

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**STAFF AND APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**

At a meeting of the **Staff and Appointments Committee** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth on Monday 15 August 2022 at 2.00 pm.

**PRESENT**

Councillor G. Sanderson  
(in the Chair)

**MEMBERS**

Dale, A.  
Flux, B.  
Grimshaw, L.  
Hunter, E.I.

Purvis, M.  
Simpson, E.  
Watson, J.G.  
Wearmouth, R.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Binjal, S.

Furnell, L.  
Hadfield, K.

O' Farrell, R.  
Willis, J.

Interim Director of Governance and  
Monitoring Officer  
Interim Service Director HR/OD  
Democratic and Electoral Services  
Manager  
Interim Deputy Chief Executive  
Interim Executive Director for  
Finance / Section 151 Officer

One member of the press was present.

**23. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the open minutes of the following meetings of the Committee, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair:-

- (a) Monday 18 July 2022
- (b) Wednesday 27 July 2022

Mr O'Farrell left the chamber whilst the following matter was discussed.

**24. REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF HR/OD**

Ch.'s Initials.....

## **Interim Head of Paid Service & Chief Executive Contract of Employment**

The report followed the agreement at Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022 for the appointment of Rick O'Farrell as the Interim Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive. The report sought to confirm the contents of the contract of employment for Mr O'Farrell with Staff and Appointments Committee in the role of Interim Head of Paid Service & Chief Executive, aligned with the terms of the JNC for Chief Executives. It was proposed that the interim appointment remained in place under these conditions until a full-time substantive appointment was made to the post of Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The report was introduced by Mrs Furnell.

Members asked a number of questions including the following:-

- Would Mr O'Farrell be expected to do 37 hours per week as he was previously working less than that. Mrs Furnell confirmed that Mr O'Farrell would be working 37 hours per week in this role.
- Who would the Chief Executive report to and who would carry out appraisals. Mrs Furnell advised that an appraisal process needed to be established for all Chief Officers which would come to the Committee on an annual basis. No one person was the line manager of the Chief Executive but the Committee was delegated the role by Council. Mrs Binjal confirmed that it was reflected in the Chief Executive's conditions of employment that the Committee was responsible for their appraisal. The JNC recommended that a framework be agreed between the Chair and the Chief Executive for the process.
- Who would approve the Chief Executive's annual leave. Mrs Binjal replied that this should be arranged with the HR and the Leader of the Council in a collaborative way through regular 1-1 meetings. HR was responsible for keeping leave and sickness records up to date.
- Was Mr O'Farrell obligated to stay during the handover period to the permanent appointment. Mrs Binjal replied that a handover period should be expected and Mr O'Farrell would return to his substantive post after that.

Councillor Flux moved the report's recommendations, which was seconded by Councillor Watson.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the report be received;
- (b) the Committee confirm the content of the Offer Letter and Statement of Particulars Contained in Appendix 1; and
- (c) the Committee note the updated Interim Head of Paid Service Job Description with Mr O'Farrell's agreed full time salary of £195,000 in Appendix 2.

Mr O'Farrell returned to the chamber.

## **25. REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **Extension of Interim Senior Structure Arrangements**

The report set out the current interim arrangements which had been in place since 1 September 2021 and which were due to end on 31 August 2022, and recommended extending them for a further 6 months to allow the Senior Manager review at tiers 1 & 2 to be implemented (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Mr O'Farrell reported to members that he hoped to bring a report on the new senior staff structure to a further meeting of the Committee prior to it going to Council in September.

Members sought clarification that staff who had been acting in interim roles could be returned to their previous positions before the interim arrangements had been implemented. Mr O'Farrell confirmed that staff would return to their substantive grades unless they applied for new roles within the new structure and were successful.

Councillor Wearmouth moved the report's recommendations, which was seconded by Councillor Flux.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the report be received; and
- (b) the extension of the interim arrangements be approved until **28 February 2023**.

## **26. REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF HR/OD**

### **Proposed Appointment Process - Head Of Paid Service, Chief Executive & Returning Officer**

The report set out the proposed appointment process of a permanent Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive following agreement at both the Staff and Appointment Committee and Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022 that Mr Rick O'Farrell be appointed on a temporary basis until a permanent appointment could be made. The report set out the structure of the permanent appointment process and reminded the committee of the requirements under the Officer Appointment Procedure Rules in relation to the appointment of all Chief and Deputy Chief Officers (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Councillor Dale queried whether reference needed to be made at this stage to the Caller report. Mrs Furnell replied that this level of detail had not been gone into yet but she expected it would be in the literature which Penna supplied candidates with.

The Leader commented that the 12 recommendations from the report were being addressed through the Action Plan and would be monitored by the Challenge Board. These would be referred back as necessary.

Councillor Flux moved the report's recommendations, which was seconded by Councillor Simpson.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the proposed Job Description for the Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (b) the continued engagement of Penna Executive Recruitment in line with the previous procurement process be noted;
- (c) the proposed timetable for the recruitment process attached as Appendix 2 to the report be approved;
- (d) the selection methodology be approved and authority be delegated to the Leader to nominate the names of members to be assigned to the various recruitment panels as set out in Appendix 3 attached to the report;
- (e) the remuneration for the post of Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive be approved at a salary range of £195,000 - £199,950;
- (f) access to staff benefits be approved in line with all Council employees; and
- (g) the inclusion of role of the Returning Officer in the Job Description be approved with the associated remuneration that this significant responsibility attracts.

## **27. REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF HR/OD**

### **Proposed Appointment Process - Director of Law & Governance**

The report set out the proposed appointment process for a permanent Director of Law & Governance which included the role of the Council's Monitoring Officer. Ms Suki Binjal had been discharging the statutory duties associated with the Monitoring Officer on an interim basis since November 2021. The report set out the structure of the permanent appointment process and reminded the committee of the requirements under the Officer Appointment Procedure Rules in relation to the appointment of all Chief and Deputy Chief Officers (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

Councillor Flux moved the report's recommendations with the same delegation regarding the member panels, which was seconded by Councillor Hunter.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the report be received;
- (b) the proposed Job Description for the Director of Law & Corporate Governance at Appendix 1 be agreed;
- (c) the involvement of Penna executive recruitment in line with the previous procurement process be agreed;
- (d) the proposed timetable for the recruitment process at Appendix 2 be agreed;
- (e) the selection methodology be agreed as at Appendix 3, and authority be delegated to the Leader to nominate the names of members to be assigned to the various recruitment panels;
- (f) the remuneration for the post of Director of Law & Corporate Governance be agreed at a salary range of £125,000 - £130,000;
- (g) access to staff benefits be agreed in line with all Council employees; and
- (h) the appointment process, once complete, be recommended to Full Council.

## **28. REPORT OF THE: INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SENIOR HR MANAGER**

### **Voluntary Redundancy of the Director of Transformation**

The report set out the current position following discussions that had been had with, and at the instigation of, Mrs Allison Joynson, the Director of Transformation surrounding her voluntarily taking redundancy from the Council (copy attached to the signed minutes).

Mr O'Farrell reminded members that approval of this would need to be done by Council.

Councillor Wearmouth proposed exclusion of the press and public for consideration of this matter which was seconded by Councillor Flux. It was therefore **RESOLVED**

- (a) That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

**Supplemental Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A  
Agenda Item**

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Information relating to any individual.

**AND**

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure would adversely affect the Authority's interests.

Following discussion, it was then **RESOLVED** that the press and public be readmitted into the meeting.

Councillor Watson moved, seconded by Councillor Hunter, that the voluntary redundancy application be approved, conditional upon Mrs Joynson entering into a settlement agreement with the Council, and that negotiations continue with Mrs Joynson on this with an update to the next meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the voluntary redundancy application be approved, conditional upon Mrs Joynson entering into a settlement agreement with the Council, which would not be unusual and would be in line with the previous 2021 active policy;
- (b) an update on negotiations be made to the next meeting of the Staff and Appointments Committee; and
- (c) no reference be made to a non-disclosure agreement settlement as it is not applicable.

**29. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the confidential minutes of the following meetings of the Committee, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair:-

- (a) Monday 18 July 2022
- (b) Wednesday 27 July 2022

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....