

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 4th March 2026 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Martin Ashcroft (Chairman),

Tunde Akinsanya, Tony Armstrong, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Luke Ellis, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Phil Hawkins, Andy Hill, John Moore, Kyle Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICIALS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)

Ms. Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)

Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

No members of public were in attendance.

99. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Neil Collinson, Lisa Conners, Richard Hutchinson, Jacqui McFadden-Lewis, Carl Robinson and Brian Sowerby.

100. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

102. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

103. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on the 21st January 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

104. SERVICE REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Chairman proposed that the minutes be agreed subject to amending them to be titled as 'minutes' not 'notes' to reference the re-establishment of standing orders at the end of the meeting following their waiving to allow for further public comments, and to clarify in the recommendations that the Santa Tours Sub Committee will meet bi-monthly as opposed to twice per month.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Michael Stead and;

RESOLVED - That the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Service Review Sub Committee held on the 4th February 2026, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments being noted:

- Amending to be titled as 'minutes' not 'notes';
- Including reference the re-establishment of standing orders at the end of the meeting following their waiving to allow for further public comments; and
- Clarifying in the recommendations that the Santa Tours Sub Committee will meet bi-monthly as opposed to twice per month.

105. AUDIT, RISK AND G.D.P.R SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Phillip Hawkins and;

RESOLVED - That the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub Committee held on the 17th February 2026, be agreed, confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

106. ACCOUNT CONTROL SHEETS

Account Control Sheets for the 23rd January, 5th February and 17th February and the General Bank Account for January 2026 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the Account Control Sheets for the 23rd January, 5th February and 17th February and the General Bank Account for January 2026 be received.

107. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out for consideration the current position of the grants and donations budgets.

It was reported that a total of £7,550 is currently available in the Grants and Donations Budget, £8,510 in the Community Benefit Fund and £1,899 in the Community Events Grants Budget.

A donation request from the Captain of Oak Leaf Golf Club was considered, requesting a donation from the Council towards his fundraising efforts for his chosen charity for 2026; Marie Curie.

The Chairman advised that he had consulted with the Golf Administrator regarding the cost of various prizes.

He proposed that a 4-ball voucher to the value of £112, a range card to the value of £33 and a voucher to spend in the golf shop to the value of £125 should be offered as raffle prizes, a total donation value of £270.

Councillor Tony Beddard raised concern on making a donation to a national charity and the precedent that this might set.,

The Town Clerk advised that the Grants and Donations Policy does not allow direct grants or donations to national charities unless there is a clear local benefit. He further advised that in this case, there is a clear link to local fundraising by the golf club and that non-cash donation had been recommended.

Councillor Lindsey Aston agreed that as the Golf Club Captain would be fundraising, the council would not be directly donating to the national charity.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran, and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) The report be received.
- ii) That a donation of a 4-ball voucher, a driving range card and a voucher to spend in the golf shop, to a total value of £270, be given to the Oak Leaf Golf Club for use by the Club Captain in one of his charity competitions and events.

108. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Health and Safety Report was submitted by the Town Clerk for consideration and approval highlighting accident statistics, including any reportable accidents, reports from the Health and Safety Executive, and a list of any operational and health and safety training undertaken by staff during the 2025 calendar year.

The Chairman was pleased to note the low accident numbers.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The Annual Health and Safety Report be received.

109. 2025/26 STRATEGIC AIMS AND TARGETS OUTTURN REPORT

The Corporate Management Team submitted a report to present the end of year outturn summary on the Town Council Service Delivery Plan Strategic Targets for the 2025/26 financial year.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The end of year outturn position on the Town Council Service Delivery Plan Strategic Targets for the 2025/26 financial year, be agreed.

110. 2026/27 DRAFT STRATEGIC AIMS AND TARGETS

The Corporate Management Team submitted a report to present for consideration and approval the draft Strategic Aims and Targets for the Town Council Service Delivery Plan for the 2026/27 financial year.

Councillor Tony Beddard questioned the target end date of March 2027 for the targets relating to the implementation of the council chamber audio-visual system and streaming and recording of Council meetings.

The Town Clerk encouraged members to revisit the previous report to the October Policy and Resources Committee Meeting which provided the full detail of the work taking place in relation to these issues including seeking advice and quotes, researching and preparing a protocol and addressing officer concerns, as well as the pending changes to the law regarding hybrid meetings. He advised that the target date provided for the time it would take to undertake these investigations, as well as report to Council and deal with any queries or requests for further work. Progress has been made on this issue and it is anticipated that a report will be brought forward well before the end of the year.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The draft Strategic Aims and Targets for 2025/26 be approved.

111. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

The Town Clerk presented a report to provide information to enable the Policy and Resources Committee to undertake the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit Service for the 2025/26 financial year, in accordance with non-statutory best practice.

It was noted that a report will follow at the next meeting of the Full Council with details of the internal audit arrangements for 2026/27 forward.

The Chairman added wished to note his thanks to the Finance Manager and the team for managing to come to a good conclusion and wished to record thanks to the outgoing Internal Auditor for his hard work and dedication.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received,
- ii) The Policy and Resources Committee supports the conclusion of the Corporate Management Team that the Council's Internal Audit Service for the 2025/26 financial year has been effective; and
- iii) The outcome of the Policy and Resources Committee's review of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service is taken into account in the consideration of the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control and the approval of the Annual Governance Statement later in the year.

Chairman