

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
13:00 on 1 February 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Christian Newsome (Chair), Graham Parker, Keith Patience and Elise Youngman

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

92. Welcome

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

93. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jones and Pearce with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Patience; all in favour.

94. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

94.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – There were no declarations.

94.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

95. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 4 January 2024

Cllr Brooks proposed approval but noted an item previously requested for this agenda concerning the code of conduct had not been included, which officers advised was due to human error. Cllr Barker seconded the proposal and advised she would raise an item on the confidential note in confidential session. A vote was held with all in favour.

96. Public forum

An opportunity for the public to make comments on any matters on this agenda, and to consider any advance comments from the public – No advanced comments had been received and no members of the public were in attendance.

97. To appoint the Deputy Chair of the Personnel Committee

Cllr Parker nominated Cllr Patience as Deputy Chair. Cllr Brooks raised concerns of a District Councillor being Deputy Chair of the Personnel Committee. Cllr Youngman seconded the nomination and a vote was held with five votes in favour and one vote against.

98. To consider an amendment to the Appraisals Guidance to implement the three-tier staffing structure

The amendments ensured any appraisers had been appraised before administering appraisals. Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the amendments; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. The Acting Clerk requested the three-tier staffing structure be discussed in confidential session.

99. To consider responsibilities, a job specification and salary range for the cleaning of public conveniences, and to make a recommendation to Full Council on whether or not to proceed (some aspects may be confidential)

This item would be discussed in confidential session.

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100. To consider job specification, advertisement and recruitment timetable for the following:

100.1. Grounds Maintenance Operatives

100.2. Workshop Operative

Items 100.1 and 100.2 were addressed in joint consideration.

The Acting Clerk suggested a delegation be considered for officers to draft and place a joint advert for two Grounds Maintenance Operatives and one Workshop Operative, with the job specification to be consolidated with existing grounds maintenance officers and for members of this Committee to be approached to form the interview panels.

The Grounds Maintenance officers had previously advised that it would be beneficial for one of the operatives to have expertise in horticultural matters and for the other to have experience in building-related maintenance.

Cllr Brooks proposed to delegate progression of the job specifications and advertisements to officers and for the adverts to seek one officer experienced in horticultural matters and the other experienced in building-related maintenance. Cllr Newsome seconded the proposal.

Discussions were ongoing on whether the Workshop Operative would be advertised for four longer working days or five normal days, this would be dependent suitable arrangements at Unit 2. Cllr Brooks amended the proposal to include a delegation to officers to decide on the working arrangements advertised for the Workshop Operative. Cllr Newsome seconded the amended proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

100.3. Asset/Facilities Management Officer – This item would be discussed in confidential session.

101. To consider costs and implementation of in-house payroll provision

Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

102. To consider matters relating to the terms and conditions of staff (confidential)

To be discussed in confidential session.

103. To receive an update from the Acting Town Clerk on any staffing issues (confidential):

103.1. Staff reviews

103.2. Staff absence, cover arrangements and financial considerations

103.3. Completion of training

103.4. Recruitment of Seasonal Workers

These items would be discussed in confidential session.

104. To consider making a recommendation to Full Council on a regular meeting schedule for this Committee

As the Terms of Reference stipulated bi-monthly meetings for this Committee, Cllr Parker proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council to amend the Terms of Reference and have meetings scheduled on a monthly basis; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

Cllr Parker proposed a recommendation to Full Council for meetings to be scheduled on the first Thursday of the month at 10:00; seconded by Cllr Patience; all in favour.

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105. Date of the next meeting

7 March 2024 10:00

106. Items for the next agenda and close

It was agreed for the item to consider the implementation of the Code of Conduct be addressed by the Finance and Governance Committee.

107. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely any legal issues or employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including the following:

107.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required – Cllr Youngman proposed the meeting be moved to confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 13:20

98. To consider an amendment to the Appraisals Guidance to implement the three-tier staffing structure

The three-tier system would require further discussion at the next meeting.

As there had been issues with email inundation and a loss of meeting papers in correspondence as a result, Cllr Parker proposed the Finance and Governance Committee consider a protocol or process to reduce the amount of emails exchanged between parties, particularly in instances where the emails consist of irrelevant information; seconded by Cllr Brooks; five votes in favour and one vote against.

The amended Appraisals Guidance stipulated for appraisals to be completed between April and November and as the new Chair and Deputy Chair of Personnel, Cllrs Newsome and Patience were required to complete the training.

99. To consider responsibilities, a job specification and salary range for the cleaning of public conveniences, and to make a recommendation to Full Council on whether or not to proceed (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Youngman declared an interest as she worked for the company that cleaned Lowestoft Town Council toilets.

Cllr Youngman temporarily left the chamber for consideration of this item at 13:36

The cost for opening, closing and cleaning the toilets had been calculated, based on 51.8 hours per week shared between two employees.

Further costs had been estimated for weekly travel, plus essential user car allowance, based on the estimated one hour to travel to all sites.

As the toilets at Pakefield Street and Fen Park have automatic locking systems these sites would only require one visit a day to clean rather than two visits. Therefore, a move to all sites having automatic locking systems would reduce staffing costs and the Committee was asked to consider delaying recruitment until all sites have automatic locks installed, a cost for which is being sought.

Cllr Newsome proposed to approve the officer request and defer recruitment whilst costs for the implementation of automatic locking systems across all sites were obtained; seconded by

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Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

Cllr Youngman returned to the chamber at 13:46

The Committee Clerk left the chamber at 13:46

100. To consider job specification, advertisement and recruitment timetable for the following:

100.3. Asset/Facilities Management Officer – It was proposed by Cllr Parker, seconded by Cllr Brooks and unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council to bring forward the recruitment of the Asset/Facilities Management Officer from October to as soon as was practical.

The Finance and Governance Committee would need to consider the budget implications.

102. To consider matters relating to the terms and conditions of staff (confidential)

Some members had not received or read the supporting paper for this agenda item. Cllr Barker requested it be noted that she had met with the Acting Town Clerk on several occasions to discuss workload and interim arrangements, due to the absence of the Town Clerk. Cllr Pearce, although not in attendance at the meeting, had provided some additional information for consideration regarding staff terms and conditions. Any further discussions were deferred to the next meeting, or would be considered directly by Full Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Barker, seconded by Cllr Newsome and unanimously agreed a one-off exception be applied to the amount of annual leave that can be rolled forward into the next leave year.

103. To receive an update from the Acting Town Clerk on any staffing issues (confidential):

103.1. Staff reviews – It was noted that the Acting Town Clerk had met for a one-to-one briefing with all office-based staff. Review meetings were in place for staff nearing completion of their six-month probationary period.

103.2. Staff absence, cover arrangements and financial considerations – It was noted that the initial period for essential car user allowance being paid was due to be reviewed in April 2024.

103.3. Completion of training

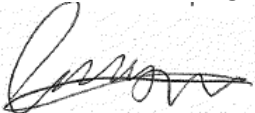
Cllr Patience temporarily left the chamber at 14:47

A confidential decision for a member of staff not to continue with a programme of professional qualification was made, proposed by Cllr Newsome, seconded by Cllr Youngman, all in favour.

Cllr Patience returned to the chamber at 14:49

103.4. Recruitment of Seasonal Workers – The Acting Town Clerk gave details of the proposed days and hours that seasonal workers would be required at Kensington Gardens. It was proposed by Cllr Brooks, seconded by Cllr Parker and unanimously agreed to proceed with the recruitment as per those details.

The Chair closed the meeting at 14:55

Signed:  7 March 2024