

Personnel and Administration Committee
Monday 1st June 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

J Durman
V Haval
M Khan
A Macdonald

Also present:

Cllr E Hards (Mayor)

Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)

Public participation

None

1. Appointment of Chair to the Committee

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr V Haval to appoint Cllr M Khan as the Chair to the Personnel and Administration Committee.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair to the Committee

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr V Haval to appoint Cllr A Macdonald as the Vice Chair of this Committee.

3. Apologies

Everyone was present but it was noted that there is a spare space on this Committee which will be offered to members at the next meeting of the Council.

4. Declarations of interest

None.

5. To review the Terms of Reference and Schedule of Delegation

At the Annual meeting in May it was agreed to ask Committees to review both the Terms of Reference and the Schedule of Delegation. Any comments or recommendations would be considered at the meeting of the full Council on 29th June 2020.

On the Terms of Reference it was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the addition of item 10: Organise and conduct the annual appraisal of the Town Clerk.

11. Wherever possible, the Committee shall support measures to address the Climate Emergency for the Council and to assist other Committees in dis-charging their responsibilities towards tackling the emergency in all projects.

On the Schedule of Delegation it was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the addition of the following:

- f) Organise and conduct the annual appraisal of the Town Clerk.
- g) Wherever possible, support any measures to address the climate emergency and assist other Committees in the dis-charge of their responsibilities.

6. To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 18th February 2020

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A. Macdonald and RESOLVED to approve the Minutes as a true record. Cllr V Haval referred to Minute 42, paragraph 5 which should say "Cllr M Khan stated that SODC request that every ~~mail~~-year ..." It was AGREED to make this amendment.

Cllr V Haval sought clarification of how the mail boxes would be used once in place and whether staff would answer personal Cllr emails. This was discussed at the March Council meeting and therefore not a record for this meeting.

7. Questions on the Minutes

Clarification was sought for the second recommendation regarding the Council paying for a data controller licence for each Town Councillor. It had not been progressed at the March Council meeting and was therefore an outstanding action. The Town Clerk would do further work to back up the bullet points in preparation for the June Council meeting.

Cllr J Durman wanted to know if any reductions had been possible from the Cllr mail box quotes. The Town Clerk would supply a break down to members of this Committee.

8. To review the Didcot Town Council Training and Development Policy

It was AGREED that the policy dating back to 2012 is due for a review. The Town Clerk felt that some of the detailed information in the policy has not been followed in previous years and procedures would need to be put in place. It was AGREED that the Policy would be reviewed every two years in future.

There was a discussion on the need to have a standard training programme along with more specialist training. It was noted that the Outdoor Services staff already

followed a training programme. It was suggested that there should be training programmes not just for office staff but for Town Councillors too. The leadership and management courses being completed by the Civic Hall staff was also discussed and more information requested for the next Committee meeting.

It was AGREED to add the following to item 14 of the policy so that it reads: "All employees, prior to attending a training course, are to be notified of paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 above, and sign a certificate to that effect."

It was also AGREED that training should include less formal ways to learn such as webinars; distance learning; on-the-job training and that there was not always a need for the Council to pay out for the formal courses. The Town Clerk would make the changes discussed and circulate by email.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Cllr V Haval and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND adoption of this Policy.

9. To agree a timescale for the adoption of the DTC Cllr email boxes

The Town Clerk asked for clarification of how strict they wish the staff to be when the DTC mail boxes are up and running. Cllrs M Khan and V Haval were currently trialling the DTC email and found it helpful in keeping Council emails together.

Clear instructions would be needed to help Councillors to connect up with computers; tablet and mobile phones. Not every Councillor was technically able and they would need help. It was agreed to ask the IT company to present a 30 minute Zoom meeting to explain the instructions and screen shots would help explain the process.

It was agreed that there should be a good transition period where both DTC and private emails will be used. However signing off official paperwork could only be done through the DTC mail box. It was also agreed that there should be a cut off where private emails would no longer be used – although the staff would reply to direct the Councillor to their DTC mail box.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that we have a transition period up to 1st September to allow Members time to install and get used to their DTC emails.

10. To consider a report on the remote working and remote meetings – and how we can take the best for the future

The Town Clerk presented a report on the pros and cons of remote working and remote meetings. It was easier for the Town Clerk and the Planning and Environment Officer to work from home but the more "hands-on" staff would probably achieve more in the office. The Civic Hall team need to be on-site for all the time that the hall is open.

There was less travelling for some which is helping to improve the environment. The new laptops and working in the cloud has been key to helping the Council to keep working even during this pandemic crisis. In total we have only missed around four

meetings. It would be good to keep the alternative option of Members being allowed to attend remotely and may help to encourage more people to take up seats at Town and Parish level.

Cllr M Khan wanted to formally thank all staff for their efforts during this unprecedented period. Cllr Khan reiterated that we must follow Government guidelines when it is considered safe to do so. The legislation to allow remote attendance is passed until May 2021.

Cllr A Macdonald felt that teamwork and accessibility to senior staff was an issue with working remotely. He also highlighted that junior staff did not always have the ability to work from home.

Cllr V Haval was interested in any software that was more difficult to use remotely. The Town Clerk said that the only issue has been the software to give us the ability to create a large pdf. We were trialling a cheaper package than adobe but quite a few Councillors preferred having the separate reports as they were easier to access.

Cllr V Haval would like to see whether Councillors would prefer to have paper copies rather than electronic copies. She would like to have the option to join a meeting remotely as it would work better with family commitments on occasions.

Cllr M Khan was keen for the access to meeting remotely to be reviewed in a year's time. It was acknowledged that some staff were more busy than others. Regular reviews and remote team meetings have helped to keep them involved and there is a lot more house-keeping which everyone is getting involved with.

Staff should see their line manager regarding any issues when we re-open the Town Council offices – and the Didcot Civic Hall. The report was noted by the Committee.

11. To consider a draft survey to be completed by staff regarding coming back to work and what measures DTC will need to take to make them feel safe

The Town Clerk had put together a survey which would be sent out to staff. This could be completed anonymously if they wished and is designed to help the staff to get their concerns aired where they may not do so in a meeting. Once circulated a meeting of the senior staff would be held to review the response.

12. To consider the progress report

This is a new item which will help the Personnel Committee to plan their future workload. Councillors were invited to forward items that they may want to review. It was noted that the Staff Handbook review should be 2020 and not 2030!

13. 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

14. To consider the confidential Staffing Report

The Town Clerk circulated a confidential staff report along with some Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the two new members of staff. There was a discussion on their performance over the past eight months.

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Clr J Durman and **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that Guy Langton is made a permanent member of staff.

There was a need to clarify which members of staff were working with the Mayor.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald and seconded by Clr V Haval and **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that Chelsey Lordan is made a permanent member of staff. She would need a detailed career development plan to help her progress within the Council.

There was a talk about various staff on maternity leave. There was also a need to clarify a formal process of appointing Civic Hall staff.

Consideration of reimbursement for working from home

There was a discussion regarding this tax entitlement for working from home – which was now up to £6 per week tax free – pro rata for part timers. There was a view that this would be easy to administer and relatively low cost. Cllr Khan felt that it would also boost morale.

The Personnel and Administration Committee **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** to F&GP Committee that this payment should be made for those staff who wished to claim it. It should be paid for the duration that the staff are predominately working from home.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Signed _____ Chair Date _____