

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 11th March 2026 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr Rae Frederick – Town Mayor
Cllr John Haywood – Chair
Cllr Philip Day – Deputy Mayor
Cllr Mary DeBoos – Chair of Policy & Finance Committee
Cllr Luke Dadford
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr James Swyer
Cllr Glenys Turner

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk

ABSENT: Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

**S/0140
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**S/0141
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

**S/0142
MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2026, having been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**S/0143
MENOPAUSE POLICY**

Members considered the Town Clerk’s report and recommendations therein. Some minor wording amendments were suggested (*Annex A*)

RESOLVED: 1) That adoption of the draft Menopause Policy be approved; and
2) That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to make any minor amendments required prior to implementation.

ACTION C Bennett / J Hurd

**S/0144
EXTENDING NOTICE PERIODS FOR EXISTING MANAGEMENT POSTS**

Members considered the Town Clerk’s report and recommendations therein (*Annex B*).

RESOLVED: That officers undertake consultation with all existing management postholders currently on one-month notice periods regarding increasing their contractual notice periods to three months.

ACTION C Bennett / J Hurd

**S/0145
EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted (*Annex C - Confidential minute*)

**S/0146
HR UPDATE**

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update on HR related matters.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk's verbal HR update be received.

ACTION C Bennett

The Town Clerk left the meeting at 19:28pm

**S/0147
TOWN CLERK'S PROBATION PERIOD**

The Chair reported that, following the probation review undertaken by the appointed councillors, the Town Clerk had successfully completed the probationary period, which was noted by members.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update from the members appointed to undertake the Town Clerk's probation review be received.

ACTION C Bennett

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.33pm.

Note: The text in the Action Boxes above does not form part of these minutes.

*RECEIVED
25th March 2026*

*APPROVED
16th September 2026*

TOWN MAYOR

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Report A

STAFFING COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2026

Menopause Policy

1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1 Officers have prepared a draft Menopause Policy for consideration in line with emerging good practice across the local government sector. Guidance from the Local Government Association (LGA), the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) recommends that councils consider adopting specific menopause policies to provide clarity and appropriate workplace support.
- 1.2 A significant proportion of the local government workforce is female, with many employees likely to experience menopause or perimenopause during their employment. This is a predictable workforce reality rather than an exceptional circumstance.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a standalone Menopause Policy that provides a structured and proactive framework for support.

2. Main considerations

- 2.1 The proposal is not primarily about sickness absence management. Menopause is a natural life stage and symptoms may fluctuate. While some individuals may require periods of absence, many experience impacts on concentration, confidence, sleep, temperature regulation or wellbeing without formal absence being triggered.
- 2.2 Addressing menopause solely within a sickness policy risks framing it as a medical issue rather than a workplace matter and may discourage early, supportive conversations. A dedicated policy provides:
 - Clear organisational recognition of menopause as a workplace consideration.
 - A framework for consistent and proportionate support.
 - Guidance to increase manager confidence in handling sensitive discussions.
 - Support for staff retention and preservation of experience and knowledge.
 - Alignment with equality and employment responsibilities.
- 2.3 From a governance perspective, adopting a standalone policy demonstrates proactive risk management, consistency of approach and alignment with recognised sector guidance. It also reinforces the Council's commitment to being a responsible and inclusive employer.

3. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the adoption of the draft Menopause Policy.
2. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk to make any minor amendments required prior to implementation.

For further information, contact:

Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk
Email: charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk

Or

Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
Email: jo.hurd@ringwood.gov.uk

RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MENOPAUSE POLICY

Aims of the Policy

Ringwood Town Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here.

We recognise that many members of staff will experience the menopause and that, for some, menopause will have an adverse impact on their working lives.

All women will experience menopause at some point during their life. Menopause can also impact trans and non-binary people who may not identify as female. Most of those who experience menopause will do so between the ages of 45 and 55. However, some start experiencing symptoms much earlier. Often, symptoms last between four to eight years, but they can continue for longer.

The majority of those going through menopause will experience some symptoms, although everyone is different and symptoms can fluctuate. Symptoms can include, but are not limited to, sleeplessness, hot flushes, memory loss or poor concentration, headaches, muscle and joint pains, depression and anxiety.

Menopause is preceded by perimenopause, during which the body prepares itself for menopause. Perimenopause can also last several years and can involve similar symptoms to menopause itself. For the purpose of this policy, any reference to menopause includes perimenopause.

The aim of the policy is to:

- make managers and councillors aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work;
- foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner;
- raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause;
- enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs;
- outline support and reasonable adjustments available;
- help us recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

This policy is part of the Council's commitment to ensuring the health and safety and wellbeing of all the workforce, and will ensure the workplace does not make the menopausal symptoms of employees worse. This policy is part of the Council's commitment to equality and diversity. We are committed to creating a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment. This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of the Council as an employer of choice. The Council recognises that many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments offered here may not only be of benefit to workers experiencing the menopause, but to all staff.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff who are employed by the Council.

Definition of the Menopause

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones, and the woman stops having periods. Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and perimenopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms.

Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

The Council recognises that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. Menopausal symptoms may include:

- hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate;
- heavy and painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic;
- night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance;
- low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems;
- urinary problems - more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal;
- irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also, vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort;
- joint and muscle aches and stiffness;
- weight gain;
- headaches and migraines;
- menopausal hair loss;
- osteoporosis - the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis;
- side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be finding difficult to manage at work.

Open Conversations

Menopause is not just an issue for women. All staff should be aware of menopause so that they can support those experiencing it or otherwise affected by it.

We encourage an environment in which colleagues can have open conversations about menopause. We expect all staff to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by menopause in the workplace.

Anyone affected by menopause should feel confident to talk to their line manager about their symptoms and the support they may need to reduce the difficulties menopause can cause them at work.

Line managers should be ready to have open conversations with staff about menopause and what support is available. These conversations should be treated sensitively and any information provided should be handled confidentially and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Risk Assessments

We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and wellbeing of those experiencing menopause.

Support and Adjustments

While many who experience menopause are able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of menopause symptoms on their work. If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so, you should contact the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

Physical adjustments could include temperature control, provision of electric fans or access to rest facilities. Depending on individual and business needs, other adjustments such as flexible working, more frequent rest breaks or changes to work allocation may be considered. These are examples only and not an exhaustive list.

We may refer you to a doctor nominated by us or seek medical advice from your GP to better understand any adjustments and other support that may help alleviate symptoms affecting you at work.

STAFFING COMMITTEE

11 March 2026

Extending notice periods for existing management posts

1. Introduction and reason for report

1.1 At its previous meeting the Committee considered a report regarding notice periods for management posts within the Council.

1.2 Members agreed that newly recruited management posts should have a notice period of three months, reflecting the level of responsibility within these roles and the importance of ensuring continuity of service and effective handover arrangements.

1.3 The Council's current management structure consists of the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and service managers. While the Town Clerk already has a longer contractual notice period, a number of existing management posts remain on historic contracts which specify a one-month notice period.

1.4 These posts currently include:

- Deputy Town Clerk
- Office Manager
- Clubhouse & Events Manager

1.5 Members may wish to consider whether the Council should seek to align notice periods across the Council's management team with the three-month notice period now applied to newly recruited posts.

1.6 Any change to an existing employee's contract would require consultation and the agreement of the individual concerned, as contractual terms cannot be amended unilaterally.

1.7 This report therefore seeks Members' direction on whether officers should undertake consultation with the relevant postholders regarding a potential increase in their contractual notice periods.

2. Issues for decision and any recommendations

Members are asked to determine whether officers should:

- a) undertake consultation with all existing management postholders currently on one-month notice periods regarding increasing their contractual notice periods to three months; or
- b) undertake consultation with specified posts only; or
- c) retain the current contractual arrangements.

For further information, contact:

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Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
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