

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

**Personnel Sub-Committee
21st January 2019 at 5.00pm.**

Present: Councillors: Ms J Hillyard Chairman (arrived 5.23pm)
D Abbott
M Kennedy Substitute
K Wattingham (arrived 5.15pm)

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillor: D Dixon-Wilkinson

PE66 Members were advised that the Chair of this committee was running late therefore an interim Vice-Chair was required. Cllr Wattingham agreed to undertake this role.

PE67 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillor D Dixon-Wilkinson substituted by Councillor M Kennedy.

PE68 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

PE69 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

PE70 MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 15th October 2018 for consideration.

Matters arising: a query was raised regarding if there had been any movement on the appointment of a Grounds Team Apprentice. Members were advised that this had been included in the draft budget for the next financial year.

Resolved: That the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 15th October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.

PE71 STAFF CAPACITY ISSUES

At the previous meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on the 15th October 2018, Members received a report detailing arising staff capacity issues.

Members were advised that all members of the office team were experiencing an increased workload.

It was suggested by the meeting that the following areas be looked at to ensure staff were not overloaded and had capacity to achieve tasks requested:

- Combating Crime Working Group projects
- Events
- Community Services

This report considered these areas in more detail and presented to members quotes for a staff capacity review to be completed.

Members were advised that this report was looked at over several years, and members were reminded that there was a large degree of work behind the scenes that members were unaware of. For example, regardless of how many cars attend the car show, the same amount of preparatory work needed to be completed behind the scenes, members were also advised that several events i.e. Pride of Houghton, had expanded exponentially since it began.

Members queried how the concern for the capacity of staff had been raised from staff. Members were advised that although no formal meeting had been held, general conversations of concern had been held in the office amongst various staff members.

Members had suggested an online payment system would help alleviate some work, it was highlighted that this would be a change of workload rather than a reduction. The example given was that payments and invoices would still need to be processed, would still arrive at the same desk and in the same quantity, but would be processed in a different way.

Members queried if the workload was heavier at specific times of the year, and were advised that it was difficult to pinpoint, but many curve balls had been thrown at officers throughout the year, all needing additional work and on occasion extraordinary meetings.

Members queried that since their start of office, three members of staff had been appointed and as such, inquired where this additional capacity had gone. It was suggested that the capacity review be deferred until the new term of office as the new council may wish to alter the work of the council. It was further suggested that the review be completed now, and then be presented to the new council in the new term.

Members were advised that each staff member held different job responsibilities with little crossover, therefore it was difficult to understand the intricacies of each individual role.

It was clarified to members that the request for the capacity review had come from members at the last meeting and not from staff.

- Resolved:**
1. **To discuss arising issues;**
 2. **To approve the staff capacity review to:**
 - **To review and consider the job evaluation report**

-
- **To review and consider relevant Personnel agendas, reports and minutes**
 - **To review job descriptions and staff structure**
 - **To review annotated versions (to show allocation of projects / tasks) of council's minutes over the last 12 months**
 - **To review the number of council and civic events and council meetings**
 - **To interview staff to assess their workloads**
 - **To provide a report with recommendations on the outcome of the review**
- 3. To use code 190-4059 to fund the review.**

PE72 INTERIM APPOINTMENT OF APPOINTED PERSON

As part of the Committees Functions one member of the Sub-Committee was to be appointed, preferably the Chair, to act as contact for the clerk for day to day matters, to provide support, handle leave requests, absence from work and to feed matters to Committee where any decisions/action was needed and to undertake the Clerks appraisal. The Sub-Committee resolved to appoint Councillor Ms J Hillyard as the appointed person at its meeting held on the 16th July 2018.

At the Town Council meeting held on the 8th October 2018 the following was resolved; *For the Chairs of Personnel and Corporate Services to immediately take steps to instruct a suitable independent person to undergo a full investigation into the events that led to Houghton Regis Town Council making an out-of-court settlement to What About Youth Limited.*

In order to avoid any conflict of interest, whilst this investigation was undertaken, it was proposed that an interim appointed person be appointed from those remaining i.e. Councillor Dixon-Wilkinson or Councillor K Wattingham. Councillor D Abbott as Chair of Corporate Services cannot be included, as per Councils resolution above.

Cllr Dixon-Wilkinson was proposed as the intertim appointed person.

Nominated by Cllr Kennedy Seconded by: Cllr Wattingham

Votes for: 2

Votes against: 0

Abstentions: 2

Accordingly, Cllr Dixon-Wilkinson was appointed as the Town Clerk's appointed person for an interim period.

Resolved: To appoint, for an interim period, Cllr Dixon-Wilkinson as the Town Clerk's appointed person.

PE73 STAFFING MATTERS

Members received a report on Staffing Matters.

Members were advised of the change in salary payment by the Houghton Regis Town Council payroll provider, resulting in the possibility of some staff facing financial difficulties for the transition period. Bedford Borough Council have offered a 50% advance payment which could then be paid back over a period of up to six months.

Members were advised that Houghton Regis Town Council would also need to obtain their own PAYE tax reference.

The value of outsourcing payroll was discussed, it was agreed that the service received was invaluable and as such agreed to continue to use the services of Bedford Borough Council for the payroll administration for Houghton Regis Town Council.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To note the change in the salary payment date:**
 - 2. To support HRTC staff by offering up to 50% salary advance repayable in monthly instalments up to a maximum of a six-month period. To advise staff that should they leave the council's employment prior to the end of the repayment period they will be required to pay back any outstanding monies;**
 - 3. To note the requirement for HRTC to hold its own PAYE tax reference and to request that this be actioned.**

PE74 STAFF SICKNESS

Members received a rolling twelve-month record of sickness absence for all members of staff.

Resolved: To note the information.

PE75 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

For the period October to December one Freedom of Information request had been received. It was confirmed that this request had been responded to within the statutory timeframe.

Resolved: To note the information.

PE76 HUMAN RESOURCES PROVISION

Members were advised via e-mail on the progress of the update report on the Town Councils Human Resources provision prior to the meeting.

PE77 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Receive notification of the Town Clerk's annual leave and matters relating to overtime working and sickness.

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Kennedy Seconded by: Cllr Wattingham

Votes for: 3

Resolved: In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

PE78 TOWN CLERK'S ANNUAL LEAVE, OVERTIME WORKING AND SICKNESS

Annual leave

The Clerk requested to take 3 days leave from 1st February to 31st March. As of the 31st March 2019 the Clerk would have 3.5 days annual leave outstanding, these would be carried over into 2019/20.

The Clerk requested to take 7 days leave from 1st April 2019 to 30th June 2019. Specific dates would be advised to the Clerks appointed person and would be circulated 1-2 weeks prior, prior to the commencement of leave, via the Members Newsletter.

Resolved: To approve the Town Clerks annual leave request.

Overtime

The Clerk attended 15 meetings or events outside of the normal working day within the period 1st October to 31st December 2018 (compared with 8 meetings in the previous quarter).

Members discussed the calling of several extraordinary meetings had impacted on the overtime hours of the Town Clerk.

Sickness

The clerk was required to inform their appointed person of any sick leave. When sick leave had been taken this has been done. Due to the sensitive nature of sick leave it was suggested that the remit of the appointed person be slightly extended to require them to follow up with the clerk on the reason for the sick leave and, if work related, to follow this up in line with internal processes. If agreed no further reports on the clerk's sickness would be made to this committee. Should members feel that this was not suitable it was requested that it be formally agreed that any report on sickness would only be considered in private session.

Members raised concerns that this was a lot of pressure on one person if an illness arose due to stress, however members were advised that the Corporate Services Manager and Head of Democratic Services were on hand to advise and support the appointed person if the Town Clerk's illness was due to work related stress.

Resolved: To confirm that the clerk continues to report any sick leave to their appointed person and to require the appointed person to follow up

with the clerk on the reason for the sick leave and, if work related, to follow this up in line with internal processes.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 6.19pm

Dated this 15th day of April 2019

Chairman