

Minutes of a Meeting of the **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE** held at the **TOWN HALL, SWANAGE** on **TUESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2026** at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor S. Vile – Chairman

Councillor M. Bonfield

Councillor T. Foster

Councillor C. Sutton

Also Present:-

Dr M. Ayres

Mr C. Milmer (to 11.50 a.m.)

Miss A. Spencer

Mrs B. Varga

Town Clerk

Visitor Services & Business Development
Manager

Finance Manager

Payroll and Personnel Officer

Public Participation Time

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologetics for their inability to attend the meeting had been received from the Town Mayor, Councillors Dorrington and Bishop.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with Section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3. **STAFF HANDBOOK POLICY UPDATES**

It was reported that as a result of the Employment Rights Act 2025, updates were required to the Staff Handbook. It was stated that these were statutory provisions with the majority of the amendments coming into force in April 2026. The inclusion of the provisions made within the Employment Rights Act 2025 were noted.

Consideration was given to further amendments to the Staff Handbook, relating to:

- Leave Policy including Jury Service, Medical Appointments, Reserve Forces; and
- Allowances: Eye Tests

It was noted the Personnel Committee had delegated authority to approve minor changes to the Staff Handbook, with any significant changes being recommended to full Council.

Members discussed section 5: Jury Service of the Leave Policy. It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That Section 5: Jury Service of the Leave Policy be approved, subject to an extension of payment beyond 4 weeks being considered on a case-by-case basis, should this need arise.

Members discussed Section 6: Medical Appointments in depth. It was stated that this section had been included in order to provide clarity when booking medical appointments that are within normal working hours for employees and managers and to ensure, as far as possible, consistency across all council departments. It was noted that the Council was under no obligation to pay for time off, however, it was obliged to allow attendance at these appointments.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That Section 6: Medical Appointments be included in the Leave Policy, subject to the wording of option two in the briefing note being revised to maximise consistency of treatment.

Members discussed Section 8: Reserve Forces. It was noted that the Council had proudly received a Bronze award from the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme. This section was noted as a new inclusion, whereas leave for such purposes was currently covered by Section 4: Public Duties.

It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Vile and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That Section 8: Reserve Forces be included in the Leave Policy and that each leave year an allowance of five days paid leave is authorised to help them to meet their commitments to the reserve forces.

Members discussed Allowances Section 2: Eye Tests, and whether the Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) test should fall within this definition. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Foster and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That a reimbursement for the costs of an Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) test be included within the scope of Allowances for employees who are identified as a DSE user.

4. **ITEMS OF INFORMATION AND MATTERS FOR FORTHCOMING AGENDAS**

- a) Domestic Abuse Policy:** Further to the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 15th October 2025, Councillor Vile asked for an update on the potential inclusion of a Domestic Abuse Policy within the Staff Handbook. It was reported that information had been sought from South West Councils, however, they had been unable to provide the required guidance. It was agreed that further advice should be sought on this matter.
- b) Vexatious Correspondence and Complaints Policy:** An update regarding the effectiveness of this policy was requested. It was noted that this matter fell within the terms of reference of the Finance & Governance Committee and would be discussed at the next meeting of that committee.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Sutton and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That, under Standing Order No. 1 c), in the public interest, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted under agenda item 5 (due to data protection requirements).

5. TO CONSIDER POTENTIAL CHANGE TO THE STAFF STRUCTURE AND PRELIMINARY EMPLOYEE BUDGET FOR THE 2027/28 FINANCIAL YEAR

Members considered a briefing note summarising the forecast employee costs for 2026/27 and the provisional budget for the 2027/28 financial year, including estimated costs for 2028/29 and 2029/30. It was noted that there was no provision within the budgets for the project and contract management of the Green Seafront Scheme, as it was anticipated that this work would be contracted out and accounted for as part of the professional fees included within the costs of the scheme.

It was noted that the forecast for 2026/27 currently shows a potential underspend of £38k due to vacant permanent posts, and some under employment in seasonal posts. It was further noted that a 3% increase had been applied to the 2026/27 budget, with the actual pay award being 3.3%, resulting in a general variance.

In estimating the 2027/28 employee costs, it was reported that a 3.5% pay award had been applied to all scale points which also includes incremental uplifts where contracted. The employer's pension contribution rate of 20% for 2027/28 had also been applied. Given the current staffing structure, it was reported that this would result in a budget requirement of £1.45m in 2027/28, an uplift of £11.5k on the 2026/27 budget, due to a decrease in the FTE employee count.

It was reported that a review of the staff structure had been undertaken, due to current and forthcoming vacancies within the Central Services and Visitor Services departments. Furthermore, a review of management job descriptions had been undertaken to ensure that these adequately reflected the roles of the postholders. All revisions had been evaluated by South West Councils and were subject to consultation with affected employees.

Members considered the proposed minor staff restructure as set out in the briefing note, which explained that its implementation would result in an uplift in budget of £56,710 compared to the current structure. It was noted that amendments to job titles could be given further consideration.

The urgency of recruiting to vacant posts was highlighted for business continuity purposes and the need to ensure resilience within the council's staffing structure was highlighted. Attention was also drawn to the importance of wording the job adverts to generate maximum interest in the recruitment process. It was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That the revised staffing structure be approved in full, together with the associated salary grades, subject to staff consultation.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Foster and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That the staffing budgets as set out in the briefing note, be taken forward to the meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee on 16th December 2026

for consideration as part of the 2027/28 budget setting process.

Members also considered the proposed staff training budget. It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Vile and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:
That the training budget of £15,000 be approved.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 21st April 2027.

The meeting closed at 12.00 p.m.
