

**DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**held on THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 2026 at 6:00PM**  
**at The Spetchells Centre, Meeting Rooms 1 & 2 Front Street, Prudhoe, NE42 5AA**

**Present:**

Cllr Mike Smith (Chair), Cllr Dot Dickinson (Ex Officio), Cllr Carol Stephenson, Cllr Holly Waddell, Cllr Jonathan Wheeler (Ex Officio)

Shirley Ann Gaut (Clerk)  
Stephanie Kirby (Deputy Clerk)

**HR2627/001 Welcome from Chair**

Meeting opened by Chair Cllr Mike Smith.

**HR2627/002 Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Val Leslie, Cllr Angie Scott

**HR2627/003 Declarations of Interest**

None received.

**HR2627/004 Dispensations**

None received.

**HR2627/005 Minutes of the Human Resources Committee Meeting, held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025**

It was **AGREED** to receive and agree as a true record. *These minutes were received for information only at the Ordinary Meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025.*

**HR2627/006 Appraisals**

**a) Staff Appraisals 2025/26**

To note that the staff appraisals for 2025/26 have been completed and that no additional comments or concerns were raised.

The Clerk advised that appraisals had been undertaken for both the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk. It was noted that Cllr Smith and Cllr Wheeler conducted the Clerk's appraisal, and that Cllr Smith and the Clerk conducted the Deputy Clerk's appraisal. Members were invited to confirm whether there were any further comments arising from the appraisal process.

Cllr Wheeler raised the matter of delegation and the sharing of responsibilities, noting that Councillors should be encouraged to take greater ownership of their respective roles. He highlighted the importance of promoting involvement in areas such as the asset audit.

Cllr Smith commented that he was impressed with the appraisals and the work being undertaken. He specifically referred to the Deputy Clerk's role in relation to the cemetery, noting the attention to legal procedures regarding deed transfers, and formally commended this work.

In respect of the Clerk, Cllr Smith commended the approach to managing decision-making processes within the Council, acknowledging that these can sometimes present challenges. He further recognised the Clerk's interpersonal skills and her effective engagement with community groups.

Cllr Stephenson enquired whether there was an action plan moving forward to address the outcomes of the appraisals. In response, Cllr Smith advised that this would need to be reviewed, with consideration given to prioritising decision-making going forward.

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***b) Staff Appraisal Forms***

**It was AGREED** to review the current appraisal forms and agree to any changes.

**It was AGREED** following a review of the current appraisal form and Cllr Smith's example, that advice would be sought from NALC and/or SLCC in order to establish best practice in relation to appraisal documentation and forms.

**HR2627/007 Training and Development**

***a) Training and Development for Prudhoe Town Council Staff***

**It was AGREED** to discuss progress on personal training and development plans for the Town Clerk/RFO and the Deputy Clerk, and to agree to any further training.

The following was noted:-

The Clerk has successfully completed the CiLCA qualification. It was also confirmed that places have been booked for both members of staff on the forthcoming Cemetery training course scheduled for 28th July.

It was highlighted that Cemetery training is essential to ensure the Council remains fully up to date with relevant guidelines and legislation, with a view to future-proofing practices and procedures.

It was further noted that it is beneficial to provide regular updates to Council regarding training undertaken, and that a formal record is maintained within the Training and Development Policy.

***b) Training and Development for Councillors***

**It was AGREED** to identify any training needs for town councillors and agree to action these.

The following was noted:-

A presentation in relation to the current condition of the cemeteries and the associated procedures would be beneficial to councillors.

It was noted that Councillors have not fully taken up training opportunities when offered.

Training opportunities discussed included social media and community engagement, as well as an introductory course for Councillors outlining roles and responsibilities.

**HR2627/008 Terms of Reference**

**It was AGREED** to review the Human Resources Committee's Terms of Reference and that no amendments were considered necessary.

**HR2627/009 Council Office Workplace Assessment**

**It was AGREED** to receive an update from the Clerk and Deputy Clerk following a workplace assessment of the Council Office and to agree any recommendations for improvements.

The following was noted:-

Excessive heat within the office environment., particularly during summer.

GDPR high priority – ongoing training. Office access is to be restricted to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk only. Any current access held by Councillors is to be revoked.

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Filing cabinets - consideration to be given to either replacement locks or new cabinets.

Cemetery records are not currently stored within a fireproof cabinet; it was noted that these should be transferred to appropriate fireproof storage.

Archiving of past financial records for the period 2016–2020, in line with the requirement to retain records for the current year plus six years.

**It was AGREED** that the above-mentioned be reviewed and recommendations brought forward to Full Council.

**HR2627/010 Date of Next Meeting**

**It was AGREED** that the meeting would be scheduled following the Annual General Meeting in May. The date and time will be circulated in due course.

**HR2627/011 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**It was AGREED** to invoke the provision of Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, by reason of the confidential nature of business to be transacted, as this item of business relates to staffing matters.

**HR2627/012 Staffing Matters**

**It was AGREED** that a plan be implemented to ensure appropriate office cover during the forthcoming period of staff maternity leave, scheduled to commence in October 2026.

The option of an apprenticeship was briefly discussed as a potential means of providing support.

**It was AGREED** that further review is required in relation to cover arrangements, and that any recommendations will be submitted to Full Council for consideration.

Meeting ended 6.48pm