

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
STAFF AND APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Staff and Appointments Committee** held in Conference Room 2, County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday 2 November 2022 at 9.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Sanderson
(in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Flux, B.
Grimshaw, L.
Hunter, E.I.
Purvis, M.

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Binjal, S.

Farrell, S.
Hadfield, K.

O' Farrell, R.
Sample, C.
Willis, J.

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

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dale.

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

40. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Leader asked the Monitoring Officer to clarify that those members who had taken part in the recruitment process could take part in the meeting. The MO confirmed this was the case. The Leader explained that he had wanted all group leaders to be involved in the recruitment process. Councillor Kennedy had

Ch.'s Initials.....

nominated Councillor Dale to take his place in this process as he could not attend, and Mr O'Farrell had advised this was not possible due to Councillor Dale being a member of the Staff and Appointments Committee. He had been invited to nominate another member but a further nomination had not been made.

Mr O'Farrell apologised for the confusion which had led from his comments. This had been a genuine mistake in a fast moving situation.

41. REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Appointment of the Preferred Candidate as the Head of Paid Service, Chief Executive and Returning Officer

The report sought approval from the Staff and Appointments Committee for the appointment of the preferred candidate as the full-time Head of Paid Service, Chief Executive and Returning Officer and requested that the Committee make a recommendation to full Council to appoint the preferred candidate. The report also reminded the Committee of the requirements under the Officer Appointment Procedure Rules in relation to the appointment (or dismissal) of all Chief and Deputy Chief Officers.

The report also confirmed and set out the process undertaken during the exercise to recruit to the permanent position of Head of Paid Service, Chief Executive and Returning Officer.

Mr O'Farrell spoke to this and informed members that the recruitment process had been very comprehensive and robust. 15 applications had been received and 7 candidates were longlisted. A short list of 5 attended the assessment centre and he provided some detail for members on what this had entailed. Two candidates had then been invited back for Day 2.

A number of member comments were made:

- Councillor Watson commented that he was very impressed with the candidate. The scores had been very close and he asked if the decision had been unanimous. Mr O'Farrell confirmed this was the case. The member panel had met with HR staff and Penna to consider the performance at interview and the qualitative feedback. It was not just about the scores but how well the candidate would fit in with the Authority's culture.
- Councillor Hunter asked about a likely start date. Mr O'Farrell advised that three months' notice had to be given so the end of January could be an indicative timescale and the new Chief Executive would be involved in the recruitment of the new Executive Team. Mrs Willis informed members that adverts for the Executive Team would go out after the Council meeting, with longlisting possibly taking place before Christmas and concluding in January with interviews after that, but further discussions were needed about the recruitment process. Mr O'Farrell

reported that adverts for the Executive Team, the MO and the Head of HR would be in next week's MJ.

- With regard to the proposed salary, the MO reminded members that they had received benchmarking information on this in August and had approved the salary range then. The Leader was keen that the candidate should be offered the higher end of the range, which was of a similar level to the current and previous postholder.
- Councillor Watson referred to the staff who were currently acting up at director level and their concerns that their substantive jobs would be lost in the restructure. Mr O'Farrell acknowledged that there would be a different structure and lots of jobs would look different. He was talking to the Executive Team about this.
- Councillor Purvis asked whether there was an obligation to find equivalent jobs for those members of staff who may not have a job to go back to in the restructure. Mr O'Farrell advised that when there were significant differences in the new structure there would be a process for getting staff into positions. Mrs Willis confirmed this would be done through the management of change policy whereby an offer of alternative employment would be made. This might not be of the same grade, but a generous level of protection was offered and suitable roles would need to be identified for the level of staff involved. "Suitable" could be one band below the current role. Councillor Purvis asked if a copy of this policy could be sent to all members of the Committee, which was agreed.

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

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the report be received and it be noted that the recruitment process has been conducted in a fair and transparent way;
- (b) the Committee accept the findings of the Interview Panel that Dr Helen Paterson is the preferred candidate to be appointed to the role of Head of Paid Service, Chief Executive and Returning Officer;
- (c) it be noted that the appointment is subject to no substantial and well-founded objection being notified to the Leader of the Council, in accordance with Part 4.3 of the Constitution (Officer Appointment Procedure Rules), that Dr Helen Paterson be appointed as the full-time Head of Paid Service, Chief Executive and Returning Officer;
- (d) it be agreed that in the event that any objection is received from the Leader or Cabinet, that the appointment in question be referred back to this Committee for urgent consideration;
- (e) subject to there being no objection from the Leader or Cabinet to the appointment, full Council be recommended to appoint Dr Helen Paterson as the Council's Head of Paid Service, Chief Executive and Returning Officer;

- (f) it be noted that the offer of employment will be subject to all necessary pre-employment checks;
- (g) it be noted that the effective date of commencement of employment will be confirmed following all the necessary pre-employment checks; and
- (h) it be agreed that the remuneration for the post of Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive will be at the rate of £199k per annum with access to staff benefits in line with all Council employees. In addition, as Returning Officer for the Council, in the event of an election an additional fee of £12,145 will be payable.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....