

## Didcot Town Council

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### **Personnel and Administration Committee** Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021 at 7.30pm Meeting held via Zoom – *(meeting as a working group)*



## **Minutes**

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

### **Councillors**

D Macdonald (Chair)  
E Hards (Vice Chair)  
V Haval  
P Davies  
A Dearlove

### **Officers:**

Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)

### **Public participation**

None

### **13. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **14. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations.

### **15. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

Cllr E Hards made an amendment to minute 8 Complaints Policy, paragraph seven to read: "Notes would be taken by someone with no previous involvement."

Cllr V Haval made an amendment to minute 8 paragraph six to delete "the handling of a complaint". The sentence would therefore read: "Cllr V Haval suggested a public feedback box which a member of the Personnel Committee would look at possibly once a week."

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true record with those amendments.

#### **16. Questions on the Minutes**

Cllr E Hards requested that the decision of the full Council meeting should be noted in the progress report on the first aid payments regarding the Green Book guidance. This was AGREED that the Town Clerk would up-date the progress report for next time.

#### **17. To revisit the Complaints Policy and Disciplinary Procedure in conjunction with other relevant policies**

These policies were to work with the other relevant documents: Dignity at Work; Member/Officer protocol and Grievance Procedure 2021 – 2022. Cllr E Hards suggested an amendment in the Grievance Procedure: 3.2 (iv) the reference to “companion” should be changed to “accompanying person”. This was AGREED.

The amendments circulated in red type were agreed for the Complaints Policy: paragraph 4.2; 5.5 and 5.6.

The Town Clerk had been guided by South East Employers that it is normal practice to remove complaints from an employee’s file after either six or twelve months.

Cllr V Haval wished to amend paragraph 6 entitled “Resolutions and Remedies” to reflect the handling of a complaint against the Town Clerk. The following would be circulated for approval on email:

#### **RESOLUTION AND REMEDIES**

*The aim in dealing with all complaints is to reach a resolution or remedy that satisfies the complainant, whether it is the remedy they were originally seeking or not. Where a complaint is found to be justified, consideration may need to be given to the question of an appropriate remedy. The Town Clerk will make the final decision regarding the remedy unless the complaint is about the Town Clerk in which case the Chair of the Personnel & Administration Committee or the Councillor’s panel will deal with the complaint.*

The amendments circulated in red type were agreed for the Disciplinary Procedure: paragraph 20 (Stage 4); 23 (ten working days); 29 (Appeals ten working days); 35 (suspended with or without pay); 41 (ten working days).

It was clarified that the reason why the stage 4 could be a dismissal without pay is because the employee may have received an earlier warning that they could be dismissed on full pay. For gross misconduct – this is likely to be a suspension on full pay because they would not have had the previous warnings.

It was AGREED that the option with or without pay should be retained to give flexibility to the procedure. It was also AGREED that an amendment would be made to paragraph 22 to allow for an employee to be informed of a disciplinary complaint within five working days and the meeting would be held within ten working days from

the date on the letter. This change would also be circulated via email to members of this Committee.

**18. To review the staff training programme for 2021 – 2022 and the budget provision**

It was noted that the training budget this year was reduced from £6,180 last year to £2,500 for this year. Much of last year's budget was not spent due to the covid pandemic – however this year with new staff there is a need to refresh current training and to upskill staff.

The Town Clerk circulated a paper with a number of courses detailed for the office staff. It was also noted that the Environment & Climate Committee had recently approved essential courses with a value of around £2,220.

The Committee felt that all of the listed training was relevant but we would need to recommend that some money is vired to this cost centre to cover the training costs. It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Dearlove to recommend that these courses were covered and a virement recommended to the next meeting of the F&GP Committee. This recommendation would also cover the recently approved training by the Environment & Climate Committee which covered the essential ROSPA training.

Repayment of training fees for staff who leave is not generally sought for the more general training. This was usually in place for the advanced courses which would result in a qualification on successful completion.

**19. To note the progress of the Kickstart programme**

The Town Clerk up-dated the Committee on the Kickstart programme. The Council has applied for two young people to join this programme – one for the outside team and one for the buildings. The last meeting of the F&GP Committee had approved in principle the programme for two applicants.

**20. To review the draft terms of reference for the Objectives Working Group**

The draft terms of reference were discussed and in particular the timings. It was AGREED to look to finish this work for the January full Council as it would be tight in terms of Member availability and Officer availability. There was a preference to meet in person for easier working.

The Town Clerk would circulate the objectives to all members. It was noted that the environment and climate section was not adequately referenced. It was AGREED that this Group would define the objectives rather than generate new material. It was also AGREED that the working group should be opened out to all Members and papers should be circulated to all Members even if they are unable to attend. It was AGREED not to open these meetings to the public at this stage.

The Town Clerk also suggested that we incorporate the criteria for the Local Council award scheme within our objectives. This was AGREED.

**21. Progress report**

The progress report was noted.

**22. 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.

**23. To consider the confidential staff report**

This report was discussed by the Members. There was an update on the appraisals and training programme; a request for study leave and an up-date on the recruitment for Civic Hall cover.

The following was AGREED:

- All staff who used DTC vehicles would be asked to bring in their driving licences to bring the personnel files up to date.
- The request for study leave would be granted for the member of staff – proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr P Davies.
- Recruitment would be ongoing for basic cover for the Civic Hall whilst the NHS were continuing to use the building for covid vaccinations and also the flu boosters in the autumn.

The Town Clerk left the meeting for the final item and was asked to minute the following statement:

“Didcot Town Council will be seeking legal advice in relation to an employment issue.”

The meeting closed at 9.25pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chair      Date \_\_\_\_\_