

MINUTES of a Special Staffing Committee Meeting held on Monday 17th March at 7.00 p.m. at Crown Chambers, 7 Market Place, Melksham

Present: FULL COMMITTEE: Cllr. Richard Wood (Chairman); Cllrs. John Glover; Alan Baines; Mike Sankey; Terry Chivers and Pat Nicol

- 536/13 **Declarations of Interest:** The Clerk declared an interest in the item on the Flexible Retirement procedure and left the meeting when this item was discussed.
- 537/13 **Financial Assistant Job Description:** The Committee reviewed the draft Job Description. The Asst Clerk explained that it was the same Job Description from when she initially undertook the role, with an update to reflect that Inland Revenue paperwork now had to be completed online. The post was initially for 10 hours per week (2 days 9.30am to 3pm with a 30 min break) and for a 15 month period with a view to the contract being extended subject to satisfactory performance.
Recommended: *The draft Finance Assistant Job Description be approved by the Council.*
- 538/14 **Outsourced accountancy services:** The Committee noted an email from an Accountancy company offering their services on an outsourced basis as an alternative to the recruitment of a Financial Assistant as advertised in the local press. It was agreed that as the role included cover of other office staff and the opportunity to take on non finance tasks in the future that this would not be a feasible approach to the position.
- 539/13 **Financial Assistant Salary:** The Committee reviewed the NJC Salary Scales, the role and responsibilities and the starting salary of the previous Financial Assistant. It was noted that there would be a 3 month probation period, and that any change in salary scale would not be reviewed until a year following a successful probation period. **Recommended:** *The Salary Scale for this post be Scale 15 £16,215 FTE per annum, £4,383.60 pro rata per annum (£8.43 per hour).*
- 540/13 **Shortlisting & Interviews:** The Asst Clerk reported that the Financial Assistant vacancy had been advertised in the Melksham Independent News (13th March) and sister papers in Frome and Westbury. The vacancy had also been posted on the Parish Council's website. The closing date for applications was Monday 24th March. It was agreed that the short-listing of candidates would take place on Tuesday 25th March at 9am and that the Interview Panel would be invited to do the short-listing. The Interview Panel would comprise of Cllrs Richard Wood, Alan Baines and John Glover. Cllr Glover may be unavailable in which case Cllr Mills would be invited to join the Interview Panel. It was noted that Interviews would take place on Thursday 3rd April 6-8pm.
- 541/13 **Staff leave at Year End:** The Asst Clerk reported that two members of staff had requested to carry over outstanding leave until the new financial year commencing 1st April 2014, both requests were for several days. It was agreed that staff taking a lot of additional leave in one year impacted on the remaining staff and office cover and tasks undertaken in the Parish.. The Council also had a duty of care to ensure the welfare of their staff and leave should be taken accordingly.
Recommended: *1. For the current financial year commencing 1st April 2013 staff were permitted to carry over a maximum of 3 days leave to the next financial year, with any outstanding leave to be paid. 2. In the future, commencing 1st April 2014, staff would only be able to carry over a maximum of 2 days leave to the following financial year and be unable to "sell back" any leave not taken by the year end.*

542/13 **Minutes of last Staffing Committee:** The Minutes of the last Staffing Committee held 12th February were noted.

The following items (Min. 543/13 – 546/13), were held in committee in view of the confidential nature of the items under the reason Standing Order 62(a) engagement and terms of services of employees.

543/13C Arising from Min. 489/13 **Flexible Retirement procedure:** The Clerk reported that she felt that staff needed to be told what the procedure was for taking * Flexible Retirement . She felt confused as she had found out from Cllr Glover in the last few days that flexible retirement was not being offered to her as it had not been requested in her retirement letter. However she was not aware that she needed to have requested it at that point. The decision not to offer flexible retirement was of course at the discretion of the Council but from a staff point of view it had been very stressful and had led to a difficult and uncertain working situation; the procedure needed to be made clear to staff for the future.

**Note: The Council adopted the Wiltshire Council Discretions Policy on 9th September 2013 which gave staff an option to take flexible retirement at the Council's discretion - see Mins. 177/13 and 226/13*

The Clerk left the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

Recommendation: *The Council take no further action on the outgoing Clerk's comments on the Flexible Retirement policy as they felt that they had acted in good faith.*

The Clerk Mrs Mary Jarvis returned to the meeting.

The Chairman explained to the Clerk that the Council had taken the view that they had expected any request for flexible retirement to have been made when the Clerk initially resigned.

544/13 **Neighbourhood Plan staffing role:** The Chairman commented that if the Joint Plan did not proceed and the Council need to produce their own plan then they would need clerical assistance. The Clerk confirmed that she had written to the Town Clerk, Steve Gray, with the Council's request that any clerical assistance should be appointed by the Joint Steering Group and as such be added to the agenda for the next Joint Steering Group meeting.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference did not mention administrative support requirements, although it was mentioned early on. It was noted that the next Joint Steering Group meeting would not be held until after 31st March when the Town Council next met to discuss the Parish Council's resolution that their funding split was only agreed for one year, 2014/15.

545/13C **Office Staffing Budget 2014/15:** The Asst Clerk presented a report on the Office Staffing Budget for 2013/14 and 2014/15. The revised budget for expenditure on office staffing (including Employer contributions for National Insurance and Superannuation) for the current year 2013/14 was £56,048.51. The proposed expenditure for 2014/15 as agreed at the Full Council (20/1/14) was £56,251.21 for 69 hours worked per week. The proposed new structure with the new Clerk

from 1st April 2014 was for £48,857 for 64 hours per week. This gave an unallocated figure of £7,394 for the office staffing budget.

The Asst Clerk explained that it was hoped that the new Financial Assistant would initially work 10 hours per week, but in the future may be suitable to take on more hours (15 hours per week) in a more general role, and assist in covering the office when staff were on leave. The Minute Taker would work more like 18 hours per week, than the 15 currently worked.

Cllr Glover expressed concern that at the start of the new financial year, the office staffing was already down to 59 hours per week whereas it had previously been agreed that 69 hours per week was required. The Asst Clerk Teresa Strange who had been appointed Clerk to the Council from 1st April explained that some time was needed at the beginning of the new year to assess how best to structure the additional hours required in the office, whether it was to cover peaks in workload, or on a project basis. It was noted that this Office Staffing budget did not cover any administration work for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Recommendation: *The Council retain £7,394 in the Office Staffing Budget for 2014/15 to set against additional assistance if needed. To be reviewed at the July Staffing Committee.*

546/13C **Employee Sickness:** The Asst Clerk reported that the office cleaner had provided Doctor's Notes stating not fit to work for 3 weeks commencing 4th February, and then another Note covering the period 6th March to 7th April.

Recommended: *The Asst Clerk report at the next Staffing Committee on the sickness leave of the employee over the last few years and provide details of the NJC Sickness Policy.*

Meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman, 24th March 2014

