

County Council

Report Title:	Pay Policy Statement
Meeting Date:	19 March 2026
Lead Councillor(s):	Councillor Nadia Cenci
Local Councillor(s):	All
Director:	Nicola Beach, Chief Executive
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	Tim Jermyn, Assistant Director: HR & OD
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Brief summary of the item to be considered

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek the approval of the County Council to the proposed Pay Policy Statement 2026/2027.

Action recommended

2. That the Pay Policy Statement for 2026/2027 is approved.
3. That the Joint Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) is delegated authority to amend the Pay Policy Statement to reflect any legislative changes during 2026/2027.

Reason for recommendation

4. Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to produce a Pay Policy Statement each year. This statement is for the year 2026/2027.
5. The Pay Policy Statement:
 - a) must be approved by the County Council by the end of March each year;
 - b) may be amended during the financial year;
 - c) must be published on the Council's website;
 - d) must be complied with when setting the terms and conditions of Chief Officer employees.
6. The Pay Policy Statement must include the following information:
 - a) the policy on the level and elements of remuneration for Chief Officers;
 - b) the remuneration of the lowest paid employees;
 - c) the relationship between the remuneration of Chief Officers and other officers; and

- d) other aspects of Chief Officer remuneration, fees and charges and other discretionary payments.
7. Remuneration in this context is defined widely to include pay, charges, fees, allowances, benefits in kind, increases in enhancements of pension entitlements and termination payments.

Alternative options

8. It is a requirement on the Council to produce a Pay Policy Statement; therefore, there are no alternative options.

Who will be affected by this decision?

9. The decision has no effect on any employees.

How does this relate to the County Council objectives?

10. This report is linked to the County Council's objectives indicated below:

Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strengthening our local economy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protecting and enhancing our environment (including carbon reduction)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

How will this impact on the Council's objectives?

11. The decision has no impact on the Council's objectives.

Main body of report

12. The Council recognises that, in the context of managing scarce public resources, remuneration at all levels needs to be adequate to attract and retain high quality employees, dedicated to public service, whilst avoiding being unnecessarily generous or otherwise excessive.
13. Local authorities can determine their own pay structures to address local priorities and to compete in the local labour market.
14. The Pay Policy Statement covers the remuneration arrangements for staff from Chief Executive to Senior Manager level. This includes the Joint Chief Executives, Executive and Service Directors, Assistant Directors and Senior Managers. In line with guidance published by the Local Government Association, it does not include information relating to staff in schools.
15. The Pay Policy Statement only details remuneration levels for staff directly employed by the Council.
16. All annual salaries and annual allowances are paid pro rata to part time employees based on the hours contracted to work.

Joint Chief Executives

17. The Joint Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) is the Council's Statutory Head of Paid Service (section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989). From 01 April 2026, the post will be paid £185,000 per annum.
18. The Joint Chief Executive (LGR, Devolution, Transformation and Change) is the Council lead for the organisational change taking place over the next two years. They are the named Senior Responsible Officer for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation for Suffolk County Council and Clerk to the Lieutenancy (Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk). From 01 April 2026, the post will be paid £185,000 per annum.
19. The salaries for the Joint Chief Executives are "Spot Salaries" which mean they do not attract pay progression. Under current arrangements, any change to the pay level of the role of Joint Chief Executives needs to be agreed by the Staff Appointments Committee. The Staff Appointments Committee meets on demand, includes one member of the Cabinet, and has representation from the larger political groups through the proportionality rules.
20. The salary does attract an annual pay award / cost of living increase which usually reflects the pay award agreed by Joint National Council (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Executives annually. The first increase will be applied from 01 April 2027.
21. There are no additional charges, fees, allowances, bonus, performance, or ex gratia payments in place for this role.
22. The Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) has been appointed to the post of Returning Officer for the Council which attracts an allowance equivalent to £17.51 per seat whether contested or not for each election.
23. Other Conditions of Service are as prescribed by the Joint National Council (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Executives national conditions.

Executive Directors

24. The salary structure for Executive Directors is set locally through the Staff Appointments Committee and ranges from £137,038 to £167,286 per annum from 01 April 2025. New appointments to this level are on a "Spot Salary" basis and do not attract pay progression.
25. Executive Director's salaries do attract an annual pay award / cost of living increase which usually reflects the pay award agreed by Joint National Council (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Officers annually. The increase has not yet been agreed or applied for 2026/2027.
26. Except for the Chief Fire Officer / Executive Director of Public Safety post, roles are evaluated at Director level through the nationally recognised Korn Ferry Hay job evaluation methodology. The Chief Fire Officer's post is evaluated in accordance with the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.
27. In the main, other Conditions of Service are as prescribed by the Joint National Council (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Officers national conditions. The Chief

Fire Officer has conditions as set under the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services.

Service and Assistant Directors, Senior Managers and equivalent

28. The salary ranges for Assistant Directors and Senior Managers from 01 April 2025 are as follows:
 - a) Service / Assistant Director (Higher) - £110,100 - £121,785 per annum
 - b) Assistant Director - £88,225 - £105,726 per annum
 - c) Senior Manager - £72,329 - £81,708.00 per annum
29. Service and Assistant Directors, Senior Managers and equivalent salaries do attract pay progression, so from 01 April 2020, where not appointed on a Spot Salary and if the eligibility and performance criteria have been met, individual's salaries will increase by one spinal point.
30. Service and Assistant Directors, Senior Managers' and equivalents salaries do attract an annual pay award / cost of living increase as agreed by Joint National Council (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Officers or equivalent annually. The increase has not yet been agreed or applied for 2026/2027.
31. Roles are evaluated through the Korn Ferry Hay job evaluation methodology, except for those senior staff within the Fire and Rescue Service and Public Health & Communities. The Fire and Rescue Service roles are evaluated in accordance with the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services and the Public Health & Communities roles were evaluated under the NHS Agenda for Change job evaluation process.
32. Other Conditions of Service are as prescribed both by the Joint National Council (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Officer's national conditions as well as local arrangements within the Council. Senior staff within the Fire Service have conditions as set under the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services: Scheme of Conditions of Service.
33. Further information relating to Officer remuneration is updated annually and is available in the Council's Statement of Accounts.

Salary structure

34. The salary structure for the rest of the workforce was determined through the Council's Single Status Agreement in 2002. There are eight grades with salaries ranging, from 01 April 2025, between £24,796 per annum to £71,634 per annum.
35. Individuals employed on Single Status grades do attract pay progression, so from 01 April 2020, where not appointed on a Spot Salary and if the eligibility and performance criteria have been met, individual's salaries will increase by one spinal point, up to the maximum for the grade.
36. The salaries associated with the Single Status grades do attract an annual pay award / cost of living increase as agreed through National Joint Council (NJC) pay negotiations. The increase has not yet been agreed or applied for 2026/2027.
37. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, those in apprentice roles are paid at the bottom of the grade below the role the apprentice is working towards or two

grades below if the apprenticeship is more than two years in duration. For apprentices where there isn't a grade available one or two grades below the role they are working towards, the starting salary will be the National Living Wage rate for those 21 and over (regardless of age). Any exceptional circumstances must be agreed by the Assistant Director: HR & OD. Where the apprenticeship is more than two years and the apprentice is appointed two grades below the role they are working towards, there will be an opportunity to move up to the intermediate grade on successfully meeting specific requirements of the apprenticeship and any competencies relating to the job as identified and assessed by the line manager and set out at the start. This can be applied no earlier than the half-way point of the duration of the apprenticeship or before 50% of the apprenticeship learning is complete.

38. Posts up to and including Grade 8 are evaluated using the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme, which is recognised by employers and trades unions nationally. This scheme allows for robust measurement against set criteria resulting in fair and objective evaluations and satisfies equal pay requirements.
39. Employees who transferred into the County Council from Suffolk Libraries will from 01 April 2026 be moved onto the Single Status grades / standard County Council terms and conditions.
40. In all other cases employees will be on protected salaries / grades which have been transferred from other organisations under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). Pay progression and annual pay award / cost of living increases will have been agreed as part of the transfer measures. In the absence of an agreement on annual pay award / cost of living increases, the Council will award an annual increase equivalent to the increase agreed through the (NJC) pay negotiations.
41. For the purposes of the Pay Policy Statement 2026/2027, the lowest paid full time equivalent basic pay of £24,796 per annum (£12.85 per hour) is used to determine the local definition of 'lowest paid'. This rate is slightly higher than the National Living Wage rate of £12.71 from 01 April 2026.

Pay relationships

42. The idea of publishing the ratio of the pay of an organisation's top earner to that of its median earner (the person in the middle of all earners) was recommended in the "Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the public sector report (Will Hutton 2011) to support the principles of fair pay and for transparency.
43. Although no fixed limit on pay dispersion was enforced for the public sector, the report identified a ratio of 20:1 as a potential limit, meaning the highest paid person would earn no more than 20 times the earnings of the lowest paid.
44. The current pay ratio in the County Council when measured against the median average is 1:4.8. This means that the Joint Chief Executives (top earner) earns just less than five times more than the Council's median earner (for which the rate is £38,220 per annum); and when measured against the lowest paid it is 1:7.5 (for which the rate is £24,796.00 per annum).
45. The pay relationship between highest, median and lowest paid staff monitored each year, with a reducing ratio noted in recent years.

Allowances, fees and benefits in kind

46. Access to the Council's Relocation scheme may be granted in certain cases when it is necessary for a new starter to move to the area. This requires authorisation from the Joint Chief Executives and / or Staff Appointments Committee for Chief Officer appointments and Executive Directors for all other posts.
47. Other allowances and benefits typically follow nationally agreed rates. Locally agreed arrangements are detailed on the Council's intranet, IRIS.

Pay on appointment across the organisation

48. All new external appointments will be made at the lowest spinal column point of the relevant grade, save in exceptional circumstances. The decision as to whether exceptional circumstances exist will be made by the relevant Assistant Director.

Pensions

49. Under Automatic enrolment rules staff who are between 22 years old and State Pension age and whose earnings exceed the equivalent of £10,000 per annum in any given period of pay will be automatically put into a pension scheme. The Council will pay the relevant employer contribution for the time these individuals are in the scheme, in addition to the contributions made by employees.
50. The Council pays into the following pension schemes:
 - a) Local Government Pension Scheme
 - i) The Local Government Pension Scheme changed from a Final Salary scheme to a Career Average Revalued Earnings scheme on 01 April 2014. All benefits accrued before April 2014 are protected in that they will continue to be based on the employee's final salary. Individuals can opt to pay half contributions for half a pension in the 50/50 scheme and will still receive full ill health and death benefit cover and the Council will continue to contribute the full rate of employer's contributions. The Local Government Pension Scheme determine these terms.
 - b) Fire-fighter Pension Scheme 2015
 - i) The Fire-fighters Pension Scheme 2015 is a Career Average Revalued Earnings scheme. Fire-fighters who are members of the 1992 Scheme and were aged 45 or over on 01 April 2012 are protected from the changes and remain in their current Final Salary scheme.
 - c) Teachers' Pension Scheme
 - i) The Teachers' Pension Scheme became a Career Average Revalued Earnings scheme on 01 April 2015. Teachers' who were within 10 years of their normal pension age on 01 April 2012 are protected from the changes and remain in the Final Salary scheme.
 - d) NHS Pension Scheme
 - i) The NHS Pension Scheme became a Career Average Revalued Earnings scheme on 01 April 2015. NHS Pension Scheme members who were within 10 years of retirement on 01 April 2012 are protected

from the changes and remain in the Final Salary scheme until they retire.

Severance and Termination Arrangements

51. The Council's approach to statutory and discretionary payments on termination of employment of Chief Officers, prior to reaching normal retirement age, is set out in accordance with regulations 5 and 6 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006; the Council's Pension arrangements are in accordance with decisions taken at the County Council meeting on 14 September 2006 (CC06/30) and the Organisational Change Management Policy.
52. The Pay Policy determines that staff, paid £50,000 per annum or more whilst in employment and who left the Council for reason of redundancy, or staff who received an ex-gratia payment and/or payment under a Settlement or COT3 Agreement of any value, will not ordinarily be re-employed by the Council within 12 months of leaving.
53. Re-employment includes interim and consultant roles or any form of worker, engaged directly or indirectly through an agency, contract for services or similar.
54. The purpose of this is to ensure management take all reasonable steps to minimise redundancies, to maximise redeployment opportunities for current staff and to proactively manage people costs.
55. Exceptions to this will be considered by the Assistant Director: HR & OD, where one or more of the following circumstances arise:
 - a) Roles which are typically hard to fill.
 - b) Situations where the individual has been reskilled and is applying for a different role based on these new skills.
 - c) Where an employee has been made compulsory redundant.
56. If the Assistant Director: HR & OD approves the candidate for short listing, a full selection process must be completed.
57. Staff paid less than £50,000 per annum whilst in employment, and who left the Council for reason of redundancy may be re-employed by the Council after a month and a day of leaving.
58. As detailed in Section 116 of the Local Government Act 1972, an individual is disqualified from being employed by Suffolk County Council for a period of twelve months after they have ceased to be a member (Councillor) of the authority.

Recovery of exit payments

59. The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 requires that where a person returns to any part of the public sector (not just the area they left) after they have received a public sector exit payment within the previous 12 months, they will be required to repay the exit payment, net of tax paid. This will apply to all public sector employees and office holders earning over £80,000 per annum.
60. It is possible this requirement may come into force during 2026/2027 and will be reflected in the Pay Policy Statement at that time.

Public Sector Pay Cap

61. The Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020 (“the Regulations”) came into force on 04 November 2020 and placed a £95,000 cap on exit payments to individuals in the Public Sector. The cap included all payments in relation to all exits, including pension strain costs / capital costs.
62. On 12 February 2021 HM Treasury Directions published guidance confirming the Regulations would be revoked. After an extensive review of the application of the cap the Government concluded there may have had unintended consequences from the caps application and therefore the Regulations were revoked.
63. It is possible that there may be new legislation implemented during 2026/2027 relating to restrictions of Public Sector Exit Payment. Any changes will be reflected in the Pay Policy Statement at that time.

Decision Making

64. Decisions on salary structures are made as follows:
 - a) Decisions relating to the Joint Chief Executive, Designated Officers and Executive Director’s basic salaries are approved by Staff Appointments Committee which is a public committee. All papers pertaining to Staff Appointments Committee are available on the Council website for public scrutiny except for Part 2 papers which are shared with committee members under confidential cover.
 - b) Decisions affecting other staff at a senior level are made by the relevant Executive Director.
 - c) The Constitution defines that the salary and grading structures of all posts below that of Senior Manager level is delegated to the Assistant Director: HR & OD, subject to observance of appropriate procedures and rights of appeal.

Conclusion

65. In conclusion, it is recommended that:
 - a) That the Pay Policy Statement for 2026/2027 is approved.
 - b) That the Joint Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) is delegated authority to amend the Pay Policy Statement to reflect any legislative changes during 2026/2027.

Sources of further information

- c) The Council's Statement of Accounts are available at the following link:
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/budget-council-tax-and-finance/council-accounts/>
- d) The Council's Transparency Data relating to staff salaries is available at the following link:
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/open-data-suffolk/council-data-and-transparency>
- e) Details relating to the Staff Appointments Committee are available at the following link:
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/the-council-and-its-committees/committees/staff-appointments-committee/>
- f) The Pay Policy Statement 2025/2026 was agreed by Council on 13 March 2025, Agenda Item 9, and is available at the following link:
<https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/HomePage.aspx>

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