PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 24th NOVEMBER 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the **PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on **TUESDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2026 at 7.00pm**

PRESENT

Councillors: Tony Armstrong, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Richard Burchell, Arun M. Chandran, Chris Clement, Luke Ellis, Kyle Robinson and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Sharna Stretch (Senior Admin. Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

One member of the public and Councillor Tracey Williams were in attendance.

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Martin Ashcroft, Neil Collinson, Phill Hawkins, Richard Hutchinson, Sharon Hutchinson, Jackie McFadden Lewis and Carl Robinson.

13. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

16. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Richard Burchell, and

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee, held on the 26th May 2026, be received.

17. CORPORATE AND POLICY OFFICER RECRUITMENT

The Town Clerk presented a report asking Members to give consideration to the recruitment process and timetable for the Corporate and Policy Officer post.

This is following receipt of notice of retirement from the current postholder.

Members were advised that the Job Descriptions and Person Specification for the post had been updated to reflect how the requirements of the role have evolved over the years.

It was noted that an expression of interest had been received from an internal candidate and that there may be other officers interested too.

Members were requested to consider whether they wish to undertake an internal recruitment exercise for this post, as has been done previously with this and other officer roles where there are strong internal candidates, or whether to carry out a full external recruitment exercise for which the internal candidate could also apply.

Councillor Arun Chandran proposed that the internal recruitment exercise be the preferred option and further proposed that a Shortlisting and Interview Panel be appointed to consist of the following members: Tony Beddard, Richard Burchell, Arun Chandran, Luke Ellis, Carl Robinson and John Woodward, with the option for the Town Clerk to seek substitutes if any member of the panel is unavailable.

Councillor Richard Burchell asked if there would be an option to backfill the vacant position that would be created if an internal appointment is made and if not whether it would be realistic to recruit and appoint a replacement officer within the timescales set out in the report.

The Town Clerk advised that there will likely be an external recruitment exercise for the new vacancy that would be created, but that the extended notice period provided by the outgoing Corporate and Policy Officer would hopefully allow for a replacement to be recruited ahead of the retirement of the Corporate and Policy Officer,

Councillor Tony Armstrong suggested that looking externally would be more advisable as there may be other strong candidates out there and despite the concerns about the tight recruitment timetable and the time available for handover, an external candidate may be able to shadow the outgoing Corporate and Policy Officer on an unpaid basis. He further asked if the interview panel proposal could be opened up to other members.

The Town Clerk advised that shadowing would be difficult as candidates would still be required to work their notice period and being available for an extended handover period would require the goodwill of their employer.

He further added that the internal recruitment process would be robust, with a presentation, and questions to help the Interview Panel find out more about the candidate and understand their background, skills and experience and suitability for the role. He stressed however, that if the panel felt they were not the right candidate for the job, then the Council could still seek to undertake an external recruitment process.

Councillor Tony Beddard asked if succession planning is part of the process and if there would be any issues regarding protecting the officers from accusations of bias in the internal recruitment process.

The Town Clerk confirmed that succession planning is part of the process and the internal candidate already works closely with the Corporate and Policy Officer. He added that there maybe other staff members who may be interested in applying for the post.

He stressed that it was the decision of the sub-committee as to whether to undertake an internal or external recruitment process and that the final decision as to whether to appoint would be for the Interview Panel and not the officers.

Councillor Chris Clement agreed that internal promotion is good as the staff know the council, he added that the candidate should be assessed and if the criteria are not hit, then it will go to external advert.

Councillor Kyle Robinson left the meeting at this point.

Councillor Tony Armstrong advised that he would like to hear the current Corporate and Policy Officer's feedback as to the role, future priorities and achievements, particularly with regards to community engagement.

The Town Clerk advised that the Corporate and Policy Officer was on annual leave and provided some personal thoughts as to the key priorities, identifying human resources issues, information technology and artificial intelligence as increasing work commitments and highlighting the Aycliffe 75th History of a New Town and Life in a New Town projects as a key achievement. He also identified the support that the Corporate and Policy Officer provides to the Town Clerk as being invaluable both practically and emotionally.

Councillor Arun Chandran suggested that to look externally would take longer and highlighted his reasoning for the interview panel selection.

Councillor Chris Clement seconded Councillor Chandran's proposal.

Councillor Lindsey Aston wished to pass on her congratulations to the Corporate and Policy Officer on her upcoming retirement.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Chris Clement, and:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

i) Officers undertake an internal recruitment exercise in relation to the Corporate and Policy Officer post to the timetable highlighted in the report.

ii) That a Shortlisting and Interview Panel is appointed comprising the following Councillors: Tony Beddard, Richard Burchell, Arun Chandran, Luke Ellis, Carl Robinson and John Woodward with the option of substitution if any members cannot attend the interview.

Chairman