

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:00 on 3 February 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Alan Green and Andy Pearce

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance (either in person or via Zoom webinar)

51. Welcome

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

52. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Graham Parker and Keith Patience. Cllr Alice Taylor had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

53. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Barker advised she had sat on all of the interview panels.

54. The draft minutes of the meeting on 13 December 2021

Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Green; three Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

55. Public forum

No advance comments had been received. There were no members of the public in attendance (either in person or via Zoom webinar).

56. Staff recruitment (confidential): - To be discussed during the confidential session.

56.1. The appointment of the following positions

56.1a. Committee Clerk

56.1b. Communications Officer

56.1c. Community Warden

56.2. The terms and conditions and any infrastructure requirements for appointments

57. Staff resourcing for assets and events

The workload around assets has increased. An officer position within the Council which was previously held was not replaced as the work did not exist at the time to facilitate the role. Assets related work has increased significantly, and is set to increase further. The Clerk currently has to cover several roles. The Council is looking to appoint a second Community Warden, but it was suggested that the Council may benefit from appointing another officer at a level between the Clerk and the Community Wardens, with a dedicated assets remit. Currently, no single member of staff has a remit to identify issues with assets and maintain an overview of all the assets. Staff are however aware of issues picked up via inspections and condition surveys but addressing them all is a significant amount of work, particularly as the Council received its assets in varying degrees of deterioration. It was suggested that an item to broadly consider staffing should be added to the next agenda. It is hoped that at least some new staff should be in position by then. Existing staff have been undertaking site visits and addressing any health and safety issues. Contractual, health and safety and compliance matters are the main concerns. The Council has increased its budgets for health and safety and compliance and will need to consider resourcing in light of the current round of

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recruitment. Certain items are currently required to go through comprehensive rounds of Committee meetings before they can be signed off. The Finance and Governance Committee will be considering appropriate delegations to make this process more efficient. There is an existing delegation for staff to progress urgent expenditure relating to health and safety. As with any delegations, expenditure will be monitored and reported back to the Council and appropriate parameters will be set.

It was agreed that the staff resourcing regarding events should be considered at the next meeting. The appointment of new staff being considered at this meeting may help with event management. Some events can be managed amongst officers, Councillors and the Events and Communications Sub-Committee. Other events may require additional resources and the Committee would like advice at the next meeting as to whether contract or freelance support could be considered, rather than an additional permanent member of staff. Cllr Barker thanked those who had been involved with preparations for Holocaust Memorial Day, and had received positive feedback about the event.

58. Any staff and Councillor training and development needs (confidential)

Cllr Brooks had expressed an interest in training she would like to receive, but had been unable to access further information. The Clerk had been asked to look into training opportunities. The Committee had requested two sessions for the inclusivity review training; one for Councillors who could not attend previously and one refresher session. There had been some concern regarding a possible lack of attendance again. A provisional date has been agreed in May and officers will try to determine who is attending before a date is formally agreed.

The Clerk has also contacted the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and is looking into bespoke training covering all Councillor modules (planning, equality and inclusivity, Charing and leadership, ethics and finance). The equality and inclusivity training would be different to inclusivity review training, which Full Council has already agreed to progress.

There were no staff training requirements to consider at this meeting, although training needs may arise with the recruitment of new officers. The Clerk has asked the Police about the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme, particularly for the Community Wardens. Appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checking will be undertaken.

The Council has agreed to separate Councillor and officer training budgets for the first time. Regarding the Council's contract with its health and safety consultant, there is a consultancy element and a training element, some of which is within the scope of the contract and some which is not. Regarding the elements which are out of scope, it was requested that the expenditure is taken from the relevant consultancy or training budgets, so that training needs can be monitored for budgeting purposes.

59. Date of the next meeting

7 April 2022 18:00

60. Items for the next agenda and close

The Committee would like an item to consider staffing generally, including resourcing for events and assets.

An item was requested to review the vacancy advertising and interviewing protocol, with equality legislation in mind. The Committee would like to review future interview procedures to increase the participation of existing staff in the process.

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

61. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

61.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required:

56. Staff recruitment (confidential):

56.1. The appointment of the following positions

56.1a. Committee Clerk – The interview panel had made a recommendation on the appointment of the Committee Clerk. The three Councillors who were on the interview panel were present at this meeting. There was a discussion regarding the interview process in general and this will be considered further at the next meeting. The Committee would like to see officers' involvement in the process become more formal.

The Clerk temporarily left the meeting 19:01

It was agreed to move onto the next item before a vote was taken on this candidate, as the Committee would like to hear the Clerk's views.

56.1b. Communications Officer – One candidate withdrew their application. The interview panel had made a recommendation on the appointment of the Communications Officer.

The Clerk returned 19:07

There was a discussion regarding the starting salary for this position. There was a discussion regarding the interview process.

56.1c. Community Warden – The interview panel had made a recommendation on the appointment of the Community Warden. Two of the candidates did not turn up for their interviews. There was a discussion regarding the interview process. Cllr Brooks proposed supporting the recommendations of the interview panels to appoint Ann Clampett to the role of Committee Clerk, Michael Winter to the role of Communications Officer and Jonny Hawes to the role of Community Warden. Cllr Brooks made a proposal regarding the salaries for these positions. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposals and all Councillors voted in favour.

56.2. The terms and conditions and any infrastructure requirements for appointments – The IT and office furniture budgets are separate. The budget agreed for car parking should be sufficient for all staff. Furniture for the new staff is on order. Work to the airflow management system in the Community Wardens' office is pending.

58. Any staff and Councillor training and development needs (confidential) – This item had been covered earlier in the meeting.

The Chair closed the meeting at 19:45.

Signed:

7 April 2022