

Didcot Town Council

Personnel and Administration Committee Monday 7th December 2020 at 7.30pm Meeting held via Zoom



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this committee.

Councillors

M Khan (Chair – joined later in meeting)
A Macdonald (Vice Chair)
J Durman
V Haval
A Sandiford

Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)

Also present:

Cllr P Siggers

Public participation

None

49. Apologies

None received as everyone present for this meeting.

50. Declarations of interest

Cllr J Durman declared a personal interest as a former employee of Activate Learning.

51. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2020

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Sandiford and RESOLVED to approve the Minutes as a true record. The Deputy Chair paged through for comments.

52. Questions on the Minutes

There were no direct questions.

53. To review the Leave Policy Procedure and TOIL arrangements

The Town Clerk introduced the Leave Policy and Procedure which had last been updated in March 2015. It was necessary to review this Policy in line with the Employee Handbook. Apart from up-dating the annual leave entitlement from 20 days to 22 days on the Policy, there was little that needed to be changed. There was however a discrepancy in paragraph 15 which deals with Time off in Lieu (TOIL) and the Employee Handbook.

At present it is possible to roll-over five days equivalent of TOIL and five days equivalent of annual leave which makes it possible for an employee to have a maximum of ten days (two working weeks) taken over from one financial year to another.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Sandiford and **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** the following amendments:

1. TOIL is revised to be taken as soon as possible and for a maximum of three days (21 hours) to be taken over from one six month period to another.
2. All TOIL must be used by the end of the financial year with no allowance to take over unless extenuating circumstances are approved by the Personnel and Administration Committee.
3. That a maximum of five days of annual leave may be taken over from one financial year to another providing that staff have taken every opportunity to use their annual leave throughout the year.
4. That the above applies to all Didcot Town Council staff whether they work in the office; at another venue or for the outside services team.

Cllr A Sandiford referred to the period between Christmas and the new year. There is sometimes Council work over the festive period so it was felt beneficial to leave this period flexible but staff would be expected to use their annual leave to cover the working days between Christmas and the new year.

54. To review the Data Retention Policy

It was **AGREED** to defer this item to give the Town Clerk time to refer to the relevant Legal Topic note on the NALC/OALC website and the relevant chapter in "Local Government Administration" by Charles Arnold Baker.

55. To receive an up-date on the costings of employing young people on the Kickstart programme

This is a programme initiated by the Government to give young people the opportunity to up-skill themselves through valuable work experience. The programme is open to 16-24 year olds for a six month work placement. The aim is to help participants to find "meaningful employment".

DTC would need to go through a training provider to organise placements. There is a set up payment from the Government of £1500 per candidate. However the current training provider is offering to take a proportion of this sum to mentor the candidates; assist with their student pack and evidence portfolio and general administrative paperwork. The cost would be taken out of the £1500. The salary of the candidates would be covered by the Government for six months.

The Committee were interested in the possibility of two placements – one for the DTC offices and one for the Outside Services. It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Sandiford and **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to the F&GP Committee that the Council take on two placements and boost their salary up to the current minimum wage within the Council (currently £9.24 per hour).

It was also **AGREED** that the Town Clerk would gather more quotes for the training and administrative work in order to present more options to the F&GP Committee. The Town Clerk would find out more about the different training providers and what the training actually provides.

56. To confirm the opening hours for the DTC Office over Christmas and the New Year

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Sandiford and **RESOLVED** to agree to the DTC Offices being closed from Thursday 24th December 2020 to Monday 4th January 2021. The Civic Hall would also be closed but would open up for one day to accommodate Slimming World.

The Civic Hall would be available to open should the NHS wish to commence their covid vaccination programme between Christmas and the new year.

Cllr M Khan enters the meeting.

57. To confirm attendance at the SLCC Practitioners Conference for four members of staff

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr M Khan to confirm attendance for four members of staff to attend the SLCC Practitioners Conference at a cost of £75 per person. It was also noted that SLCC owed the Town Council £195 for a training programme which did not go ahead.

58. To improve the Employee Application Form

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Sandiford and **RESOLVED** for the Committee to email over any amendments to enable the Town Clerk to incorporate these into the recruitment papers.

59. To consider the quote for further work on the accessibility of the DTC website

The Town Clerk gave an introduction to this proposal. It is a software package that flags up accessibility issues on the DTC website. At the moment we are being offered a free trial or “premium package” where we can identify the remaining issues on our website and address them with our host. If DTC wanted to continue using the software there would be a charge.

Cllr M Khan was keen that we should accept the free trial and see what we can learn from the software. Cllr A Sandiford favoured training the staff to amend the website as the rules of accessibility was changing all the time. Cllr V Haval was interested to see what the costings would be should DTC wish to adopt the software beyond the free trial.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr V Haval and RESOLVED to ask the Town Clerk to make enquiries about the training of staff with our current web provider and compare the cost of this with the long term cost of the software.

60. To note the Progress Report

The progress report for items not on the agenda was noted by the Committee.

61. Exclusion of the press and public

It was RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

62. To consider confidential staff report

The Town Clerk gave an up-date on the appraisals incorporating a review of job descriptions and other staff movements.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND to the F&GP Committee to approve the incremental pay awards listed in the confidential staff report. It was also RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND to the F&GP Committee to increase the hours of one member of staff along with an additional increment as a response to exceptional achievement during this year.

The Town Clerk asked the Committee to note that the payment of £4384.84 made on 1st December 2020 was an error on the part of HMRC and we are now in credit.

The Town Clerk also raised the approval process of payments. It was the advice of the internal auditor that we should organise one or two Councillors to go online and approve payments and salaries at the point of submission. However our current bank was due to close in early February and we need to consider whether the Council will stay with this bank.

It was AGREED to defer this item until further information on banking options was available. The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the paper payments were currently signed off – so there was scrutiny.

63. To review the Planning and Environment Officer role

The recruitment papers were considered by the Committee. It was AGREED that, although there was room for improvement, there was a need to get the advertisements in place before Christmas with a view to encouraging as high a standard of applicants as possible.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to give the members of the Committee until 18th December to come back to the Town Clerk. The amends would be included and both positions would be advertised before Christmas.

The interview panel would include the Chair of the Environment and Climate Committee; a member of the Personnel & Administration Committee and the Town Clerk. The interviews would aim to be held in mid to late January 2021.

64. To review the recruitment papers for the Property and Facilities Manager

The Chair emphasised the importance of this role especially as we may be increasing the number of properties which end up in DTC ownership.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr V Haval and RESOLVED to advertise the positions before Christmas giving the Committee until 18th December for any amendments to be incorporated.

The interview panel would consist of the Chair of the Civic Hall Management Committee; a member of the Personnel & Administration Committee and the Town Clerk.

It was also AGREED to make use of professional communications to advertise the positions if needed. The Committee AGREED that the important thing was to find the right person. Advertising nationally would be used and a budget for each position was approved.

It was also agreed to involve the Planning and Development Chair in some aspect of the recruitment of the Planning & Environment Officer – either by serving on the interview panel or by short-listing applications.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed _____ Chair Date _____