

Downham Market Town Council
Human Resources Committee Meeting
Tuesday 30 June 2026 at 6:30pm

This meeting was held at Downham Market Town Hall, Bridge Street, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9DW

Present

Committee Chair – Cllr Pegg

Committee Members - Cllrs Daymond, Jordan, B Moyses, C Pyatt & Webb (6)

Town Clerk – Claire Dornan

There were no members of the public present.

The Chair reminded members of the evacuation procedures from the Assembly Room.

The Chair asked that all mobile phones be switched off or on silent.

1. To note apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Cain due to ill health.

RESOLVED:

‘That, due to the current absence of Cllr Cain through ill health, Cllr Jordan be appointed as the temporary Vice Chair of the Human Resources Committee until such time as Cllr Cain is able to resume the duties of Vice Chair or a further decision is made by the Committee.

Proposed – Cllr Pegg Seconded –Cllr B Moyses 4 in Favour 1 Against 1 Abstain

2. To receive declarations of interest and consider requests for dispensations.

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. To approve the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 11 June 2026.

RESOLVED:

‘That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record.’

Proposed – Cllr Jordan Seconded –Cllr Webb All in Favour

4. Public Participation.

There were no members of the public present and no written correspondence.

5. To review the GDPR Policy and agree any necessary actions.

Members considered the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Model Data Protection Policy, which was presented by Cllr Pegg as the most suitable version currently available for adoption by the Council.

The Town Clerk queried why the policy was specific to Human Resources matters, noting that it states, *"This policy does not apply to the personal data relating to members of the public or other personal data processed for council business."* Members were advised that the Council's Privacy Policy would cover the processing of personal data relating to members of the public and other Council business.

The Town Clerk highlighted that, following adaptation of the NALC template, page numbering and bracketed template options would need to be removed or updated prior to the policy being presented for adoption.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Council's Retention Policy requires review, as the draft policy refers to retaining personal data only for as long as necessary and responding to subject access requests by confirming how long personal data is stored. Members agreed that the Council requires clearly defined retention periods to support consistent application by both Members and officers.

The Town Clerk also noted references within the policy assigning responsibility for data breaches to the Town Clerk and the Town Mayor. As the policy relates to Human Resources matters, it was questioned whether the Town Mayor was the appropriate role. Members agreed that responsibility should instead rest with the Town Clerk and the Chair of the Human Resources Committee. Similarly, where the policy referred to "we" in relation to reporting data breaches, Members agreed this should be replaced with the specific responsible roles to remove ambiguity.

The Town Clerk questioned whether the Council could comply with the requirement that personal data should not be stored on local drives or personal devices used for work purposes, as the majority of Councillors currently use their own personal devices to access Council information. Members discussed requiring Councillors to password-protect Council documents and folders held on personal devices. The Town Clerk advised that approving the policy without amendment could knowingly leave the Council exposed to an increased risk of data breaches, unauthorised access and potential fraud where Council information is stored on unsecured personal devices. It was further noted that adopting a policy which the Council knows it cannot fully comply with may have governance and insurance implications in the event of a data breach or cyber incident. The Town Clerk was therefore asked to investigate the cost of providing Council-owned devices for all Councillors, enabling the Council's contracted IT provider to manage security centrally. The Town Clerk also advised that consideration would need to be given to the insurance implications of Council-owned devices being kept at Members' homes, together with the cost of purchasing, maintaining and insuring approximately 20 additional devices.

The Town Clerk questioned the section relating to training, advising that Councillors cannot be compelled to attend training. Members discussed requiring any Councillor appointed to the Human Resources Committee to complete Data Protection training within six months of joining the Committee. It was suggested that this requirement be incorporated into the Committee's Terms of Reference and that any Councillor failing to complete the training within the required timescale would be removed from the Committee.

The Town Clerk questioned whether it would be appropriate to include a section within the policy relating to the use of Artificial Intelligence, including whether the Council should specify approved AI platforms for official use to ensure appropriate data security and compliance with data protection legislation.

Members agreed that the Data Protection Policy should be subject to annual review.

It was agreed that the policy should be amended and presented to a further meeting of the Human Resources Committee to enable a recommendation to be made to Full Council. The Town Clerk was requested to make the agreed amendments in advance of an additional Human Resources Committee meeting to be held on Tuesday 7 July 2026 at 5.30 pm. Cllr C. Pyatt submitted his apologies for absence from this unscheduled meeting due to a prior holiday commitment.

Cllr Pegg agreed to provide the Town Clerk with an electronic copy of the policy to facilitate the required amendments.

6. To review the Privacy Policy and agree any necessary actions.

RESOLVED:

‘That the current Privacy Policy remain unchanged following review by the Committee.’

Proposed – Cllr C Pyatt

Seconded – Cllr Pegg

All in Favour

7. To receive an update on staff training.

Members were advised that six of the Council's eight members of staff had successfully completed Health and Safety training on 18 June 2026. The remaining two members of staff were absent due to sickness and will be required to complete the training at a later date. It was suggested that this be arranged once the new Deputy Clerk is in post.

The Town Clerk reported that Whole Council Data Protection training had been completed on 16 June 2026. Members were advised that officers were currently completing the associated online training modules.

The Town Clerk informed Members that a First Aid Refresher course, including Mental Health First Aid, had been booked for 1 December 2026.

Fire Safety and Manual Handling training had also been arranged for 3 December 2026.

Members were advised that Legionella training would be the next staff training programme to be organised.

8. To receive an update on the cleaning contract.

Members were advised that the contract had been signed by both the Town Clerk and the contractor on 15 June 2026. The contract is due for review on 31 March 2027. Members were informed that a copy of the contract is available for inspection upon request.

9. To receive an update on call-out discussions.

Members were advised that there had been no out-of-hours alarm call-outs since the previous meeting of the Human Resources Committee.

The Town Clerk reported that, following the Committee's previous discussions and the referral to the Property Committee, advice had been sought from CTS Security regarding the cause of the out-of-hours alarm notifications and potential solutions.

Members were informed that CTS Security had confirmed that both the fire and intruder alarm systems are fitted with battery backup in accordance with regulatory requirements. In the event of a mains power failure, the monitoring station is automatically notified to enable the issue to be investigated before the backup batteries become depleted and the systems cease to operate.

CTS Security further advised that standard uninterruptible power supply (UPS) units are not suitable for providing prolonged backup for these systems. Preventing fault notifications during extended power outages would require specialist high-capacity battery and inverter equipment installed by a specialist backup power provider.

Members also noted that an alternative option of suppressing certain fault notifications during specified hours had been considered. However, CTS Security advised that this could leave the premises without effective monitoring during a prolonged power outage and may have implications for the Council's insurance arrangements.

The Committee noted that the out-of-hours notifications are therefore a normal function of the monitored alarm systems and are intended to ensure that any loss of protection is identified and addressed promptly.

Members were advised that the Property Committee would receive the same update for information.

The Committee noted that the Caretakers had agreed, in principle, to operate a rolling out-of-hours call-out rota on a one week on/one week off basis. The Town Clerk recommended that this arrangement be introduced initially as a six-month trial by way of a temporary variation to the Caretakers' contracts of employment, with a formal review at the end of the trial period to determine whether the arrangement is suitable for both the Council and the employees.

RESOLVED:

‘That the Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Caretakers' out-of-hours call-out rota be implemented on a one week on/one week off basis as a six-month trial, subject to a temporary variation to their contracts of employment, with the arrangement to be reviewed by the Human Resources Committee at the conclusion of the trial period.

Proposed – Cllr Pegg

Seconded –Cllr C Pyatt

All in Favour

10. To consider the purchase of a new laptop and agree any necessary action.

The Committee considered the purchase of a new laptop for the new Deputy Clerk.

Members were advised that the Council's existing laptops are approaching the end of their operational life. The laptop previously assigned to the former Deputy Clerk is currently unavailable, as it continues to be used to support ongoing project work. Once the former Deputy Clerk has completed this work and returned the device, laptops can be reallocated to phase out the oldest equipment in accordance with the Council's ICT replacement programme.

The Town Clerk recommended the purchase of an HP 250R G9 Notebook with 16GB RAM, including build, configuration, deployment and delivery, at a cost of £796.55 plus VAT.

RESOLVED:

‘That the purchase of an HP 250R G9 Notebook with 16GB RAM, including build, configuration, deployment and delivery, at a cost of £796.55 plus VAT, be approved for the new Deputy Clerk. The Committee further authorised the Town Clerk to arrange purchase and deployment’

Proposed – Cllr Jordan

Seconded –Cllr Webb

All in Favour

11. To review the Human Resources budget.

Members reviewed the Human Resources Committee Budget Monitoring Report, comparing budgeted expenditure against actual expenditure for the first three months of the financial year.

The Committee noted that there were no significant areas of concern at this stage.

No expenditure had been incurred to date against the budgets for Travel and Expenses, Refreshments, Recruitment, Councillor Vacancy Expenses or SLCC Membership.

Members also noted that a saving would be realised against the Deputy Clerk salary budget during July 2026 following the vacancy. However, this would be partially offset by the payment of four days' outstanding annual leave due to the former Deputy Clerk.

The Committee further noted that external contractors are currently being engaged to provide operational cover during periods of staff sickness. Whilst this has resulted in additional expenditure, Members recognised that the arrangement has ensured continuity of Council services. The associated costs will continue to be monitored as part of the budget monitoring process.

The Committee acknowledged that expenditure against the Human Resources Advice Line budget is likely to exceed the approved budget provision during the financial year as a consequence of the decision made by Full Council on 1 April 2026. Members noted that the budget would continue to be monitored and, should the projected overspend materialise, the Committee would consider making a recommendation to Full Council for an increase to the Human Resources Advice Line budget to ensure sufficient provision for the remainder of the financial year.

12. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of confidential personnel matters.

RESOLVED:

‘That members of the press and public be excluded whilst information pertaining to staff matters are discussed.’

Proposed – Cllr Pegg

Seconded – Cllr Jordan

All in Favour

The meeting went into confidentiality.

Confidential Items

12.1 To consider the outcome of the Deputy Clerk interviews and determine whether to make an appointment.

Members discussed the Deputy Clerk interview with Cllr Pegg and the Town Clerk.

12.2 To consider terms for the Projects Coordinator role and agree any necessary actions.

Members discussed the revised request from the Projects Coordinator.

12.3 To receive an update on staff wellbeing and welfare matters.

Members discussed matters relating to staff welfare.

The Town Clerk raised concerns regarding her workload and the volume of correspondence received from Councillors. In particular, the Town Clerk advised that a significant number of emails relate to ideas or proposals that have not been fully researched or developed before requests are made for them to be included on future Council agendas. The Town Clerk explained that each request requires officer time to undertake initial research, assess legal and financial implications, prepare reports and determine whether the matter is appropriate for consideration, placing additional pressure on existing workloads.

The Town Clerk also advised that responses are frequently received to general circulars and information emails, raising questions or requests that could more appropriately be discussed during scheduled Committee or Council meetings. It was noted that responding individually to such correspondence adds to the administrative workload and can duplicate discussions that are more effectively held collectively through the Council's formal decision-making process.

Members acknowledged the concerns raised and recognised the importance of ensuring that officer time is used efficiently. The Committee discussed the need for Councillors to give due consideration to proposals before requesting that they be placed on future agendas and, where appropriate, to raise general queries and discussion points during Committee or Council meetings rather than through individual email correspondence.

The Committee agreed that Members should be mindful of the cumulative impact that ad hoc requests and unnecessary email correspondence can have on officer capacity, productivity and staff wellbeing. Members acknowledged that Councillors have a responsibility to respect officer capacity and utilise the Council's established decision-making processes

12.4 To receive a staff appraisal update.

The Committee received an update on the staff appraisal process.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that, at its meeting held on 20 March 2026, the Committee had agreed arrangements for the Town Clerk's annual appraisal. Members were advised that the appraisal has not yet taken place.

The Town Clerk explained that completion of her own appraisal is necessary before undertaking appraisals for other members of staff, as it provides the opportunity to agree priorities, objectives and Council objectives for the year ahead, which then inform individual staff objectives and development plans.

Members were further advised that staff have expressed concern regarding the delay to the appraisal process, as annual incremental Salary Scale (SCP) progression is linked to the completion of appraisals and was due to take effect from 1 April 2026. Whilst any approved incremental increases can be backdated, the Town Clerk advised that this is not in keeping with the spirit of the Council's appraisal process or its contractual arrangements and may have an adverse impact on staff morale.

Cllr Pegg advised that the Town Clerk's appraisal could not currently be progressed. No further detail was provided to the Committee.

The Committee noted the update and acknowledged the importance of completing the appraisal process in a timely manner to enable the remaining staff appraisals to be undertaken without further delay.

12.5 To receive an annual leave summary.

The Committee received the annual leave summary presented by the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk provided Members with a spreadsheet detailing each member of staff's annual leave entitlement in accordance with their individual contracts of employment. Members noted that annual leave entitlements and conditions differ between employees, reflecting the fact that staff joined the Council at different times and negotiated varying contractual terms.

The Town Clerk suggested that, given the Council's relatively low staff turnover, consideration be given to reviewing annual leave provisions with the aim of achieving greater consistency across staff terms and conditions. It was noted that any review would be undertaken on the principle that no member of staff would be disadvantaged or have their existing contractual entitlement reduced. Instead, the intention would be to harmonise annual leave arrangements over time, where appropriate and financially sustainable, so that employees receive consistent contractual benefits.

Members noted the update and agreed that a review of annual leave entitlements should be considered as part of a wider review of staff terms and conditions.

The meeting came out of confidentiality.

12.1 To consider the outcome of the Deputy Clerk interviews and determine whether to make an appointment.

RESOLVED:

Resolved: That the preferred candidate identified following the interview process be appointed to the post of Deputy Clerk on the following terms and conditions:

- **Salary to commence at SCP 20 of the applicable Local Government Services Pay Scale.**
- **Subject to satisfactory annual appraisal, incremental progression of one SCP each year, up to and including SCP 25.**
- **A three-month probationary period.**
- **Attendance at up to two evening Council or Committee meetings per month, as required.**
- **Attendance at Council civic and community events as reasonably required.**
- **Annual leave entitlement of 21 days, increasing by one additional day for each completed year of service up to the fifth year, after which the entitlement will be 30 days per annum, plus statutory public holidays.**
- **During the probationary period, entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) only. Upon successful completion of probation, the Council's contractual sickness absence policy will apply.**
- **The contract of employment shall include arrangements for participation in the Council's out-of-hours call-out rota, where required.**

The Committee further resolved that the Town Clerk be authorised to issue a formal offer of employment and prepare the contract of employment incorporating the above terms and conditions.

Proposed – Cllr C Pyatt Seconded –Cllr Webb 5 in Favour 1 Abstention

12.2 To consider terms for the Projects Coordinator role and agree any necessary actions.

RESOLVED:

‘That no further negotiations be entered into in respect of the terms and conditions for the Projects Coordinator role and that the original offer previously approved by the Council remain unchanged.’

Proposed – Cllr C Pyatt Seconded –Cllr B Moyses All in Favour

12.3 To receive an update on staff wellbeing and welfare matters.

RESOLVED:

‘That Cllr Pegg, as Chair of the Human Resources Committee, write to all Councillors reminding them of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to officer management, communications and staff wellbeing, with reference to the email issued by The Mayor on 25 June 2026.’

Proposed – Cllr C Pyatt Seconded –Cllr Pegg All in Favour

12.5 To receive an annual leave summary.

RESOLVED:

‘That the Council review annual leave provisions for employees who have completed five years of service, with the aim of considering consistency and fairness across staff terms and conditions. Any review will be undertaken on the basis that no employee will be disadvantaged or have their existing contractual entitlement reduced.’

Proposed – Cllr Pegg Seconded –Cllr Daymond All in Favour

The meeting closed at 20:16.