

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
Whitton Residents' Hall, Hawthorn Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9BB
18:00 on 09 June 2022

MINUTES

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

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk)

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

1 Welcome

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

2 Apologies for absence

All present.

3 Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

4 The draft minutes and appended confidential notes of the meeting on 14 April 2022

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

5 Public forum

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

6 Committee arrangements

6.1 Committee membership - This was noted, membership being as per the councillors present at this meeting with no further requests for membership.

6.2 Deputy Chair appointment - It was agreed to discuss the time of meeting (item 13). It would be recommended to Full Council that the meeting schedule changes commencing with the next meeting at 2pm on 4 August 2022. Cllr Patience was proposed as Deputy Chair by Cllr Green; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

7 HR Support Service

It was agreed that a £5000 maximum budget from the staffing Earmarked reserve should be allocated to securing an appropriate service; this then to be mainstreamed into the consultancy budget, with delegation to the Clerk in conjunction with the Committee to agree the provider. Details to be circulated. This was proposed by Cllr Pearce; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. There were discussions about the service including the need for GDPR compliance and clear service levels and the Clerk confirmed that reputable companies had been approached for quotations and contracts would be checked.

8 Recruitment Process

This was discussed, particularly in light of item 9 below, noting that in some cases HR support might advise on process and/or attend interviews. The Clerk provided an outline for the recruitment:

1. Staff welcome and office tour. An assessment grid to be provided to staff for use.
2. A minutes exercise with a written explanation of the task. An assessment grid to be provided for scores.
3. Candidate interview with panel. No presentation in the case of the Committee Clerk interview. An assessment grid to be provided to the panel.

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4. There would be a clear break with no overlap of candidates to enable joint Panel consideration of all three assessments.

Details including questions would be provided to the Panel in advance to consider.

This process and the following were agreed:

1. Any assessment grid would incorporate appropriate assessment criteria.
2. The interview would have 6 to 10 questions.
3. The Panel would comprise two members of staff and two councillors.
4. The recruitment would progress apace, following the Committee agreeing the detailed paper on the process and questions.

Proposed by Cllr Barker; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all agreed.

9 Committee Clerk Vacancy

Considered at item 8 above.

10 Reviewing the following Town Council policies:

10.1 Safeguarding Policy - This had been reviewed comprehensively recently with amendments made and was being reconsidered for this financial year. It was agreed to accept the policy, subject to inclusion in 9.1, 8.1 and 8.2 of the word 'freelancers'. Proposed by Cllr Brooks; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

10.2 Training and Development Policy - This had been reviewed recently and it was agreed to adopt this as it stands, noting that developments during the year and any advice from an HR professional might necessitate a further review. Proposed by Cllr; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

11 Staff terms and conditions

This was discussed in the confidential session below.

12 Current staff salaries

This was discussed in the confidential session below.

13 Date of next meeting

Agreed at item 6.2.

14 Items for next agenda

Succession planning.

15 Resolution to close the meeting to the public

It was proposed by Cllr Pearce, seconded Cllr Green, with all in favour of excluding the public in order to discuss employment matters relating to items on this agenda.

11 Staff terms and conditions - Current staffing cover including an absence were discussed. It was noted that the Office Assistant post had been renamed Office Administrator.

A confidential proposal on the salary position and title change for a member of staff was discussed and would be recommended to next Full Council. This was proposed by Cllr Pearce; seconded by Cllr Green; one abstention. Full Council would also provide the opportunity to consider further the delegation of the staffing budget to this Committee.

It was agreed that the cost of fuel made a review of essential user reimbursements timely, and this could go to the next ordinary Personnel Committee.

It was agreed that a proposal of 4 day working (no reduction in working week hours) should go to an Extraordinary Personnel Committee meeting in a month's time. It was noted that shift work and further new ways of working will need to be considered as the service expanded.

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Cllr Barker asked for the minutes to reflect the appreciation of staff work at the Jubilee event in Sparrows Nest and in the earlier Falklands Memorial event. It was noted staff and the councillors who attended had worked well together and had done the Council proud.

12 Current staff salaries - The current staff salaries were noted.

The working document showing future staffing (dependant on factors such as the Town Hall development and grounds maintenance arrangements) was noted and the associated staff costs, to be considered as part of the Council's 5 year budget.

It was agreed that at the next ordinary Personnel Committee meeting, consideration would be given to the information that would be provided alongside salary positions when they are published.

Signed:

4 August 2022