

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
17:00 on 18 February 2020

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Amanda Frost (Chair), Alan Green, Andy Pearce and Alice Taylor

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

34. Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained and the meeting was welcomed.

35. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Neil Coleby, Jacqueline Hardie, Peter Lang and Graham Parker. Cllr Taylor proposed acceptance of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

36. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

37. Accuracy of the Minutes

6 January 2020 – Accepted as accurate. Proposed by Cllr Taylor; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

38. Public Forum

There were no members of the public in attendance.

39. The recruitment process for new staff

Previously, it was agreed for a process to be set up for each of the new roles to be advertised and appointed at the same time. In practice, this is proving more difficult for the Community Warden roles, as there are such things as uniforms, vehicles and office space to consider, and the Police are unable to meet with the Clerk until 11 March, to discuss the necessary checks. The arrangements for the Community Warden positions needs careful consideration, and the Clerk suggested that arrangements to appoint the Administrative Assistant and Events and Communications Officer are progressed first, to allow more time to make the necessary arrangements to appoint the Community Wardens. If the Committee is happy with this, the Clerk will set up a timetable and circulate the application form and guidance notes for anyone involved with the recruitment process. There is provision in the budget for electric vehicles, but these have not been considered in relation to the roles of staff yet. Before this is progressed, storage and charging arrangements for the vehicles would need to be considered. Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee that the appointment of new staff is considered in two rounds, with the Administrative Assistant and Events and Communications Officer roles to be progressed first, followed by the Community Warden roles, pending further information; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. In terms of the timetable, it has been previously agreed that the appointments will not be made until 1 April at the earliest. It was suggested that the vacancies could be advertised on the Town Council's Facebook page and website, on the Town Council's noticeboards and to local Residents Associations via Councillors, through the local press, such as the Lowestoft Journal, the Bugle, the East Anglian Daily Times and the Eastern Daily Press, through the Jobcentre and through distribution to other Councils. Staff will need to explore advertising costs. The Clerk

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will make what arrangements she can for the Community Warden positions, ahead of her meeting with the Police, ready for the vacancies to be advertised as soon after this as possible. The Full Council agenda has been issued but includes provision for the recruitment process to be considered. This can include the consideration of any necessary delegations and arrangements for appointing the interview panel. The Clerk has material which was used for the last recruitment process and can be used again. Previously, candidates selected for interview have been required to complete a task tailored for the role, followed by a formal interview. Staff will seek information on advertising costs in time for the Full Council meeting. In addition to the cost of the recruitment process, the cost of office equipment and furniture for new staff will also need to be considered. The Clerk will provide information to Full Council on the funds available under the relevant budget headings and request that consideration be given to delegating authority to the Finance and Governance Committee to progress the arrangements. There is provision on the agenda for recruitment to be discussed at this week's Finance and Governance Committee meeting, which will be fed back to Full Council. There are spare computers available. It was also noted that a desk from the Members' Room could be moved into the office and replaced by a table from the Chamber. Staff will draw up a list of the required items to present to Full Council. It was suggested that a Recruitment Sub-Committee could be set up and membership opened to all Councillors. The Clerk recommended that only members of the Personnel Committee sit on the interview panel, but other Councillors could be involved with other aspects of the process. This Committee could ask Full Council to consider delegating authority to this Committee to oversee the whole process and make the appointments. The Clerk would wish to be involved as the Line Manager of the new staff, along with Cllr Frost as the Chair of the Personnel Committee. Cllr Frost would also like Cllr Taylor to be involved. It was agreed that the Personnel Committee should meet again shortly after the Full Council meeting, and the meeting was set for 15:00 on 4 March. At that stage the costs should be known and any delegations approved by the Council. It was agreed that the deadline for the submission of applications should be set at a maximum of three weeks following publication of the vacancies. One week will be allowed for the shortlisting process and interviews will be arranged following this. It was agreed that the interview dates should be published in the job advertisements. There were no issues with requests being put to Full Council for delegated authority to be granted for certain aspects of the process, but it was commented that opportunities should also be given for other Councillors who would like to be involved. This would be possible for most stages but may not be appropriate for all. Any Councillors wishing to be involved at any stage will need to adhere to the recruitment process guidance. The Clerk will set out what each stage of the process will be, the timescales and the recruitment framework. Any Councillors interested in assisting with the process should make staff aware and will need to agree to the recruitment process guidance.

40. Staff appraisals (confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

41. An update on staff working hours (confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

42. Date of the next meeting

This was agreed earlier in the meeting as 4 March at 15:00. It was queried whether delaying the appointment of the Community Wardens will impact on the Council's risk management. Transitional arrangements are in place so this should not pose an issue, and appointing staff

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without all of the necessary arrangements in place could pose a greater risk. Additionally, appointing four new members of staff at the same time could place more pressure on the existing staff. Risks are being managed and today a fire risk assessment of the Town Council's offices at Hamilton House was completed and samples were taken from the asbestos present at the allotment sites, to be tested.

43. Items for the next agenda and close

Arrangements for the recruitment process will continue to be considered and progressed at the next meeting.

Cllr Taylor proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

44. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

44.1. Any employment matters including those at 40 and 41 above as required

40. Staff appraisals (confidential) – There was a request for this to be added to the agenda to look at the appraisals framework, as there has been some uncertainty about the process and what the appraisal is for. A form is used as a reference for the appraisals. The Clerk completes the appraisals for the other staff and the Mayor and Chair of the Personnel Committee complete the Clerk's appraisal. The Clerk has received training from ACAS on how to complete appraisals and it was noted that part of the Council's risk management is for the Clerk to be competent and adequately trained to perform such functions. It was clarified that the appraisal is a confidential, two way discussion. It is not negative or an attack on the appraisee's personality, it is not a disciplinary interview or salary discussion. The Clerk has produced a guidance document which will be circulated to all Councillors, which contains essential information for any Councillor involved in performing an appraisal, and guidance in how to complete an effective appraisal. The Clerk recommended that this is supported by ACAS training also. A Councillor previously suggested that appraisals should be conducted monthly. The Committee agreed that this was not necessary and were happy for the current arrangements to continue, with appraisals being conducted annually. The new staff will be subject to a probation period and will have regular reviews. In the period between appraisals, staff can approach the Clerk, and the Clerk can approach staff, to discuss any issues. Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Appraisals Guidance; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

41. An update on staff working hours (confidential) – This will be a permanent ongoing consideration for the Personnel Committee. The Clerk provided an update and there were no issues to report.

Signed:

4 March 2020