Minutes of the Meeting of Personnel held in Doggetts Barn on 6 November 2026 at 11:00 am

Present: Cllrs. Alan Layland, Margot McArthur *(Chair)*, Michael Stockdale
In attendance: Town Clerk and Cllr Gemmell Smith; there were no members of the public or press.
11:00am the meeting opened.

1 To receive apologies for absence

The Chair asked members in attendance if they were content to proceed with the meeting given only three members were in attendance, and there were financially matters to consider. Noting Cllr Gemmell Smith was also in attendance, members ***agreed to proceed with the meeting.***

Apologies for absence were received, noted and accepted from Cllrs Baker, Compton, and McGregor.

2 Declarations of interest or predetermination

None.

3 Matters arising not covered elsewhere

The following updates were noted:

Grounds Team Medicals: It was clarified that the previously reported requirement for three members of the grounds team to undergo eye tests had arisen from a misunderstanding of the medical reports. No further eye tests were required.

Personnel Risk Assessment: The review by Cllr Layland and the Town Clerk remained outstanding, with the intention of completing it before the next annual review.

Staff Appraisal and Development Policy: The new policy had been approved by Council in September and published on the Council's website, formalising the Council's existing appraisal arrangements.

Staff Development Review Form: The form had been updated to place greater emphasis on constructive discussion, objective setting and staff development, replacing the previous numerical scoring system with an overall performance assessment.

Staff Appraisals: Annual appraisals were scheduled for January and February 2027, with informal reviews anticipated during November 2026.

4 To discuss Personnel matters

4.1 To receive update on staff attendance/absence for 2025/26

Members noted total absence for the first six months of the financial year, 30 days including two officers compassionate leave.

4.2 NJC Pay Award 2026–27

Members noted that the revised NJC pay scales for 2026–27 had been implemented, with backdated payments from 1 April 2026 included in the September payroll. The deletion of Scale Point 2 (SCP 2) was also noted, along with confirmation that no updated information had been received regarding the Outer London Allowance.

4.3 Grounds Apprenticeship update

Members were delighted to note that Kai had successfully completed his Level 2 Horticulture Apprenticeship in August 2026, having passed his outstanding examinations.

Members congratulated Kai on his achievement and noted that he had been placed on the appropriate NJC pay scale, with a permanent contract of employment being prepared in accordance with the Council's previous resolution.

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4.4 Contracts of employment updates

Members noted the following updates:

Community Warden: The fixed-term contract had been extended to 31 March 2027, at 11 hours per week, in accordance with the Committee's previous resolution, pending a review of the role and future service requirements.

Market Officer: A revised contract of employment had been issued, signed and returned. Members also noted that the Market Officer had joined the Council's pension and medical insurance schemes.

4.5 Paternity Leave – Facilities Manager

Members considered the exceptional circumstances affecting the Facilities Manager's paternity leave following a family bereavement and supported the Town Clerk's proposed compassionate approach.

Resolved: To approve the reallocation of the affected leave as compassionate or other appropriate leave, allowing the remaining two weeks and two days of enhanced paternity leave to be taken at a later date.

4.6 Medical Insurance Scheme – eligibility update

Members noted the following updates regarding the Council's medical insurance scheme:

Market Officer: Had joined the scheme in July 2026, following confirmation of eligibility.

Cleaner: Had been offered membership but had declined due to the associated benefit-in-kind tax implications.

Grounds Team: Kai was eligible to join the scheme following completion of his apprenticeship and was considering whether to take up the benefit.

Open Spaces Officer: Would become eligible to join the scheme from April 2027, with provision included in the proposed staffing budget.

Members noted the potential additional costs associated with eligible employees joining the scheme.

5 To receive an update on other staff matters

5.1 Communications Officer – request for additional contracted hours

Members considered the proposal to increase the Communications Officer's contracted hours from 15 to 22.5 hours per week, recognising the increasing demands of the role and the additional capacity this would provide for the Council's communications, tourism, market and community engagement activities.

Members unanimously supported the proposal,

Resolved: to support the increase in the Communications Officer's contracted hours from 15 to 22.5 hours per week, with effect from 1 April 2027, initially for a 12-month period. To recommend to Full Council that the estimated additional annual staffing cost of £8,460.19 be included within the 2027–28 budget. To review the increased hours ahead of the preparation of the 2028–29 budget, to assess the ongoing operational requirements and benefits.

5.2 Community Warden – review of role and future provision

Members received a report on the Community Warden role, including the activities and achievements over the past year under the current reduced working hours. Members discussed the future provision of the service and the need to review the role in line with the Council's current objectives and priorities.

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Members supported making provision for 15 hours per week within the draft 2027–28 staffing budget, noting that the Council's precept contribution would depend on the level of external grant funding secured. It was also noted the Earmarked Reserves should there be an increase to the hours unbudgeted. Members,

Resolved: the following recommendations to Full Council:-

- **That two Members be nominated to work with the Town Clerk to review the Community Warden role, including its objectives, responsibilities, working arrangements and future service requirements.**
- **To support budget provision for 15 hours per week within the draft 2027–28 staffing budget, subject to the outcome of the review and subsequent approval of any changes to contracted hours.**
- **To include consideration of external grant funding and the Council's future precept contribution as part of the review.**
- **To report the findings and recommendations back to the Personnel Committee ahead of the expiry of the current fixed-term contract on 31 March 2027.**

6 HR and Health & Safety Consultancy Services – contractual arrangements and proposed transition

Members received an update on the proposed transition of the Council's HR and Health & Safety consultancy services from WorkNest to Peninsula, in accordance with Full Council's July 2026 resolution.

Members reaffirmed their support for the proposed transition, noting that no new agreement had yet been finalised or signed. The Town Clerk confirmed that, together with the Deputy Clerk/RFO, the proposed arrangements would be reviewed to ensure that best value for money continued to be sought. Members unanimously,

Resolved: for noting to Full Council:-

- **To reaffirm support for progressing towards a transition from WorkNest to Peninsula, subject to satisfactory contractual and financial arrangements.**
- **To support a provisional allowance of £2,200 within the draft 2027–28 budget towards potential early termination costs, subject to negotiation and subsequent approval as appropriate.**
- **To support the Town Clerk continuing discussions with WorkNest regarding a reduced early termination arrangement following the November 2026 renewal, with the outcome reported back to Members as appropriate.**

7 Budgets

7.1 Staffing Budget - review 2026-27

Members received and noted the staffing budget review for the six months ending 30 September 2026, with expenditure of £272,933.90, representing 47.67% of the annual budget.

The projected year-end expenditure was approximately £546,312, representing an anticipated underspend of £26,248 against the approved budget of £572,559.47.

Members noted that the projected underspend was principally attributable to the reduction in employer pension contributions from 23.9% to 19.2%, together with the Community Warden currently working 11 hours per week against a budget provision of 22 hours. These savings were partly offset by the significant increase in medical insurance premiums.

7.2 Staffing Budget – draft estimates 2027–28

12:05pm the meeting was paused for a comfort break.
12:10pm the meeting resumed.

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Members received and discussed the proposed staffing budget for 2027–28, including the projected costs based on contractual increments and assumed NJC pay awards of 3.2% and approximately 4%.

Members supported the proposed staffing budget of £605,477.76, incorporating an assumed NJC pay award of approximately 4%, and unanimously,

Resolved: to recommend to Finance and Governance Committee and Full Council for consideration as part of the draft budget:-

- **To recommend the proposed 2027–28 staffing budget of £605,477.76.**
- **To note the current Staffing Earmarked Reserve of £45,000 and its purpose in meeting unforeseen staffing expenditure.**

12:15pm the meeting closed.

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