

Minutes of the Meeting of Personnel held in Doggetts Barn on 23 May 2023 at 11:00 am

Present: Cllrs. Angela Baker, Michael Gemmell Smith, Alan Layland, Margot McArthur (*Chair*), Stuart McGregor, Bob Todd
 In attendance: Town Clerk; no members of the public and no members of the press.

1 Elections

Cllr Baker proposed Cllr McArthur to continue as Chairman; Cllr Layland seconded. Members unanimously,

Resolved: Cllr McArthur as Chair of the Personnel Committee.

2 To Receive Apologies for Absence

None

3 Declarations of Interests or Predetermination

None

4 To Confirm the Minutes of The Committee Meetings Held on 20 February (9874- 9876) and 27 February 2023 (9879)

Resolved: that the minutes of the Personnel Committee meetings held on 20 February (pages 9874-9876) and 27 February 2023 (9879) be duly signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting

5 Matters Arising Not Covered Elsewhere

None.

6 To Discuss of Personnel Issues

In view of the confidential nature of the following items to be discussed the Chairman proposed that the press and public be excluded from the Chamber. Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 s100 and 102.

No Members of public were in attendance.

6.1 To receive a report on staff attendance/absence for 2022/23

Members noted total absence for the year 2022-23, and for new year from 1 April:

	2022-23 total	April 2023 to date
Total sick days	99	4
Total Covid Days	-	-
Total compassionate related	-	-
Total Lost Working Days	99	4

6.2 To receive an update following a recent employee's Occupational Health Assessment

The OHA took place in March 2023, having been referred due to prolonged and then recurrent sickness absence. The conclusion of the OHA was that *'the employee is fit to undertake their role but could benefit from some adjustments/consideration to lighter duties'*.

The employee had advised they were okay for duties whilst continuing to be monitored by GP. The line manager was monitoring the type of work duties in agreement with the employee.

6.3 To receive update on other staff matters

6.3.1 To note: New contracts issued to RFO, Communications Officer, Head Groundsman/Buildings Manager, and Grounds Staff supervisor

Noted.

6.3.2 To receive the notice of two employees

Members received the two following notices due to retirement: Community Warden, last working day 16 June; Deputy Clerk last working day 31 August. Members noted the long service of both employees almost 10 years, and over 22 years respectively; both would be missed and had been valued members of the team.

6.4 To receive an update on grounds apprenticeship schemes

(Council approved March 2023)

The Town Clerk had contacted both Plumpton and Hadlow colleges to discuss suitable apprenticeship schemes, with the Sport Turf Operative the most suitable covering a range of skills including sports pitch management, this was usually an 18-month programme. Hadlow College had recommended that the Council employed someone first and let them work for about 3-months, if suitable to then enrol on an apprenticeship. The first step needed was to set up an apprenticeship digital account to secure government funding and then advertise the position.

The costs for the apprenticeship training were £6,000, but the government apprenticeship scheme pays 95% of this to the approved training provider and the employer/council pays the remaining 5%, in this case £300 payable at the start of the course. The employer/council is responsible for the salary costs for the apprenticeship (this had already been budgeted for). The Head Groundsman was keen to proceed. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to proceed with the recruitment of a grounds apprentice, on a fixed-term contract for up to two-years with a 3-month probation before enrolling on the apprenticeship training course; and the expenditure of £300 training costs (5% contribution to the approved training provider).

6.5 To confirm proposal for personnel changes

Members noted previous decisions and changes, which would now be implemented:

Lorraine Ganney – RFO/and promoted to Deputy Clerk

New position - Open Spaces and Admin Officer (to replace Kathy Staff as Open Spaces/Deputy Clerk). This position would also provide reception cover and support to buildings officer.

New Position – Grounds apprenticeship

The Town Clerk asked for the new Open Spaces Officer position to be considered at the NJC LC1 levels 13-17 above substantive benchmark range, instead of LC1 7-12. The job was quite a responsible position and required someone with good attention to detail, literacy skills and able to multi-task. This would provide a starting salary of £25,611 including the outer fringe London Weighting. The impact on the budgets for 2023-24 would be an estimated addition of £1,800 including pension contributions (annually est. £3k). Members voted 5:1, and

Resolved: the Opens Spaces and Administration Officer to be graded at the NJC LC1 band level 13-17, above substantive benchmark range; starting salary £25,611pa including outer fringe London weighting.

Members considered the replacement of the Community Warden position, and agreed it was a valued role in the community, this had been endorsed by Sevenoaks District Council Community Safety Team, the Police and other agencies. It was also noted that most communities in Kent had a Kent Community Warden, which unfortunately did not have any capacity to extend to Edenbridge. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to proceed with the recruitment for a replacement Community Warden.

6.6 To receive an update on the staffing budgets 2023/2024 (as approved 20 February meeting) including an increase in the employer's Kent pensions contributions from 23.8% to 23.9%

Members noted the increase in the employer's Kent pensions contributions from 23.8% to 23.9%. Looking at the budgets: Total annual staffing budget £432,536; estimated staffing costs for 2023-24 was currently £409,676 plus the NJC pay award yet to be confirmed.

6.7 To receive the costs for 2023-24 Medical Insurance membership

The annual costs for the Medical Insurance 2023-24 were £11,53.75 (plus the P11 costs est. £1,500). However, with two retirements this would be reduced saving of £3,200.6 on budget.

6.8 To consider staffing vacancies and recruitment programme

The following recruitment was unanimously approved by Members:

Resolved: to proceed with the recruitment for an Open Spaces and Administration Officer; Community Warden; and a Grounds person apprentice.

7 Parental Leave and Shared Parental Leave Policy

The Employees Handbook (2018) already included Maternity Leave (section 11) and Paternity Leave (section 12). Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014 which come into force on 1st December 2014, were yet to be formally reflected in the Handbook policies. Council's Contract of employment says that employees may be entitled to maternity/paternity/adoption/shared parental leave and pay in accordance with the current Green Book provisions.

Paternity Leave - up to two weeks taken around the time of birth. The statutory weekly rate of Paternity Pay is £172.48, or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). The Green book allows for one week of paid leave as follows:

Maternity Support Leave: Maternity support leave of 5 days with pay shall be granted to the child's father or the partner or nominated carer of an expectant mother at or around the time of birth. A nominated carer is the person nominated by the mother to assist in the care of the child and to provide support to the mother at or around the time of the birth.

Some Local government employers incorporate this by offering the first week of Paternity Leave at full pay.

Shared Parental Leave: this is quite complicated but essentially allows working parents to split time off during the first 12 months assuming both parents meet the eligibility criteria (length of service and earnings). The partner would need to reduce their maternity leave by the amount of shared parental leave taken. It operates in a flexible way so both parents could be off at the same time. Or the shared leave could start when the partner returns to work.

Parental leave - After 1 year service, up to 18 weeks unpaid leave per child, capped at 4 weeks per year. I've attached a guidance note.

Members received the information on maternity/paternity/adoption/shared parental leave and pay and unanimously,

Resolved: to have the Employees Handbook updated to reflect current practices, and to offering the first week of Paternity Leave at full pay, with the second week 90% of average weekly earnings.

Members noted the Head Groundsman would be taking Parental leave in August and was also considering Shared Parental Leave.

8 To Consider an Evaluation of Staffing Hours

The Town Clerk said that the office staff actual work hours compared to contract hours was increasing and, in some cases, getting excessive. The team had discussed time management strategies and once the office had been redecorated, were looking at a slightly different use of the desk space to allow it easier to work upstairs away from reception distractions. However, much of the diverse work requires initial immediate response in some form and therefore interrupts the thread of specific tasks that might be underway. Coupled with a busy work environment this adds

to the length of time some tasks can take. It is not the individual tasks it's the cumulative effect and timing. Home Working was not necessarily a solution due to office cover, meetings and necessity to interact with colleagues on specific tasks.

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to support an evaluation and receive details of actual staff hours worked so as to consider how this could be best managed for example, reducing office open hours.

Meeting closed: 11:55