

Minutes of the Meeting of Personnel held in Doggetts Barn on 5 September 2023 at 11:45 am

Present: Cllrs. Angela Baker, Michael Gemmell Smith, Alan Layland, Margot McArthur (*Chair*), Stuart McGregor, Bob Todd

In attendance:

Meeting opened 11:54.

1 To receive apologies for absence

None.

2 Declarations of interest or predetermination

None.

3 To confirm the minutes of the Committee meeting held 23 May 2023 (2023-004-1-4)

Resolved: that the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 23 May 2023 be duly signed by the Chair of the meeting as a true and accurate record of the meeting; pages 2023-004/01-04.

4 Matters arising not covered elsewhere

The Chair raised concerns that the Personnel Committee papers were circulated to all councillors, not just Committee Members. Whilst this is normal practice with other committees as Members may want to attend a meeting (but do not have voting rights), the meeting papers for Personnel often had sensitive information. Members discussed and agreed, commenting that not all councillors should necessarily be privy to this information. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to recommend to full Council circulation of Personnel Committee meeting papers/reports to Personnel Committee members only.

Under s101, LGA 1972 the council can arrange for the discharge of any of its functions by an officer as well as by a committee. The Council's Terms of Reference already sets out delegated authority to Personnel (sub) Committee to make a number of staffing decisions, including employment (1.2); and to consider and bring to a final conclusion, any matters emanating from staffing policies (including Managing Employee Performance, Managing Employee Ill Health and Sickness and Grievance Policies etc) for members of staff employed by Edenbridge Town Council (1.3).

5 Personnel Handbook - to receive and recommend adoption of the updated Employee Handbook

Members noted Worknest had recently reviewed the Employee Handbook, following the corrections to reflect paternity leave (as approved May meeting) and were satisfied with the regulatory and procedural changes. (This was circulated with Personnel papers.)

Resolved: to recommend to full Council to adopt the updated Employee Handbook.

6 To discuss Personnel Issues

6.1 To receive update on staff attendance/absence for 2023/24

Members noted there had been a total of 12 days absence for the year 2023-24 to date.

6.2 To receive an update on other staff matters

Members received an update from the Clerk on staffing matters. One issue was been managed by the Clerk and Cllr Baker, with Worknest informed.

6.3 Budget 2023-24 update

Members received an updated view of the budgets following two recent retirements and the

delayed current vacancies. It was also noted that the NJC Committee was yet to confirm the final pay offer award for 2023-24, but anticipated details early September. The budget at present, likely to remain underbudget.

6.4 Recruitment update

In June three positions were advertised: Grounds Apprenticeship (GA); Open Spaces and Administration Officer (OSO); Community Warden (CW). The OSO and CW positions have since been readvertised through the Council's Facebook, website and noticeboards. Members **supported** to extend the application period and a two week advert in South East Recruitment for £155.

The GA position had initially been for a Sports Turf Operative Level 2 (Hadlow College), but the Horticulture and Landscape Construction Operatives Level 2 (Plumpton College) may be more suitable. The Clerk was currently looking at this and potential candidates.

7 Office staff hours evaluations and to consider how to manage hours and expectations

Background: At the May meeting, the committee supported an evaluation of the staff hours, and with a view to look at how these could be managed. Members noted that the work and expectations of the Council has changed over the years, the diverse range of activities and projects of the Council, its meetings (min 45 public meetings a year), the buildings and open spaces management, emails, social media and an open office, means there is a lot going on and the cumulative effect of addressing issues which require immediate attention is impacting on managing staff hours and resources.

7.1 To receive results of office staff hours evaluations

Members received the staff hours evaluation, which span over an 87 week period (January 2022 to 31 August 2023). This supported the excessive additional hours office staff are working, and rarely leaving before 6.00 pm. The Clerk was often working on average 48 hours pw, and other officers exceeding 40 hours pw.

7.2 To receive summary/statistics of Council office visitors

A summary of daily/weekly visits to the office was presented for August. The weekly totals ranged from 84 to 122 visitors. People access the office for a wide range of reasons not just Town Council services, but also matters relating to other agencies and councils, mental health issues, environmental and more.

7.3 To consider ways to manage office staff hours

12:50 pm the Town Clerk left the meeting whilst Members considered proposals and potential changes that could be considered to help address the additional hours worked by officers and managing office activities.

Members noted the wide range of activities and work that the Council is involved with, and the diversity of enquiries via the phones or visitors to the office varies hugely. However, with staff resources limited, the regular hiatus is effecting the management of work expectations. Members were also aware because of current vacancies, extra work was being covered by the Town Clerk and officers, and there are potential lone working issues with reduced staff to cover the current office hours. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to recommend changing the office hours 'open to the public' to Monday to Thursday 9.00 am to 3.30 pm; closed Fridays to the public. This would allow uninterrupted work time for other office operations/tasks (Monday to Friday 9.00 am - 5.00 pm). They also supported a nine-day fortnight for the Town Clerk and RFO.

13:00 the Clerk re-joined the meeting

8 To consider staff remuneration in view of additional work loads/hours

Members noted the recent additional responsibility for the Planning and Administration Officer and unanimously,

Resolved: a one point NJC pay scale increment in recognition of additional work and expertise; and a nominal monthly bonus of £150 in recognition of the extra work load until the new officers were onboard.

Meeting closed 13:09