

Minutes of the Meeting of Personnel held in Doggetts Barn on 5 November 2024 at 11:30 am

Present: Cllrs. Alan Layland, Margot McArthur (*Chair*), Stuart McGregor, Michael Stockdale, Bob Todd
In attendance: Town Clerk.
Meeting opened at 11:36.

1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received, noted and accepted from Cllrs Baker and Gemmell Smith.

2 Declarations of interest or predetermination

None.

3 To confirm the minutes of the Committee meeting held 03 September (2023-060/1-3)

Resolved: that the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held 03 September 2024 be duly signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting (pages 060/1-3).

4 Matters arising not covered elsewhere

None.

5 To discuss Personnel Issues

5.1 To receive update on staff attendance/absence for 2024/25

Members noted attendance 2024: Total leave across both departments was 64 days. One employee had returned from long term sickness, otherwise in the past two months there had been just two days - one sick day and one compassionate. Members also noted, two employees may need planned medical procedures in the near future resulting in some time off.

5.2 To note: New starter for Open Spaces and Administration

Following a successful recruitment, where four candidates were interviewed by Cllrs Baker, Layland and myself, an appointment had been made. Daniel Strugnell was due to start 3 December. Council had ratified the appointment at its October meeting.

5.3 To receive an update on other staff matters

Following a disciplinary hearing in July where an employee's employment with the Council came to an end, Members noted an appeal had been lodged. An update on this was given at the meeting, noting it was understood the appellant had appeared to withdraw their appeal, and a letter had been sent confirming the matter was therefore considered closed. Procedures had been consulted on with Worknest. The three month period to submit a tribunal had past.

5.4 To receive the NJC Pay Award agreement for 2024-25

Members received the National Joint Council (NJC) agreement on this year's pay claim covering the year from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. All grades up to SCP 43 the agreed amount was £1,290 per annum. Grades SCP 44 to 62 were increased by 2.5%. The new outer London weighting fringe annual allowance was £706 (was £689pa). All employers were encouraged to pay the pay award as swiftly as possible. Members noted back pay applied to all employees employed from 1 April. Members referred to Governance Committee to review the pay policy on this for future consistency.

5.5 To consider pay scales for the Communication Officer

Members received a request to consider the pay scale for the Communications Officer who's role and work load had changed since their initial appointment, and contributions surpassed the expectations outlined in the original job description. The added value they delivered, especially in

areas of graphic design, digital marketing, website management, and content creation, provided significant cost savings to the Council, increased visibility for the community, and streamlined the Council's communication processes. The Town Clerk said that she wholly supported a higher pay scale, she is creative, well educated with superior written skills, she is reliable and can totally trust the standard of her work. Members discussed, praising her work, and unanimously,

Resolved: to recommend to Council to support increasing the Communications Officer's pay scale in line with others to SCP level 16 (rising on increments to LC2 23), from 1 December.

6 To receive an update on office hours, visitors to office and staffing hours

Members received an update on visitors to the the office: September total 262, average day 16; October 272, average 15 per day. The highest days 20 visitors. Staffing hours had improved, though the Planning and Administration Officer was still working extra hours, approx. two hours per week; and the Town Clerk's hours averaged 50 per week.

7 Budget 2024-25: to receive an updated of the budget

Members received an updated view of the budget for 2024-25 now that the pay award was known. Key points:

- 2024-25 budget for total salaries was £464,608
- Forecasted end-of-year £436,000
- Two vacancies during the year had meant savings to salaries, estimated at £28k

Members discussed the budgets and the lower than budgeted pay award. In view of inflation rates, unpredicted pay awards, Members considered the salaries surplus should be moved to the staff reserves at year-end, and to also provide for any unbudgeted potential staff cover. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to recommend to Finance Committee and Council to move the year-end salaries budget surplus into the earmarked staff reserves.

8 Budget 2025-26: considerations for the new staffing budget; and to make recommendation to the Finance Committee for the draft budget

Members received the draft budget proposals for the 2025-26 for discussion and consideration. Included in the proposals was the employers NI rate increase from 13.8% to 15%; medical insurance last year had had a considerable increase (£3285) and so some increase to 2025-26 would be expected; pensions contributions were calculated at the current rates (with no increases included); the contingency for 2025-26 NJC pay award had for the past few years been estimated at 4.04%, but a comparable budget was also presented with 2.5%. Members discussed and noted:

- At the current staff levels, 2025-26 salaries needed to be £496,261 (£31,653 increase on budget);
- To allow for the NJC potential pay award at 4.04%, £516,563 (£51,955 increase on budget);
- To allow for NJC potential pay award at 2.5%, £508,430 (£43,822 increase on budget);
- Assuming the current budget spend, the impact on the precept council tax band D could range between £8 to £13 per year.

Members discussed, including potential future staff review. They unanimously,

Resolved: to recommend to the Finance Committee for its draft budgets 2025-26 to proceed with the higher contingency of 4.04% and total staffing salaries and costs budget of £516,563.62.

Members were also advised that two employees had reached the top of their pay band, and were asked to consider if to move into the next LC band. Members agreed that these two employees had skills and experience that warranted the upgrade, and that their attendance and commitment to the council was also excellent. The above budget had assumed the increases. Members unanimously,

Resolved: one employee to move up from LC1 (7-12) to LC1 (13-17) band; and the other from LC2 (29-32) to LC3 (33-36). The scale increments would be from 1 April.

2023-072/03

Meeting closed at 12:21.