

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL

Subject : A Year in Review - HR
Committee : Governance, Policy & HR
Date : 23 March 2026
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1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report gives Councillors an annual overview of key HR activity during 2025, covering honoraria payments, formal HR cases, sickness absence and mental health, staff leavers, and internal promotions.
- 1.2. The purpose is to give Councillors a clear picture of what the data tells us about how the organisation is functioning and what is being done to address any areas of concern.
- 1.3. The headline position across each area is:
 - 1.3.1. Honoraria: Payments were modest in total (£8,695.34) but predominantly reactive, used to cover vacancies rather than to reward exceptional performance. There is an opportunity to manage this more proactively.
 - 1.3.2. Formal HR cases: 20 cases were progressed through formal processes in 2025, concerning disciplinary, grievance, capability, attendance and probation. All were handled in line with SCC policy and employment law. The number of cases is within expected range for an organisation of this size.
 - 1.3.3. Sickness absence: Detailed data is reported in the quarterly KPI report. The focus for 2026/2027 will include mental health and stress, with a Council-wide push on stress risk assessments during April.
 - 1.3.4. Leavers: Exit interview analysis identifies four key themes, limited progression opportunities, pay competitiveness, conflict with managers or colleagues and personal reasons.
 - 1.3.5. Promotions: Two internal promotions took place in 2025, reflecting the Council's commitment to developing and retaining its own staff.

2. Honoraria Payments

- 2.1. What is an honorarium payment?
 - 2.1.1. An honorarium is a one-off or short-term additional payment made to a member of staff who takes on responsibilities that fall clearly outside their normal role. The Council's Honorarium Policy makes clear that they should be used for short-term situations not as a long-term solution to vacancies or workload pressures.

2.2. Honoraria paid

2.2.1. Between January and December 2025, 42 monthly honorarium payments were made, totalling £8,695.34. The breakdown by reason is shown in the table and chart below.

Reason for Payment	No. of Payments	Amount
Additional management responsibility	Majority of 42	£5,050.00
Loss of Head of Service		£1,650.00
Market Officer absence		£750.00
Loss of line manager		£640.00
Ongoing H&S additional duties		£605.34
Total	42	£8,695.34

2.3. Over half of all honorarium payments (58%) were for additional management responsibility meaning individuals were effectively covering two roles simultaneously. While this demonstrates real commitment and flexibility from those staff, it also carries risks:

2.3.1. Sustained additional responsibility increases the risk of fatigue, reduced performance, and impact on wellbeing particularly if cover arrangements run for several months.

2.3.2. Honoraria used in this way are largely reactive filling a gap rather than strategic, which is how the policy intends them to be used.

2.3.3. No payments were made to recognise exceptional performance within a role, or to support one-off development projects, even though the policy allows for both.

2.4. The ongoing H&S additional duties that were covered by honorarium during 2025 have since been incorporated into a permanent role through the Job Evaluation framework. This is exactly the right outcome where duties become ongoing, they should be formally recognised through role design rather than indefinite additional payments. This provides a useful model for how other honorarium arrangements should be reviewed.

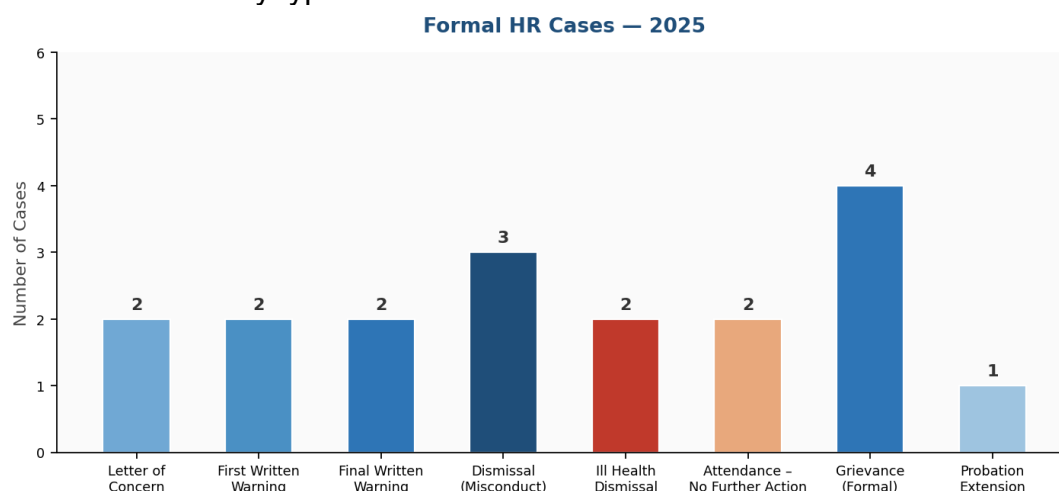
2.5. What we are doing

2.5.1. The following actions are proposed to reduce reactive use of honoraria and move towards a more sustainable approach:

- 2.5.1.1. When key posts become vacant, critical activities will be clearly identified and temporary responsibilities shared equitably rather than defaulting to one individual absorbing the additional workload.
- 2.5.1.2. Formal deputising or acting-up arrangements will be considered for staff covering key roles, with a defined scope, duration and approval process, providing greater clarity and fairness than ad hoc honoraria.
- 2.5.1.3. Succession planning will be strengthened, including a gap analysis of roles critical to service continuity, and the use of shadowing and interim opportunities to build internal capability.
- 2.5.1.4. As role clarity continues to develop from implementation of the job evaluation changes, honoraria will increasingly be used for their intended purpose recognising genuine exceptional performance or supporting developmental projects.

3. Formal HR cases in 2025

- 3.1. For the purposes of this report, formal HR cases refer to disciplinary, grievance, attendance management and capability.
- 3.2. All of the formal HR cases SCC policy and employment law.
- 3.3. Councillors understandably will have a legitimate interest in understanding the overall volume and nature of formal cases, as this gives a picture of workforce health, management capability, and any emerging patterns the Council should be aware of.
- 3.4. A total of 20 formal cases were progressed in 2025. The chart below shows how these break down by type.



Case Type	Explanation	Number
Letter of Concern	The lowest level of formal sanction. Used where the behaviour is more serious than informal	2

	guidance but where mitigating circumstances mean a disciplinary hearing is not appropriate.	
First Written Warning	Issued for a first instance of misconduct where the matter is not serious enough to warrant a higher sanction.	2
Final Written Warning	Issued either because a first written warning is already in place, or because the conduct is serious enough to go straight to this level.	2
Dismissal (Misconduct)	Either following a final written warning already being in place, or because the conduct constitutes gross misconduct.	3
Ill Health Dismissal	Where a member of staff has been unable to return to work and all reasonable steps to support a return have been exhausted.	2
Attendance – No Further Action	Cases that progressed to a formal attendance management meeting, but where the outcome was no further action due to exceptional circumstances.	2
Formal Grievance	A formal complaint raised by a member of staff. All four cases were resolved — primarily through a facilitated meeting to understand the issues and agree a way forward.	4
Probation Extension	One new starter's probation period was extended to allow additional time and support before a final decision on confirmation in post.	1

3.5. What this tells us

- 3.5.1. Twenty formal cases in a year is within the expected range for an organisation of this size. A few points are worth drawing to Councillors' attention:
- 3.5.2. The volume of disciplinary cases ranging from letters of concern through to dismissal reflects that the Council is prepared to address conduct issues formally and consistently rather than leaving them unresolved. This is a positive indicator of management confidence and HR support.
- 3.5.3. Three dismissals for misconduct and two ill health dismissals represent significant decisions with real consequences for individuals. All were handled through a full and fair process, with HR support throughout, to minimise the

risk of legal challenge.

3.5.4. All four formal grievances were resolved. Resolution through facilitated meetings is the preferred outcome it is quicker, less stressful for all parties, and demonstrates a willingness to listen and act rather than simply defend.

3.5.5. The fact that some attendance cases resulted in no further action reflects that the process is being applied thoughtfully formal action is not the automatic outcome, and individual circumstances are properly considered.

4. Sickness Absence

4.1. Detailed sickness absence data is reported quarterly through the HR KPI report, and Councillors will be familiar with the position from those updates. This section focuses on the direction of travel for 2026/2027 rather than repeating figures already reported.

4.2. Focus for 2026/2027 – Mental Health

4.2.1. Stress-related absence is one of the most common causes of long-term sickness in local government. The Council already requires all managers to complete a stress risk assessment for every member of staff using the Health and Safety Executive template, reviewed annually.

4.2.2. In practice, the consistency of this has varied. April 2026, which is Stress Awareness Month, will be used as a focused period to ensure stress risk assessments are in place and up to date for all staff across the organisation. HR will support managers through this process and track completion.

4.2.3. This is not just a compliance exercise. Done well, stress risk assessments are a practical tool for early identification of pressures before they escalate into absence or more serious health issues.

4.3. Head of HR will be looking at commissioning the counselling service, as agreed in January budget setting to support staff with poor mental health episodes.

5. Staff Leavers

5.1. Understanding why staff leave gives us insight into areas we may wish to consider in our overall people strategy.

5.2. Losing staff has a direct cost: recruitment, induction, and the time it takes for a new person to become fully effective in a role. But the indirect costs disruption to services, loss of institutional knowledge, and the impact on remaining team members are often greater.

5.3. Tracking and acting on leaver themes is therefore both a staff wellbeing issue and a business continuity issue.

5.4. Analysis of exit interview data for the 2025 calendar year identifies four primary themes. These are set out below, this was based on the 6 questionnaires received. Numbers total more than 6 as some people gave multiple reasons.

Theme	What leavers told us
Conflict or issues with colleagues or line manager	4 leavers cited this as a contributing factor. Specific themes included inappropriate communication or behaviour, feeling unsupported, and concerns about repercussions for raising issues.
Lack of progression and development opportunities	2 leavers cited limited opportunities for career progression, skills development, or the ability to use their experience effectively in their role.
Pay and reward	2 leavers indicated that pay levels were not competitive compared to other organisations.
Personal reasons (non-job related)	3 of leavers referenced personal circumstances unrelated to their employment at the Council.

5.5. It is expected that Job Evaluation may have dealt with the issue of pay and reward.

5.6. The staff development plan for 2026/2027 includes development for managers on dealing with conflict.

5.7. It is intended that a more effective performance framework will be launched in September 2026 which would include the expectation of more formal 1:1 meetings to discuss career progression along with identifying any training needs.

6. Internal promotions

6.1. Two internal promotions took place during 2025:

6.1.1. Streetscene Operative promoted to Streetscene Officer.

6.1.2. Streetscene Officer promoted to Operations Supervisor (Streetscene).

6.2. Both promotions were made through a competitive interview process, in line with SCC's commitment to ensuring the best person is appointed to every role.

6.3. All internal members of staff are guaranteed an interview for any role that is advertised. This matters for two reasons. First, it gives existing staff a genuine opportunity to be considered for progression, which supports morale and retention. Second, even where an internal candidate is not successful, the interview experience itself is a form of development, giving staff exposure to the process and feedback they can act on.

6.4. Being guaranteed an interview does not mean being guaranteed the role. Internal candidates still need to score the highest points through the interview process. This ensures the Council maintains quality in its appointments while also investing in the development of its own people.

7. Recommendation:

7.1. It is recommended that the Committee:

7.1.1. Notes the content of this report.

8. Wards Affected: None

9. Background papers: None

10. Implications:

Financial: As detailed in the report.

Legal: None.

Personnel: As detailed in the report.

Environmental Impact: None

Equalities Impact Statement: The data presented in this report does not currently include a breakdown of outcomes by protected characteristic. HR will work towards capturing and reporting this data in future years so the Council can identify and address any patterns of disproportionate impact.