropriate.. Inevitably some of the issues covered by the Code will affect senior, managerial and professional employees more than it will others.

The standards in this Code apply equally when employees are working in person, remotely, in the community, online, or using social media or other digital communications.

1. Standards

1.1 Local government employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to councillors and fellow employees with impartiality. Employees will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service.

Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure.

1.2 Employees must treat councillors, colleagues, contractors, partner organisations, volunteers and members of the public with civility, professionalism and respect at all times. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination and victimisation will not be tolerated.

1.3 Employees must comply with all lawful management instructions, council policies and procedures, and any relevant professional standards applying to their role.

1.4 Employees must raise concerns about wrongdoing, risks to service users, unlawful conduct, financial irregularity, fraud or serious misconduct in accordance with the Council's whistleblowing arrangements. Employees who raise concerns in good faith should not suffer detriment for doing so.

2. Disclosure of Information

2.1 It is generally accepted that open government is best. The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. The authority itself may decide to be open about other types of information. Employees must be aware of which information their authority is and is not open about, and act accordingly.

2.2 Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. Any particular information received by an employee from a councillor which is personal to that councillor and does not belong to the authority should not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of that councillor, except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by the law.

2.3 Employees must handle personal data and confidential information in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and the Council's information governance and records management policies.

2.4 Employees must take appropriate steps to keep information secure, including when working remotely, using mobile devices, or communicating electronically.

3. Political neutrality

3.1 Employees serve the authority as a whole. It follows they must serve all councillors and not just those of the controlling group, and must ensure that the individual rights of all councillors are respected.

3.2 Subject to the authority's conventions, employees may also be required to advise political

groups. They must do so in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality.

3.3 Employees, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every lawful expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

3.4 Employees must not use Council resources, systems, social media channels or official position for party-political purposes unless expressly authorised by law or by the Council.

4. Relationships

4.1 Councillors

Employees are responsible to the authority through its senior managers. For some, their role is to give advice to councillors and senior managers and all are there to carry out the authority's work. Mutual respect between employees and councillors are essential to good local government. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual councillors can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to other employees and councillors and should therefore be avoided.

4.2 The Local Community and Service Users

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community as defined by the policies of the authority.

Employees must have due regard to the needs of people who may be vulnerable and must follow the Council's safeguarding procedures where concerns arise about a child or an adult at risk.

4.3 Contractors

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the appropriate manager. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders, and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.

4.4 Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship to the appropriate manager.

5. Appointment and other employment matters

5.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. It would be unlawful for an employee to make an appointment which was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with him or her.

5.2 Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner etc.

5.3 Recruitment, promotion and other employment decisions must comply with employment law, the Equality Act 2010, and the Council's recruitment and selection procedures

6. Outside Commitments

6.1 Some employees have conditions of service which require them to obtain written consent to take any outside employment. All employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take outside employment which conflicts with the authority's interests.

6.2 Employees should follow their authority's rules on the ownership of intellectual property or copyright created during their employment.

6.3 Employees must not undertake outside work, business interests or voluntary roles that conflict with Council duties, adversely affect performance, create a safeguarding risk, or bring the Council into disrepute.

7. Personal Interests

7.1 Employees must declare to an appropriate manager any non-financial interests that they consider could bring about conflict with the authority's interests.

7.2 Employees must declare to an appropriate manager any financial interests which could conflict with the authority's interests.

7.3 Employees should declare to an appropriate manager membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules of membership or conduct.

7.4 Employees must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest as soon as it arises and must comply with any management instruction for managing that conflict.

8. Equality Issues

8.1 All local government employees should ensure that policies relating to equality issues as agreed by the authority are complied with in addition to the requirements of the law. All members of the local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity.

8.3 Employees must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and must not unlawfully discriminate against, harass or victimise any person on the basis of protected characteristics.

8.4 Employees must contribute to a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where differences are valued

9. Separation of Roles during Tendering

9.1 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the authority. Senior employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

9.2 Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with

all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.

9.3 Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

9.4 Employees must follow the Council's procurement procedures, financial regulations and contract standing orders, and must maintain proper records of decisions and approvals.

9.5 Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

10. Corruption

10.1 Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity. If an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.

10.2 Employees must comply with the Council's anti-fraud, bribery and corruption arrangements and must report any suspicion of fraud, bribery, theft, misuse of funds or other financial irregularity immediately.

11. Use of Financial Resources

11.1 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and must avoid legal challenge to the authority.

11.2 Employees must use Council property, equipment, systems, email, internet access and other resources lawfully, securely and only for authorised purposes

12. Hospitality

12.1 Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the local authority in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the authority should be seen to be represented. They should be properly authorised and recorded.

12.2 When hospitality has to be declined those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the authority.

12.3 Employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers, although the authority may wish to allow employees to keep insignificant items of token value such as pens, diaries etc.

12.4 When receiving authorised hospitality employees should be particularly sensitive as to its timing in relation to decisions which the authority may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality

12.5 Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the authority gives consent in advance and where the authority is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, etc, are required, employees should ensure that authorities meet the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.

12.6 All gifts and hospitality offered, whether accepted or declined, should be declared and recorded in accordance with the Council's procedures.

13. Sponsorship - Giving and Receiving

13.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a local government activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

13.2 Where the authority wishes to sponsor an event or service neither an employee nor any partner, spouse or relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to an appropriate manager of any such interest. Similarly, where the authority through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

Agreed at Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee: January 2022

Reviewed Staffing Committee 22.07.2026

Review Staffing Committee July 2030

Witham Town Council: VDU Policy

Policy Overview

This policy explains how Witham Town Council manages risk for officers working on Display Screen Equipment, including both in-office and remote working environments. The policy applies to all employees, contractors and temporary staff who regularly use DSE as part of their normal work.

Employer Obligations

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 along with subsequent amendments and current HSE guidance, place specific requirements on employers to protect workers from the health risks associated with DSE.

Employers' must-

- Analyse workstations, assess and reduce risks. This includes equipment, furniture, work environment, the job being done and any special needs required by staff.
- Provide adjustable chairs and suitable lighting.
- Plan work so there are breaks or changes of activity, encouraging micro-pauses away from the computer.
- On request, provide eye tests or spectacles if special ones are required.
- Provide health, safety and training information specific to the safe use of working with VDUs and computers
- Extend these obligations to remote working environments, ensuring employees have appropriate equipment and support at home.
- Ensure that all new starters receive DSE training and a workstation assessment as part of their induction.
- Review and update DSE assessments when there are significant changes in workstation setup, job role, or if an employee reports discomfort or health issues related to DSE use.
- Provide reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities or specific health needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Risk Assessment

Witham Town Council will perform an annual risk assessment to mitigate against any negligence regarding their employer obligations. This includes assessments for remote workstations.

Eye Tests

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 Regulation 5 sets out an employer's responsibility for providing eyesight tests. It provides that the employer must ensure that employees who are VDU users, or who are to become VDU users, are provided with an appropriate eye and eyesight test if they request one.

To comply with this Witham Town Council will fund the cost of eye examinations and eyesight tests upon a valid receipt from a suitably qualified and registered ophthalmic optician, optometrist or doctor.

If, after examination, it should prove necessary to purchase spectacles in order to assist the employee, whose vision needs to be corrected for defects at the viewing distance or distances used specifically for the display screen work concerned, the Town Council will fund such spectacles to a maximum value of £200.00. This is only payable once the employee has passed probation and is a permanent member of staff. Employees on fixed-term contracts of a year or less or still on pro are only entitled to this contribution at the discretion of the Town Clerk.

Eye tests may be repeated at regular intervals, typically every two years, or sooner if recommended by the optometrist.

Remote and Hybrid Working

Witham Town Council recognises the increase in remote and hybrid working. The Council will provide guidance and, where necessary, equipment (such as chairs, screens, or keyboard/mouse) to ensure remote workstations meet the same standards as office-based workstations. Employees must report any issues or discomfort promptly to their line manager.

Training and Information

All staff will receive periodic training on safe DSE use, including posture, breaks, workstation setup, and reporting procedures for discomfort or health concerns. Training records will be maintained.

Data Protection

All data collected during risk assessments or through eye test requests will be handled in compliance with GDPR.

Agreed at Staffing Committee

Reviewed: Meeting of the Staffing Committee 22.07.2026

Review date: June 2029

POLICY NO: WTC/020 - STAFFING

Witham Town Council: Extreme Weather Policy

Policy Overview

This policy explains how Witham Town Council manages health and safety risks arising from extreme weather conditions, including high temperatures, cold weather, heavy rain, storms and other adverse conditions. It applies to all employees, contractors and temporary staff, with particular reference to those working outdoors or in environments significantly affected by weather.

The Council will take reasonable steps to protect workers from the risks associated with extreme weather, including heat stress, dehydration, sun exposure, cold stress and reduced visibility or safety during storms.

Legal and Guidance Framework

This policy is informed by:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.
- Relevant HSE guidance on workplace temperature, heat stress and outdoor working.

There is currently no statutory maximum working temperature in UK law; however, employers must ensure that working conditions are reasonable and that risks from extreme heat or cold are properly assessed and controlled.

Employer Obligations

Witham Town Council will:

- Assess risks associated with extreme weather as part of its general risk assessment arrangements, including specific consideration of outdoor working and tasks affected by high or low temperatures.
- Implement sensible control measures to reduce exposure to extreme heat or cold, in line with HSE guidance (for example, changing work times, providing shade, rest breaks and appropriate PPE).
- Monitor Met Office forecasts and heat alerts for the local area and consider adjustments to work patterns when significant heat or adverse weather is predicted.
- Provide information, instruction and training so that employees understand the risks of working in extreme weather and the measures in place to manage those risks.
- Make reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities or specific health conditions that may make them more vulnerable to heat or cold, in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- Review this policy and associated risk assessments following significant incidents, changes in guidance, or reports of health issues linked to extreme weather.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees must:

- Follow safe working procedures and use any PPE or control measures provided by the Council for working in extreme weather.
- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety, including staying hydrated, using sun protection, dressing appropriately for cold or wet conditions, and reporting symptoms of heat or cold stress promptly.
- Inform their line manager if they have health conditions, medication or other factors that may increase their vulnerability to heat, cold or sun exposure, so that adjustments can be considered.
- Report any concerns about working conditions or equipment in extreme weather without delay.

High Temperature and Heat

When high temperatures are forecast or experienced, the Council will consider the following measures, particularly for outdoor workers and those performing physically demanding tasks:

- Rescheduling work to cooler times of the day, including earlier start times where operationally practicable.
- Providing access to shade or cooler areas for rest breaks.
- Increasing the frequency and duration of rest breaks in hot conditions.
- Providing cool drinking water and encouraging regular hydration.
- Reviewing PPE and work clothing to ensure it does not unnecessarily increase heat stress, while maintaining safety standards.

Early Start Times for Outdoor Workers

Where the Met Office forecast for the local area indicates that temperatures are likely to reach 28 degrees Celsius or above during the day, outdoor workers may be permitted to start work at 6:00am to reduce exposure during the hottest period.

- This arrangement is subject to operational requirements, service needs and management approval.
- Managers will confirm start times in advance wherever possible once reliable forecast information is available.
- Normal working hours and pay arrangements will apply unless otherwise agreed through existing flexible working or overtime procedures.

PPE, Sun Protection and Welfare

To support safe working in hot weather, Witham Town Council will provide appropriate measures, which may include:

- SPF 50 sunscreen for use during outdoor work, with employees expected to apply and reapply it as directed.
- Chilled thermal bottles or other suitable drinking containers to help maintain hydration.

- Neck fans or similar cooling devices where appropriate for the tasks being undertaken.
- Access to shaded or cooler rest areas where reasonably practicable.

Employees must use the items provided and follow any instructions relating to their use. If an employee believes that additional equipment or measures would be appropriate for their role (for example, different workwear, sun hats or portable shade), they should request this through the Deputy Town Clerk. Requests will be considered as part of the risk assessment process and implemented where reasonable and proportionate.

Cold, Wet and Stormy Weather

In periods of extreme cold, heavy rain, snow, ice or strong winds, the Council will consider control measures such as:

- Adjusting or postponing non-essential outdoor tasks where conditions present an increased risk.
- Providing or requiring suitable clothing and PPE such as waterproofs, insulated gloves, footwear with appropriate grip, and high-visibility garments.
- Ensuring access routes and work areas are treated or made safe where possible (for example, gritting paths and steps).
- Limiting work at height or in exposed locations during high winds or storms.
- Allowing additional time for travel and safe access where adverse weather affects routes.

Managers will consult employees on practical measures and will take account of service needs, public safety and individual circumstances when deciding whether work should continue, be modified or be temporarily suspended.

Vulnerable Workers

The Council recognises that some workers may be more susceptible to harm from extreme weather, including individuals with certain medical conditions, those taking specific medications, pregnant workers or those who are new to outdoor work.

- Line managers should consider these factors in risk assessments and may adapt duties, hours, PPE or break arrangements accordingly.
- Employees are encouraged to discuss any concerns confidentially with their line manager or the Town Clerk so that appropriate support can be put in place.

Training and Information

All relevant staff will receive periodic training or briefings covering:

- The risks associated with working in extreme heat and cold.
- Signs and symptoms of heat stress, dehydration, sunburn and cold stress.
- Safe working practices, including hydration, appropriate clothing and use of PPE.

- Emergency procedures, including when to stop work and seek medical assistance.

Training records will be maintained as part of the Council's health and safety documentation.

Data Protection

Any health information collected in connection with extreme weather risk assessments or adjustments (for example, information about medical conditions or vulnerabilities) will be handled in compliance with GDPR and the Council's Data Protection Policy.

Agreed at Staffing Committee 22nd July 2026

Review date: June 2029

Officer Report: **Essex Pension Fund valuation and employer contribution rates**

Summary of the Essex Pension Fund valuation

The LGPS funds, including Essex Pension Fund, undergo a full actuarial valuation every three years to check the “financial health” of the fund and to set employer contribution rates for the following three-year period.

- The latest valuation has now been completed, and new employer contribution rates apply from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.
- Although investment values can fluctuate, the valuation looks at funding over the long term and for many LGPS funds, has resulted in stronger funding levels and lower average employer rates overall.

For Essex Pension Fund, the valuation has resulted in reduced employer contribution rates for the Council over the 2026–2029 cycle. The defined-benefit nature of the LGPS means that member benefits at retirement are unchanged by this change in employer rate; the valuation simply adjusts how much employers need to pay to keep the fund secure.

New employer contribution rates for Witham Town Council

Witham Town Council’s certified employer LGPS contribution rate changes from 24.8% of pensionable pay to:

- 23.8% in 2026/27,
- 22.8% in 2027/28, and
- 21.8% in 2028/29.

These reductions were not known at the time the 2026/27 budget was set, so the budget currently assumes the higher 24.8% rate throughout the year.

Financial impact for 2026/27

In 2025/26 the Council paid approximately £109,322 in employer LGPS contributions at a rate of 24.8% of pensionable pay.

Based on last year’s LGPS cost of £109,322 and a 5% pay uplift, the reduction from 24.8% to 23.8% will save the Council in the region of £5,000 in 2026/27, with further savings in 2027/28 and 2028/29.

The actual figure will depend on the final pensionable pay bill (for example overtime and new starters), but this gives a reasonable planning estimate.

Advice: To receive and note.