

MINUTES of the Staffing Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 18th December 2023 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices, Melksham Community Campus (First Floor), Market Place, Melksham, SN12 6ES at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council), Alan Baines (Chair of Committee), Robert Shea-Simonds (Vice Chair of Committee), and Shona Holt.

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk)

Housekeeping: There were no members of public present in person or remotely.

324/23 Apologies: Councillor John Glover had tendered his apologies as on holiday. It was noted that the two other members of the Committee had recently stepped down as Councillors, so the Committee currently stood at 5 members, and the Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Resolved: To accept the reasons for apologies by Councillor John Glover

325/23 Declarations of Interest: The Clerk declared an interest in personal staffing matters, and advised she would leave the room when items related directly to her.

326/23 Items to be held in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business (Agenda items 7a, 9, 10 & 11) as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

Resolved: Agenda items to be held in closed session for reason 3d (a) engagement, terms of service, conduct and dismissal of employees.

327/23 Public Participation This item falls as there were no members of the public present.

328/23 Health and Safety: To note any Health and Safety matters occurring since the last meeting (standing item as per the health and safety policy).

None.

329/23 Office Accommodation:

a) To note correspondence received from Wiltshire Council regarding the car parking arrangements due to be implemented at the Campus from 8th January 2024 and consider parking arrangements for staff.

Members noted that the lease with Wiltshire Council for the Parish Council's office and meeting accommodation at the Campus included 3no. parking spaces for the three officers. These were not physical spaces, but the registration of the number plate through the MiPermit system.

Recommendation: To register for car permits for the two Officers who currently drive; with the option to register the third if the need arose.

- b) **To receive feedback from Melksham Community Campus fire evacuation training.** The Clerk reported back following attending the 2 hour session held on Saturday 16th December 6-8pm. The session including training with the majority of the Campus staff, and the building was physically evacuated three times; with different role playing staff and scenarios enacted. The Clerk had agreed to meet with the Deputy Manager following the session, to talk through arrangements for parish council staff who cross over to the use the Campus leisure facilities on an evening and then return to the office; as this could lead to confusion as to where they were in the building if evacuated; and how the parish council office was checked in a fire, as locked and the codes only known to the Duty Manager who would not be the staff member who swept the building.
- c) **To note office closedown dates for the Christmas break:** The office will close at 4.45pm on Friday 22nd December and reopen at 9.15am on Tuesday 2nd January. Thanks were expressed to those councillors who had offered to check the play areas and other amenities during the staff holiday period.

330/23 To note staff member summoned to undertake Jury service and consider the implications.

Members noted that a staff member had been summoned for jury service for Tuesday 2nd January; as this clashed with officer workloads, this had been postponed, with the new date of Monday 29th July. Only one postponement is allowed. There were 3 options for employees to be paid whilst on jury service:

1. For the employer to pay their full earnings (unable to claim this back)
2. For the employer to pay nothing and the employee claim loss of earnings from the court up to £64.95 per day for the first 10 days
3. For the employer to let their employee claim loss of earnings from the court and then top up the payment to make up the difference between the loss of earnings maximum rate and their full pay

Officers had also checked to see if there was any cover for jury service within the parish council's insurers. The insurance company thought it was covered but asked for it to be checked with the HR/legal provider helpline, who referred it back to the insurance company; but noted that a claim can only be made after the service has been completed. There was time to look into this, now it had been deferred to the end of July. Members were in agreement that they did not want to see the staff member out of pocket for undertaking this civic duty.

Recommendation:

1. The staff member to claim the loss of earnings from the court (and note that this must be done on the first day of attendance).
2. The parish council to top up the employee's pay to make up the difference in the standard monthly pay and try and claim back from the insurance company.
3. The parish council to assist the employee in investigating how they can claim back expenses (travel costs for example).

The following items were held in closed session.

331/23 To review current workload levels.

The members noted the report produced by the Melksham Without Parish Clerk for a Melksham Town Council meeting that same evening, with a proposal for the lack of

Town Council officer capacity on the joint Neighbourhood Plan to be backfilled by the parish council, with limited use of Place Studio consultants, and a bought in resource. This was costed to £2,900, with an estimate for the time taken on tasks. £1,100 of this cost was for two full days by Place Studio. The members also noted correspondence from the Parish Council Chairman to the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor, which followed on from a meeting with them at the end of October when the issues had been discussed.

The Clerk informed members on the options that she had looked into regarding possibilities for employing a temporary resource with the members agreeing to the selection, and that the Clerk had passed this through the Town Council Mayor and Deputy Mayor, who were happy. The Clerk had also kept the Parish Council Chair, Vice Chair and Chair of Staffing Committee informed of the situation, and proposal to find a solution to the issues raised, over the last few days.

Recommendation:

Further to the Town Council approving the way forward, and funding, at their meeting on Monday 18th December the parish council:

1. To take on the responsibility of providing the whole officer resource to the joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan project to its submission to Wiltshire Council at Regulation 16 stage (currently anticipated in April 2024) due to the lack of officer capacity at Melksham Town Council.
2. To employ a temporary member of staff to assist the parish council as additional officer resource for this project, on an hourly basis against a timesheet, at c£20 per hour. Total number of hours to be assessed and reviewed during the remainder of the project as responses to the Regulation 14 consultation are analysed, as impossible to accurately estimate number of hours at this stage.
3. Miriam Zaccarelli to be employed as the temporary resource ready to commence work on the return after the Christmas break, due to the current project timeline for the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan and the next Steering Group on 17th January. To work either from home, from the Parish Council office, or a mixture of both.

It is noted that this is before the approval of the recommendations of the full council, but necessary for the task deadlines that cannot wait until the end of January, and that the funding will be covered by the town council and so no financial impact to the parish council. The parish council are fully aware that there has been issues previously raised (June Staffing Committee meeting) of the project workload and lack of town council capacity and that a solution was being sought. Members felt that they were just the vehicle for the town council to provide and fund this resource.

4. Note the impact this makes on the workload of the Parish Clerk, and that it only covers the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan project and not all the joint projects with the Town Council.

Members and the Clerk discussed the current workload and capacity in the office.

332/23 To consider any feedback received to date on revised staff contract consultation (deadline midday Friday 22nd December)

Although the deadline for consultation comments was later in the week, the Clerk had asked for all staff to submit any queries in time for the Staffing Committee meeting tonight. None had been raised by 4 members of staff, with queries from the 5th member of staff earlier in the day, which had already been answered by the Clerk. No issues had been raised by any staff member and all were happy to sign the new contract from 1st January.

333/23 To consider scale point reviews for all staff following appraisals (deferred from Staffing Committee 30th October)

Recommendation: The council implement the following scale point changes:

- 1. Parish Officer:** To review following appraisal at end of February 24.
- 2. Finance & Amenities Officer:** It was noted that the last scale point increase for this officer was in July 2023. It was unanimously agreed to award one Scale Point increment from May 24 (the new council year). This is an increase from SCP 11 to 12, £26,421 FTE (£13.73 per hour)
- 3. Parish Caretaker:** No amendment, the current scale point is considered appropriate as there was no increase in responsibility.
- 4. Allotment Warden:** No amendment, the current scale point is considered appropriate as there was no increase in responsibility.
- 5. Clerk & RFO (Responsible Financial Officer):**

It was noted that until now it was believed that the LC2 Scale Point Band had matched the Council activities, and the Scale Point for the Clerk was at the top of the 'above substantive benchmark range' at 32.

Since the last Staffing Committee meeting, the Committee members had reviewed the SLCC Advice Note "Job Evaluation – How to evaluate the Clerk's Job" and individually assessed the elements of the role to see how the Melksham Without Parish Clerk role fitted into the Job Profiles 1-4. The Staffing Committee Chairman had then collated the individual assessments and it was unanimously agreed that the Melksham Without Clerk role fits into Profile LC3 for the majority of elements.

The Clerk left the room.

The last two year's national pay agreements had awarded local government staff an across the board £1 per hour meaning that whilst other staff had received pay increases in the order of 8 - 9 %, the Clerk had only received a rise of around 5% for those years. It was also noted that having reached the highest level of Profile LC2 the Clerk had not been awarded any Scale Point increases since mid-2020, despite consecutive very satisfactory appraisals. It was agreed that needed to be addressed. During that period it was noted that several major tasks had been undertaken, the adoption of Neighbourhood Plan 1, adapting council activity for

Covid and moving meeting venue; negotiating a realistic long term lease with Wiltshire Council for office/meeting space in the new Campus; successful move and set-up of the Council Office from the Bowerhill Pavilion to the Campus; adapting the council to be largely paperless; overseeing the design, procurement and construction of the £800,000 Berryfield Village Hall; taking the lead in producing Neighbourhood Plan 2. In view of those achievements by the Clerk, it was agreed to recommend that further increased Scale Point revisions were needed. **The recommendation to full council is that the Clerk's Scale Point should be increased from 32 to 36 from the beginning of the Calendar Year 2024.** This is essentially 2 points to give same percentage rise as other staff in the last 2 years and 2 points for 'personal' achievements. Total increase since April 2023 of 16% to £44,428 per annum or £23.09 per hour.

Meeting closed at 21:50

Signed.....
Chairman, Monday 22nd January 2024