

Personnel and Administration Committee

Monday 7th June 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

Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)

Also present:

Cllr M Khan
One member of the public

Public participation

None

1. Election of Chair

It was proposed by Cllr E Hards and seconded by Cllr P Davies and RESOLVED to elect Cllr D Macdonald as Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.

2. Election of Vice Chair

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr V Haval and RESOLVED to elect Cllr E Hards as Vice Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.

3. To note the Terms of Reference for this Committee

Cllr E Hards noted that the terms of reference stated that this Committee meet every quarter. It was agreed that there was a lot to discuss and bi-monthly meetings were necessary to keep up with the work load. The Town Clerk would amend the terms of reference in line with the correct number of meetings as the approved calendar.

4. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Dearlove.

5. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

6. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2021

Cllr P Davies queried whether the standing orders were suspended when Cllr E Hards spoke during the meeting – as she was not a member of the Committee. It was confirmed that on minute 81 – the minutes should show that the standing orders were suspended to allow the Councillor to speak.

It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true record with that amendment.

7. Questions on the Minutes

Cllr V Haval suggested an amendment to the text at Minute 84 to read “Cllr M Khan wished to facilitate the operation of community groups and this would mean opening seven days a week.” This was AGREED and the Town Clerk would make this amendment.

8. To review the Complaints Policy and Disciplinary Procedure in conjunction with other relevant policies

The Councillors were asked to review the Complaints Policy and the Disciplinary Procedure to act as part of the approved Grievance Procedure; Dignity at Work and Member Officer protocol.

Complaints Policy. Cllr D Macdonald wanted to know whether the Council had a “trending” code or policy on complaints. It was confirmed that this was unlikely to be in place. The Town Clerk stated that not all complaints came through to the Clerk. Often it was a frustrated enquiry or request for information rather than a complaint. It was possible to put in place a system of logging the complaints but questioned whether this was necessary.

Cllr P Davies requested that the gender was taken out of the document. Cllr P Davies also noted that all complaints are fed through the Town Clerk and wondered how complaints were made about the Town Clerk. It was AGREED that the complaints about the Town Clerk should be made direct to the Leader or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee – who this year is the same Councillor.

Informal and formal complaints – at the moment it was the Town Clerk who decides. It was AGREED that the complainant should be asked if they want to formalise the complaint. Complainants about members of staff should consult the Town Clerk in order to fully understand all aspects of the complaint.

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr P Davies and RESOLVED that the complaint should be passed on within 24 hours of receiving the complaint to either the Town Clerk or the Chair of Personnel and Administration Committee.

Cllr V Haval suggested a public feedback box on the handling of a complaint which a member of the Personnel Committee would look at possibly once a week. It would not be open to staff but it would allow for trends to be noted. The Town Clerk wanted to know what would happen to the information. It was AGREED not to progress this idea at the moment.

Cllr E Hards wished to change to “a Councillors’ Panel “ rather than “the”. On 5.6 – Cllr Hards pointed out that the make up of the Council was different and there was no formal opposition. It was AGREED to change the make up of the panel to the Leader of the Council plus two other members of whom at least one should not be from the largest party – to make it cross party. Notes would be taken by some with no previous involvement.

Bottom of 5.6 – it was AGREED that the outcome of all formal complaints should be advised to the Personnel & Administration Committee unless there was a potential financial liability in which case it should be directed to the Finance & General Purposes Committee. This would need to happen after the appeal process has been exhausted.

Cllr V Haval proposed at point 5.7 Unreasonable and vexatious complaints –that the Chair of P&A be informed with a correspondence trail and that no further action will be taken. Any conflict of interest would need to be declared by the Chair and to the Vice Chair or another member of the Committee. This was seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and AGREED.

Cllr V Haval queried whether the anonymous complaints should go to the Town Clerk but felt this was OK. Cllr V Haval also queried item 6 “resolutions and remedies” and whether the Town Clerk should make the final decision. It was AGREED that the Town Clerk would usually make any final decision or remedy unless it was not appropriate to do so. In this case either the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee or the Councillors Panel would decide the remedy. This was proposed by Cllr V Haval and seconded by Cllr P Davies.

Disciplinary Procedure. Cllr V Haval commented about the removal of warnings after six month and twelve months. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was standard practice. Cllr V Haval felt that stage four sounded like a foregone conclusion. She felt that the wording could be improved. There was also a lack of clarity on the difference of the stage four – dismissal or suspension without pay and the alleged cases of gross misconduct.

It was AGREED that the Town Clerk would seek clarity and re-word the documents for further Committee consideration.

The other documents would be up-dated by the Town Clerk in terms of staff restructuring and circulated to the Committee by email.

9. To review the email and proposal from Major W Thrussell

It was AGREED that our current system of having an unlimited number of cadets to serve the Mayor was inclusive and therefore there was no need for a policy.

10. Progress Report

Cllr V Haval requested clarification on the comment “no information being shared in return”. The Town Clerk stated that there is a lack of information coming from our District and County Councillors and in some cases these projects affect the work of the Town Council and there may be opportunities to share which are missed. Cllr P Davies felt that this was not a two way flow and also felt that there should not be “double hatters” and “triple hatters” on the Council to allow for a wider range of people to get involved.

It was AGREED that this could be an action point on the working group who will meet to discuss the Town Council objectives and vision.

The petition policy work would need to wait until the end of year audit papers go off to the auditors – but it could be ready for the August meeting if workload permits.

11. 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.

12. To consider confidential staff report

This report was discussed by the Members.

- **Up-date on appraisals and training programme**

Appraisals for all staff were complete for this year however the administrative staff will have a review to finalise job descriptions once the ongoing recruitment is finalised. Evidence of KPI's are being met. The appraisals for the Outside team will be reviewed by the Town Clerk.

- **Probationary period for the Outside Services Manager**

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr E Hards and **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that Mr Robert Harris is made a permanent member of staff. The Committee agreed that Robert had made an excellent contribution to the operation of the outside team. Recommendation one is covered in appendix A.

- **Work experience and the Kickstart team**

The Town Clerk has heard from the Oxfordshire representatives and will progress as soon as possible. The decision was to bring this back to the F&GP Committee. The plan is to have one young person for the Civic Hall and one for the Outside team. There is no guaranteed position but it gives the young people a chance to learn basic skills.

- **Staff movement, up-skills and Civic Hall cover**

It was noted that the two advertised positions have now been filled – the Projects & Services Officer and the Reception and Finance Administrator. This leaves a total of 68.5 budgeted hours to staff the Civic Hall – including the twenty-five hours covered by the member of staff on maternity leave who is due to return in mid July. Total

remaining hours available = 43.5. It was noted that during the NHS vaccination sessions it was possible to cover the Civic Hall with a volunteer as that second person. It was however clarified that the Civic Hall is a large building and we must have two members of staff available in the building at all times.

Recommendation two: It was AGREED to delegate the remaining hours (43.5) to the Town Clerk and Property & Facilities Manager in terms of cover for the Civic Hall. It was noted that Councillors were not supportive of zero hours contracts but some form of flexible contracts with guaranteed hours may be a solution.

- **First Aid payments**

At the last meeting, the Town Clerk was asked to come back to this Committee with the issue of first aid payments for staff. It was agreed that it would be good practice to have some nominated first aiders to keep the first aid kits in date and to represent the Town Council in an emergency situation.

Recommendation three: It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Council follow the Green Book guidance even though this is not a contractual right. The Town Clerk would check with the HR consultants to clarify the Green Book guidance. The sum would be available for everyone with a valid first aid qualification.

The meeting closed at 9.42pm

Signed _____ Chair Date _____