

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 20 February 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Sanderson
(in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Dale, A.
Dickinson, S.
Flux, B.

Hunter, E.I.
Purvis, M.
Watson, J.G.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Binjal, S.

Crosland, S.
Elsdon, A.
Farrell, S.
Hadfield, K.

Paterson, Dr H.
Sample, C.

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

56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Simpson and Wearmouth.

57. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 January 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

58. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Senior Management Restructure Proposal

The report sought agreement to a proposal for a management restructure across the Council consistent with the revised Executive Director structure.

Ch.'s Initials.....

The Committee approved the revised executive arrangements (tiers 1 and 2) at its meeting in September 2022 and this was subsequently also approved by full Council, with progressive implementation since that time. This proposal covered the necessary senior management restructure (tiers 3 and 4) and the proposal was appended to the report (Appendix 1). Appendix 1 to be considered under agenda item 10 in Part 2 of the agenda. (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The report was introduced by the Chief Executive. She highlighted that the current structure had evolved over time and was not consistent with itself and the roles as they currently were. She drew members' attention to the design principles, advising that the structure was there for consultation at this stage. Affected staff would be met with after the meeting, assuming members approved it, and meetings with Trade Unions would follow.

A number of points were made including:-

- On page 6, Councillor Dickinson asked how savings could be achieved if the number of heads of service roles were increasing. Members were advised that reductions in other areas balanced this out overall.
- Councillor Watson welcomed the fact that discussions were now being held with staff as it would ease a lot of unsettlement. He agreed that there were some tweaks which could be done and that this would come out as part of the consultation.
- Councillor Purvis asked why management did not meet with staff and Trade Unions together. Members were advised that sometimes staff preferred to speak without Trade Union representatives present. Or, they may wish to reflect on things before speaking to them. Time was factored in for staff to meet with Trade Unions and Executive Directors, and Trade Unions were already aware of the shape of the proposals so were able to consider things from their members' perspective, and take comfort that there was a structure and consultation process for the next 30 days.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the proposed senior management (tiers 3 and 4) restructure be approved for consultation as detailed in Appendix 1 (exempt from publication for reasons set out in the agenda letter) to the report;
- (b) the Committee note that the proposed restructure is subject to formal consultation with affected colleagues and Trade Union representatives, in keeping with the Council's Management of Organisational Change policy (Appendix 2);
- (c) the Committee note that following the results of formal consultation, the Chief Executive will consider any required adjustments and the finalised structure will be brought back to a meeting of this Committee during April for final approval; and

- (d) proposed Tier 3 roles be established at either Band 16 or 17 and proposed Tier 4 roles at either Band 14 or 15. For salaries over £100,000 formal approval of this Committee will be required in line with the Council's Pay Policy.

59. REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF HR/OD

Pay Protection Provision for Senior Managers

The report sought approval to agree to an adjustment of current provision for pay protection for employees at NCC Band 14 and above i.e. those on Senior Manager Terms and Conditions. The proposed adjustment would bring greater parity with provision for employees at NCC Band 13 and below (Pay Protection policy – appendix 1) and with other local government employers (Benchmarking – appendix 2) (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The report was presented by the Acting Head of HR/OD. She highlighted that the policy was barely called upon and had not been reviewed since 2013. Benchmarking had been carried out with other authorities and the change was likely to affect two heads of service.

Members welcomed the proposals.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) a one-off arrangement for the payment of pay protection at a value of 100% protection for a period of 18 months be agreed. This will apply only to those impacted by the senior management review proposed to commence consultation on 21 February 2023;
- (b) a subsequent review of pay protection arrangements be undertaken with a view to harmonising provision across all employee groups; and
- (c) a harmonised pay protection policy should aim to be affordable, supportive to employees and be benchmarked against other local government employers.

60. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Restructure of Tiers 3 and 4 – Consequential Redundancies

The report set out the current position and requested approval of the applications for voluntary redundancy (VR) for five posts. It highlighted the considerations taken around the applications of VR against the tiers 3 and 4 restructure.

It provided a financial position highlighting the overall savings that may be achieved as a result of granting the requests of the five members of staff.

It outlined that in the case of two of the posts, the final decision rested with full Council due to the cost of the individual exit packages exceeding £100,000.

Appendix 2 to be considered under agenda item 11 in Part 2 of this agenda. (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report was introduced by the Chief Executive.

A number of points were made, including:-

- Councillor Dickinson asked why previous reports on voluntary redundancies had contained much greater detail for consideration in public than was the case here. The sums involved were also greater in these cases. He also asked how the voluntary redundancies were consequential when the structure had been discussed for some time.
- The Monitoring Officer confirmed that a consistent approach had been taken. Such information had to be in the public domain unless there was good reason to withhold it. The previous cases Councillor Dickinson referred to were Chief Officers and therefore their roles were in the public domain. The public interest test differed depending on the individual circumstances. Staff that were subject of this report were less senior and would normally not have needed to come to the Committee but the voluntary redundancies demonstrated how they fitted in with the proposed structure. Two were also over £100,000 and would therefore need Council approval. The Service Head for Finance added that the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosure because these applications would not normally be brought to Staff and Appointments Committee for approval. They were more junior roles and therefore it would not be right to name them in the report. The purpose of the report was to determine whether they were affordable in the overall proposed structure.
- Councillor Purvis asked about the ring fencing process. The Acting Head of HR/OD confirmed that an employee's fit would be assessed against a role and if there was an 80% match they would be slotted in. A more detailed response would be given to Councillor Purvis after the meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the voluntary redundancy applications for the following posts be approved:
 - Revenues and Benefits Manager
 - Director of Housing and Public Protection
 - Head of Property and Capital Programming
 - General Manager, Adult Social Care
 - Strategic Services Manager (Planning)
- (b) Council be recommended to agree that the applications for voluntary redundancy for the Director of Housing and Public Protection and the Revenues and Benefits Manager are approved; and
- (c) the cost of the redundancies outlined in the report be met from the Council's Restructuring Reserve. A recommendation will be made to Cabinet in the next financial monitoring report.

The Chief Executive left the meeting at this point.

61. REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF HR/OD

Chief Executive Performance Appraisal

The report sought approval to an appraisal process for the Chief Executive in line with the guidance laid out within the JNC Handbooks for Chief Executives (Appendix 2.) The report offered a defined process for appraisal for the Committee to consider and agree (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

Councillor Dale asked whether there was a need for external support to be sought for this process. The Leader replied that the Chief Executive was happy with what was proposed.

Councillor Dickinson had every confidence that the Leader could carry out the Chief Executive’s appraisal with in house support from officers, which he supported.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the appraisal process be as defined in the attached appendix 1; and
- (b) the Chief Executive’s appraisal be conducted by the Leader and the Deputy Leader with administrative support from the Director of HR/OD

The Chief Executive returned to the meeting.

62. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 items on the agenda as they involve 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:-

Agenda Item Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A

10 and 11	1 and 2 Information relating to any individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
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AND The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure would adversely affect the Authority’s interests.

The Monitoring Officer cautioned that members could comment on the confidential appendices relating to the reports in Minute No.s 58 and 60, but the decisions had been made on these matters.

63. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Senior Management Restructure Proposal

Members had been circulated with a confidential Appendix 1 under Agenda item 4 in Part 1 of this agenda.

Councillor Dale sought clarification on a couple of points regarding the Chief Internal Auditor and the Head of Policy and Performance roles which was provided.

Councillor Dickinson sought clarification on the internal change consultants which was provided.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....