

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 Thursday, 22 February 2024 at 9.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor R. Wearmouth
(Deputy Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Dale, A.	Purvis, M.
Dickinson, S.	Simpson, E.
Hunter, E.I.	Watson, J.G.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Farrell, S.	Director of Workforce and Organisational Development
Gerrard, S.	Director of Law and Corporate Governance (MO)
Paterson, H.	Chief Executive and Head of Paid Services
Sample, C.	Solicitor
Turnbull, N.	Democratic Services Officer
Willis, J.	Executive Director - Transformation and Resources

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Flux and Sanderson.

36. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Staff and Appointments Committee held on Thursday, 8 February 2024, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

37. APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Members received a report seeking to confirm the outcome of the selection process for the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and sought approval for the appointment of the preferred candidate.

The Committee discussed the starting salary and requirement for the matter to be referred to Council following approval of the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 at the last meeting of the Staff and Appointments Committee, for approval of

new appointments with salaries over £100,000. A report would therefore be taken to the next meeting of full Council on 20 March 2024.

RESOLVED

- 1) To accept the findings of the selection panel that the preferred candidate be appointed to the role of Assistant Chief Fire Officer. Details set out in confidential appendix 1.
- 2) To note that offers of employment would be subject to all necessary pre-employment checks.
- 3) To note that the effective date of commencement of employment would be confirmed following all necessary pre-employment checks.
- 4) To agree that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer would align to the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services terms and conditions (Gold Book) with remuneration aligning to NCC pay grade of Band 16, £103,133 SCP 65. This cost excluded employer's national insurance and employer's pension contributions.
- 5) To agree that, in the event that any objection is received from the Leader and/or Cabinet, the appointment in question be referred back to this Committee for urgent consideration.
- 6) Subject to there being no objection from the Leader or Cabinet to the appointment, to recommend to full Council that the preferred candidate be appointed as Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

38. PROPOSED RECONFIGURATION OF ROLE IN RESPONSE TO ENDING OF JOINT ARRANGEMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR VACANT DIRECTOR OF INTEGRATED COMMISSIONING AND PERFORMANCE – ADULTS, AGEING AND WELLBEING

The Chief Executive presented the report and explained that following the ending of a joint arrangement with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the report set out the proposal that the currently established, shared cost 0.5 FTE Director of Integrated Commissioning be increased to 1.0 FTE, to be wholly employed by the Council. An updated Job Description was included within the papers at page 15.

RESOLVED that the following recommendations be made to full Council on 20 March 2024:

- 1) That the confirmed staffing budget be utilised to increase the establishment from 0.5 FTE by a further 0.5 FTE to create a 1.0 FTE role.
- 2) That the Band 16 (£100,157 - £109,081) job description and associated job evaluation established via the senior management review of summer 2023 continue to apply. The job description was attached to the report at appendix 1.

- 3) That external advertisement of the post for the period 25 March 2024 – 6 April 2024 takes place following consideration at full Council. Shortlisted candidates be required to attend an Assessment Day during w/c 10 April 2024. The assessment would include psychometric testing, staff panel comprising key employees, and a formal interview by a panel comprising senior managers and the relevant Cabinet Member.
- 4) Accept the findings of the selection panel that the preferred candidate be offered the role of Director of Integrated Commissioning and Performance subject to the final approval of full Council.
- 5) Agree that in the event that any objection be received from the Leader and/or Cabinet that the appointment in question be referred back to this Committee for urgent consideration.
- 6) Note that offers of employment will be subject to all necessary pre-employment checks.
- 7) Note that the effective date of commencement of employment is to be confirmed following completion of all the necessary pre-employment checks and following approval by full Council.

39. INCREMENTAL PAY PROGRESSION FOR SENIOR MANAGERS (BANDS 14-17)

The Director of Workforce and Organisational Development presented the report which sought approval for a revised process for the handling of requests for incremental progression for senior managers i.e. those managers at Bands 14 – 17. The proposed assessment process was set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

She explained that the new process would enable parity for all senior managers and address concerns that had been raised informally regarding the previous inconsistent process.

The following issues were discussed:

- Whether the Chief Executive should be involved in the process. It was noted that initially there was likely to be a significant workload and it would be left to her discretion as to whether her involvement was required.
- There were 33 Heads of Service on Band 14. 20 members of staff were on the bottom spinal column point of Band 14.
- Appraisals for the Executive Directors had been updated in 2023 and now included references to health and safety and safeguarding. The updated appraisal would be rolled out across the organisation. Whilst the format of appraisals was the same, the content varied depending on the nature of roles.
- Risk management was not normally a criterion of appraisals unless it was key to the role or corporate plan. There was an expectation that risk management would take place across the organisation all the time.
- The appraisal process was separate to the management of underperformance. All employees were entitled to have an appraisal

which should be a positive process. Underperformance would be managed through regular meetings.

- There were no concerns regarding the performance of the cohort of senior managers in Bands 14-17.
- Paragraph 4.3 required review of applications by line managers.
- Poor performance would not be rewarded.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The content and application of the proposed assessment process (appendix 1) be agreed with effect from 1 April 2024.
- 2) The transitional arrangements outlined in paragraph 5.1 (immediate access to the scheme for historic applications and those on static salaries for more than 2 years) and paragraph 5.2 (accelerated increment for those at the bottom of Band 14), be agreed.

40. APPROVAL OF FLEXIBLE EARLY RETIREMENT REQUEST

The report sought approval of a request from the Director of Finance and Procurement to take flexible early retirement with effect from 31 March 2024.

The Executive Director - Transformation and Resources provided background on the request and confirmed that the Director met the criteria. There would be a payback period of 1.4 years.

She confirmed that approval of the request would be in the Council's financial and managerial interests, which was set out in the business case contained at Appendix 2 and would enable succession planning in the interim period.

The Chief Executive referred to KC advice which confirmed that approval by Full Council was not required.

Members commented that the Director of Finance and Procurement was an exemplary, long serving member of staff and they wholeheartedly supported the application. The Chair requested that their comments regarding the officer being an extremely valued member of staff be relayed to them.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The request of the Director of Finance and Procurement to take flexible early retirement with effect from 31st March 2024, be agreed.
- 2) The pension strain costs of £102,818, be agreed.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____