

**Minutes of the Meeting of Personnel held in Doggetts Barn on 10 March 2025 at 11:00 am**

Present: Cllrs. Angela Baker, Alan Layland, Michael Stockdale  
 In attendance: Town Clerk, and Cllr Stephen Sumner  
 11:05am The meeting opened.

**1 To receive apologies for absence**

*Cllr Baker was voted in to chair the meeting.*

Apologies for absence were received, noted and accepted from Cllrs McArthur and McGregor.

**2 Declarations of interest or predetermination**

None.

**3 To confirm the minutes of the Committee meeting held 05 November (2023-072/1-3)**

Resolved: that the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held 05 November 2024 be duly signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting (pages 2023-072/01-3).

**4 Matters arising not covered elsewhere**

None.

**5 To discuss Personnel matters****5.1 To receive update on staff attendance/absence for 2024/25**

Members noted the attendance 2024-25 - Total sickness leave across both departments was 75 days, this included one employee who had been on long-term sickness:

Attendance 2024-25	Office	Grounds
Total sick days	66	6
Total Covid days sick	0	0
Total compassionate related	2	1
Total lost days	68	7

It was also noted that two employees were due to have operations which would require some convalescence time. There were no questions.

**5.2 To receive an update on other staff matters**

Members received an update on Daniel Strugnell's development who had completed his 3-month probation period. Overall, from both our perspectives he had settled in well and had covered training on aspects of the job description some on the job, and some external such as agendas and minutes, cemetery law and management, and managing Closed Churchyards. He was due to start his Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA) qualification.

Kathy Staff had been helping out for a few months, mainly minutes clerking drafting minutes, but also with the 130 years project and looking back at the past 30-years of the council, as well as a couple of other smaller matters. Her time ended at the end of March, and had not been budgeted for 2025-26 as the office staff was now at full complement.

**5.3 Appraisals completed**

It was noted that staff appraisals for all current 12 employees were completed over January. All were good, and met above satisfactory performance for the annual pay increment.

#### **5.4 To note: The Groundstaff annual medicals in March**

The annual medicals for the groundstaff have been booked for 21 March. These covered general medical, audio, lung function, HAVS, vision.

#### **5.5 NHS Health Checks offered to all employees and councillors**

In December free cardiovascular disease (CVD) Health Checks were offered to all employees and councillors. This consisted of lifestyle questions and assessments such as blood pressure readings and BMI with the aim of identifying risks of CVD such as stroke, heart disease. Referrals to relevant lifestyle services were then be offered. One person was advised to go and seek immediate medical advise, so the checks were worth doing. We hope to be able to follow this up with with a repeat service as well as including type 2 diabetes tests later in the year. This service was offered by provider, Radox working with Kent County Council and NHS.

#### **5.6 Annual Leave carryover 2024-25 update**

Most staff had managed to use their annual leave and any time owed hours. Outstanding leave not allocated:

- Caroline: balance 9 days annual leave; 23.5 hours time owed
- Lorraine: balance 1 day annual leave

Members unanimously,

**Resolved:** to allow the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk to carry over their unused annual leave and time owed in to 2025-26.

#### **5.7 Training annual update and potential courses to consider**

Members received a summary of training attended over the past year, and noted that all staff had been provided with access to the WorkNest E-learning portal which covers health and safety, safeguarding, fire safety, risk assessments and lots more - there are about 65 different sessions that can be accessed ranging from about 10 minutes to an hour long.

Additional training:

- Principles of Internal Auditing Local Councils (PIALC) - SLCC qualification with one-year to complete: Previously approved for the Town Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk; Town Clerk recently registered.
- Institute of Leadership & Management courses - Level 3 & 5 Management - Committee and Council had supported for the Head Groundsman/Buildings Manager to do level 3, and the Town Clerk level 5. Due to course times neither have registered for these. Cost for the ILM 3 is £795 + VAT and for the ILM5 is £995 + VAT. When the next set are released, consideration will be given and if there is the appropriate time available to support officers.
- Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA): The RFO/Deputy Clerk was intending to do to this, but for now is not sure if she has the time to commit to it. The Town Clerk would like to enrol Daniel, after his ILCA first and has at least six to 12 months council experience.
- Chainsaw training - Committee and Council has approved training for one employee subject to passing PA1&6 which he has now done.

#### **5.8 Pension administration changes**

Administration changes to Kent Pensions has seen a move to a new administration system i-connect, which now requires monthly details for each employee to be submitted via its online portal. This is in addition to monthly summary, but there is no longer the requirement for individual annual totals as this forms part of the ongoing monthly submissions. This is additional admin at our end, though now that it is set-up it should be be fairly straightforward going forward. Processing new members and leavers should be easier on the i-connect. There were no questions.

## 6 Groundstaff staffing

### 6.1 Apprenticeship: To review the apprentice fixed term period and position

Members were provided with a progress report for the grounds apprentice (Kai Day) who was progressing well and nearing his end assessment. The 10-weekly reviews from the college had all been positive, he had now passed his PA1 and PA6 spraying qualifications, his portfolio of evidence was on target, and should be ready for his end assessment in April/May.

The contract was for two-years fixed term ending 30 September 2025. The Head Groundsman was satisfied with Kai's performance, he had had a good appraisal, and was an asset to the team. It had been discussed to consider offering the next level apprenticeship, horticultural level 3, but Kai is not sure that he would like to do this currently. However, we would like to consider offering Kai a permanent contract. He is currently on LC scale 3, increasing to point 4 from 1 April. Propose he continues on the scales (up to LC1 12 on new contract). The additional pay from scale 4 to 5 is £386 (£92.25 pension and £57.90 NI). Also, under the NJC contracts when a person achieves a qualification, they get to increase one scale point, therefore assuming Kai does pass his apprenticeship level 2, this would move him to point 5 (from 4).

Members unanimously,

**Resolved:** to support a permanent contract to Kai Day following completion of his apprenticeship, and recognising the qualification in the pay scales from level 4 to 5 (once achieved the Horticultural level 2 qualification).

Members also,

**Resolved:** to confirm the contract be offered on LC scales, LC point 5 up to LC1 12.

### 6.2 Groundstaff vacancy: To confirm placing advert for a full-time person

Members considered the current vacancy and whether to go down the apprenticeship route again or to look for an experienced grounds person. After some discussions, Members unanimously,

**Resolved:** to advertise the grounds person vacancy as either an apprenticeship or for an experienced grounds person, and then consider dependant on the applicants. It was noted, the budget had assumed an apprentice again, LC point 2 £24,362 (£23,656 plus OLV £706).

Members noted, once the grounds team was at five, this should help to support the Head Groundsman and releasing him to allow some time on the Buildings Manager aspects of his new additional role which included the responsibilities with the health and safety monitoring for buildings and open spaces. The grounds team were approach its busier season with the growing and summer season, as well as covering holidays and a fifth person was very much needed.

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

Members received an update on visitor numbers to the office for November to February, noting November had been the busiest of the four months with 245 visitors. The daily average was 10, with the busiest day 25 visitors.

Officers hours had improved with most close to contracted hours. The nine day fortnight for the Town Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk, was helping towards managing hours, though the Town Clerk's hours did remain excessive.

## 8 Budget updates

### 8.1 Budget 2024-25 forecast end-of year

Previously reported, the estimated end of year surplus had been about £23k. The year end had been estimated against budgets approved by Committee. However, staffing budgets in the full approved budget and set in Edge, was £5k less. When looking at staffing predicted year end £446,818 against the full approved budget, £464,608 the predicted surplus/underspend was

£17,789 (or against previous figures £22,788). The recommendation from Personnel, Finance and Council was to move any surplus to staffing earmarked reserves. members had no further questions.

## **8.2 Budget 2025-26**

The approved budget for 2025-26 was confirmed at £516,563.62 (as recommended by Committee November, approved by Council December and January). Members noted that the budget had not allowed for the increase on the medical insurance which was higher than expected, an additional £5,799.91 or the changes to the groundstaff vacancy or a scale point increase to the apprentice. However, due to the delay with recruiting to the grounds team, there would be at least one months salary saving in the grounds team. There were no questions.

## **8.3 Medical Insurance: To receive the renewals for 2025-26**

The medical insurance renewal for 2025-26 had been received: £19,958.88. This was an annual increase of £7,123.32 / £593.61 per month. The budget had allowed £14,158.97, so there would be an overspend of £5799.91. The increase was because there remained an ongoing medical claim. Members were asked in April 2024 if to continue with the medical insurance benefit and it had been unanimously confirmed to continue supporting the medical insurance scheme for employees, and those qualifying after 1 April two-years continuous service.

The Communications Officer would qualify for the scheme on 1 April, but as she is a remote work (living mostly abroad) she would not qualify for the scheme. From 1 April 2026 the Community Warden and grounds apprentice would both qualify for the scheme.

Members noted the medical insurance premium £19,958.88, additional expenditure to budget of £7,123.33.

## **8.4 Pension scheme contribution rates 2025-26**

Members noted Kent Pension Fund had advised that the employee contribution pay bands from April 2025 had changed. This would mean some staff paying slightly more. The rates were between 5.5% and 12.5% of actual annual pensionable pay, and depended on which pay band employees fall into. For some employees there would a slight increase, most stayed the same. The employers contribution rate was currently 23.9%. Letters had been sent to all employees advising of the scale rates.

## **8.5 To consider pay scales for the Planning & Admin Officer**

It had previously been agreed that whilst the office was short staff, and in recognition of additional duties that Planning and Administration Officer would receive a non-pensionable monthly payment of £150 per month. This ended 31 March. During this time they took over the cemetery bookings and enquiries and had been an absolute star with this, and was training the new Open Spaces Officer. The Town Clerk asked members to consider in recognition of continued additional responsibility to increase her scale by one further increment. To move from new scale 15 as of 1 April 15, to point 16. This would be a prorata annual increase of £388.38 / £32.37pcm. The employers pension annual additional payment would be £92.83py and NI £58.25. Total budget impact £539.46.

Members unanimously,

**Resolved:** to support the gesture to recognise the additional responsibilities with cemeteries for the Planning and Administration Officer and allow an additional scale increase to point 16 from 1 April, with an additional budget spend of £539.46.

12:07pm The meeting closed.