

**MINUTES Of a Staffing Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 at Crown Chambers, 7 Market Place, Melksham at 7.00p.m.**

**Present:** Cllrs. Terry Chivers, Jan Chivers, Pat Nicol, Alan Baines and Mike Sankey

**Apologies:** Cllrs. Richard Wood and John Glover

114/14 **Chair of Meeting:** As the Council's Chair and Vice-Chair had given their apologies for the meeting the Clerk invited the members to nominate a Chair for the meeting.  
**Resolved:** *Cllr Alan Baines Chair the meeting.*

115/15 **Declarations of Interest:** The Clerk declared an interest in any staffing matters that related to her.

*The following items (Min. 116/14 – 124/14), 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.*

116/14 **Staff Appraisals:** The Clerk gave a report on the staff appraisals that had been held over the last few days and the Committee discussed any issues that had been raised.

- a) Parish Caretaker: The Caretaker had commented that he was reactive with regards to footpath maintenance and inspections rather than proactive. The Caretaker had discussed with the Clerk the possibility of walking the footpaths with Councillors (footpath reps). The Committee agreed that it was not the responsibility of the Caretaker to maintain the footpaths and that it was not appropriate to ensure all were usable on a regular basis if the Council were not aware that they were being used by residents regularly.

**Recommendation:** *For the Parish Caretaker to continue as before, with obstructions being reported to the Rights of Way Warden. If further issues arise then the Council Footpath reps will organise to walk the relevant footpaths with the Caretaker.*

The Clerk had discussed with the Caretaker about making him more easily identifiable to residents when carrying out Council duties, particularly when spending time in the play areas.

**Recommendation:** *The Council purchase "hi viz" vests for the Caretaker with Melksham Without Parish Council written on the back and ask the Caretaker if he would also like T-shirts with the Council name on for wearing whilst conducting Council duties.*

- b) Office Staff: The new office staff were fitting in well and a good split of labour had been organised. All three office staff quoted that their only difficulty was lack of time in the office, as well as lack of quiet time in the office when it was not open to visitors. It was agreed that the Parish Assistant only working 3 hours two afternoons a week was disjointed, and did not allow for enough time for worthwhile tasks to be completed. Looking forward this would be one day per week in the future, on Mondays to assist with sending out agenda packs, setting

up for meetings etc. The office hours and opening days was to be discussed as a later agenda item.

- c) It was noted that the Finance Assistant had only been in post since 19<sup>th</sup> May and a full appraisal would be conducted after her 3 month probation period at the end of August/beginning of September.
- d) Office Cleaner: The Committee noted that this appraisal could not be conducted as the member of staff was currently off sick.
- e) Clerk: The Clerk reported that she had been in position for 3 months now and was enjoying the challenge of the new role and working with the new team in the office. Some changes had been made to the way the office staff were working and the way that information was stored, mainly due to the changes in technology since some of the systems had been set up, allowing more to be done electronically. There had been a big workload, with the Clerk continuing with the Finance role until the new Finance Assistant had been appointed and now was training the new staff member. It was noted that the Assistant Parish Officer was still in her first year and so had not been through a whole year of Council activity and so many of the tasks were also new to her too. The Clerk was constantly prioritising tasks and there was a backlog of some non urgent actions from the meetings. The office had also been reorganised to accommodate the new ways of working for office staff in conjunction with the supply of furniture available from the Wiltshire Council Shurnhold site.

The Committee noted that the Clerk's 6 month probation review was due in October. The Clerk advised that SLCC employer advice notes advised that it was good practice for Clerk's appraisals to be conducted by more than one person, such as the Chair and Vice Chair, or members of the Staffing Committee.

#### 117/14 **Review of Office Staffing:**

- a) **Future staffing structure and working hours:** It had been agreed at the Staffing Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March that the Council would retain £7,394 in the Office Staffing Budget for 2014/15 to set against additional assistance if needed which was to be reviewed at the July Staffing Committee (*Min. 545/13C*).

The Clerk had been assessing what was required in terms of additional hours and had discussed this with the office staff at their appraisals. The Clerk and the Assistant Parish Officer had been working many additional hours since the beginning of April. The office staff were consistently working through their unpaid lunch breaks, starting early and leaving sometimes up to half an hour later than their paid 5 hour day. This was acknowledged as something that should only be done on an exceptional occasion but was now routine and not sustainable or conducive to good working practice. Not leaving promptly at the end of the day meant that the staff were regularly late collecting their children from school. This problem was mainly caused by the office being open until 3pm with the office staff and Clerk's working day technically finishing at 2.45pm.

The following Clerk's recommendation was discussed:

Clerk: To continue working 25 hours per week (consisting of 1 hour per week attributed to evening scheduled meetings and 24 hours per week (4 days of 5 hour days and 1 day of 4 hours).

Assistant Parish Officer: To increase her working hours from 3 days per week to 4 days per week (15 to 20 hours) with 3 hours additional working for meetings.

Finance Officer: To increase her working hours from 2 days per week to 3 days per week (10 to 15 hours). This increase had been envisaged at the commencement of employment, as would include duties other than finance.

Parish Assistant: To continue to work 6 hours per week, but on one day rather than 2 sessions of 3 hours per week. To continue to work additional hours to cover any office staff's absence for holidays, training, sickness etc.

The budget amount of £7,393.11 retained in the budget for additional office staffing in 2014/15 had been recalculated by the Finance Assistant against actual figures, rather than budget figures, giving a difference of £7,278.66. (Difference between Staffing Expenditure for new structure in place from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 £48,972.55 against Budget figure £56,251.21).

The only increase in the staffing structure would be for the increase in the Assistant Parish Officer's hours (Sept to March extra 5 hours per week = £1,222.95) as the Finance Assistant's increase had already been accounted for in the Budget figure of £48,972.55.

The additional hours worked by the Clerk and Assistant Parish Officer in April, May and June had cost £1,580. This left £4,475.71 in the Budget for 2014/15 for office staffing.

The Clerk also recommended that all the office staff had the same start and finish times (9.15am to 2.45pm) apart from the Parish Assistant who would work on until 3.45pm.

***Recommendation:*** *The Council implement the new office staffing hours as outlined by the Clerk above, with the budget implication of an additional £1,222.95 to be spent on increasing the hours of the Assistant Parish Officer from 15 to 20 hours per week (from Sept 2014 to March 2015).*

- b) Office opening hours: The Clerk advised that the office opening hours had been moved last year from Mon, Tuesday and Thursday to Monday and Thursday only, but felt that Tuesday and Thursday would be much better opening days as Mondays were the days when agendas and meeting information was prepared which were very busy days. The office was also open longer than staff's working hours. The Committee discussed various options of days and opening hours. It was agreed that Wednesdays and Fridays needed to be quiet days in the office for staff to concentrate on tasks and not engage with visitors, with Monday remaining a day when Councillors could still

call in, as well as Tuesday and Thursday when open to the public.

**Recommendation:** *The office open to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.30am to 2.30pm. The Council purchase an inexpensive mobile phone, so that the contact number can be advertised over public holiday periods for emergency use but not specific to one particular staff or Council member.*

118/14

**Staffing Salary reviews:**

a) **NJC/Unison negotiations:** The Committee noted that Unison members had voted in favour of strike action over the ongoing pay dispute.

c) **Review staff scale points:** The Clerk reported that the Assistant Parish Officer, Jo Eccleston, had completed her probationary period at the beginning of the year and had just had a favourable staff appraisal. Jo had shown good progress over the recent months and had taken on additional responsibilities in the office with the changes to staffing structure since the beginning of April. It was noted that the Parish Assistant was on Scale point 14. **Recommendation:** *The scale point for the Assistant Parish Officer be raised from Scale point 12 (£7.89 per hour) to Scale point 14 (£8.25) per hour from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.*

119/14

**Review of employee terms and conditions:** The Committee discussed the possibility of reviewing current terms and conditions of staff to include recommendations for occupational health referrals and request for access to medical records for staff members on long term sick leave. It was felt that the current arrangement of the Council abiding by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services “National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service” was adequate, and in line with other Parish and Town Councils. Councillors expressed concerns about altering existing staff contracts but were happy to investigate further enhancing terms and conditions via a Wellbeing policy. **Recommendation:** *The Council investigate adopting a Staff Wellbeing policy.*

120/14C

**Employee Sickness:**

**Recommendation:** *The Council write to the employee explaining the reasons why they were unwilling to allow the employee to return to work until fit for full duties and to request permission to access the employee’s medical records to ask the employee’s GP as to the current diagnosis, treatment plan and prognosis.*

*(Cllr Sankey left the meeting).*

121/14

**Staff Training:**

a) **Health and Safety Training:** The Clerk reported that the SLCC Local Council specific H&S training course had been cancelled due to lack of interest.

**Recommendation:** *The Council seek an alternative provider of Health & Safety training for the Clerk.*

b) **Fire Marshall:** The Clerk reported that the previous Clerk had been the Council Fire Marshall. **Recommendation:** *The Clerk undertake relevant Fire Marshall training.*

c) **First Aid:** The Committee noted that the “Emergency First Aid at Work” certification held by the Clerk and Parish Assistant expired 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015. The Clerk explained that they had joined a local employer for the last first aid

training as a cost effective solution, and would investigate if that was a possibility in the future as those employees' certification would be due to expire at the same time. It was noted that the Finance Assistant held the same qualification, however did not attend the Council meetings on a regular basis when any first aid may be required.

Cllr Chivers agreed to give the Clerk details of a local training provider that could be in a position to offer staff the required H&S, Fire Marshall and First Aid training in one package.

- d) **Social Media and Community Engagement Tools:** The Clerk reported that Social Media was an agenda item for the next Full Council meeting as had been requested by a Councillor.

There were also details emerging of new discretionary tests being introduced to the revised Quality Council accreditation that included the formulation of a community engagement strategy and the provision of a regular weblog on Council's website or the provision of online forums and surveys.

The Clerk advised that there were two courses being run on Social Media. "An Introduction to Social Media" being run by DEVELOP on the 10th July for £55 and an SLCC course "Digital Engagement" on 8<sup>th</sup> July and 25<sup>th</sup> September for £145. The Clerk sought permission to attend the DEVELOP course to investigate more information to present to the Council at their next meeting, with the possibility of attending the SLCC training in September if appropriate following the next Council meeting. Councillors had mixed views as to the benefits of social media to residents and concerns as to adding to the office staff's workload. ***Recommendation:*** *The Clerk attend the DEVELOP "Introduction to Social Media" training on 10<sup>th</sup> July for £55 excluding VAT and report at the next Full Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> July.*

- e) **MyEngolve:** The Clerk reported that she attended a free training session held at the Town Hall on the MyEngolve community engagement tool, and also a presentation on the tool at the recent SLCC Branch meeting. The tool allowed community organisations to easily set up tailored online surveys and was networked with users to encourage wide participation. The tool was already being used by Melksham Town Council for projects such as feedback following the recent Food Festival, by Calne Without Parish Council on their neighbourhood plan and by Atworth Parish Council about their Village Hall. The service was free of charge for Parish Councils, up to a limit of 200 participants per survey and 100 surveys per year. A cost of £399 per year was applicable for surveys above that threshold. The MyEngolve team were happy to come along and present to the Parish Council.
- f) **Induction Training for new office staff:** The Clerk reported that the Assistant Parish Officer and the new Finance Assistant were booked on the WALC New Clerk Training on 9<sup>th</sup> July.

- g) **SLCC Wiltshire Branch Meetings:** The Clerk reported that she attended the last Branch Meeting of the SLCC in Calne on 20<sup>th</sup> June. These sessions were included as part of the Clerk's SLCC membership and were to be increased from 4 to 6 meeting per year. The beginning of each meeting would have a training session for Clerks and include forthcoming topics on VAT, Insurance and Play Areas. The Clerk found the meeting attended useful for the training it provided with one session on techniques for dealing with difficult members of the public and line management issues and another on the MyEngolve tool. The meeting also gave a good opportunity for networking and sharing good practice with other local Clerks.

The meeting was held at Beversbrook Sports Facility, and at the Clerk's request staff members gave the Clerk a tour of the award winning facilities and passed on useful tips for running a Playing Field with football pitches and changing rooms.

- h) **Staff training requests:** The Finance Assistant had requested some Finance and VAT training appropriate to local councils and the Clerk was investigating the next session to be run by WALC or the SLCC.

The Assistant Parish Officer was interested in attending any sessions on Street Scene issues run by Wiltshire Council and Best Kept Village sessions run by CPRE.

The Parish Officer requested more training on uploading content to the Council website use as not confident in using at present.

- 122/14 **Health & Safety Policy & Fire Risk Assessment:** The Committee noted that these policies were overdue for renewal. **Recommendation:** *The Clerk to revise the Council's Health & Safety Policy and Fire Risk Assessment and bring to the Full Council for review and adoption.*
- 123/14 **Maximum capacity of Crown Chambers meeting room:** The Committee noted that the last Planning Committee meeting was held at Christie Miller sports centre as it was anticipated that there would be too many members of the public present to render the Crown Chambers meeting space unviable. The Council were not aware however of what the actual maximum number of people were allowed in the Crown Chambers office for a public meeting. **Recommendation:** *The Council find out the maximum number of people allowed in the Crown Chambers meeting room area for a public meeting.*
- 124/14 **New Law to support Volunteers:** The Committee noted an SLCC article about Justice Secretary Chris Grayling's announcement that "Good Samaritans and community heroes will have law on their side". Government action taking place to ensure that members of the public are not put off participating by worries about risk and liability if something goes wrong. The measures will also provide greater protection to small business owners who face challenges from irresponsible employees if they have taken a responsible approach to safety training and procedures. **Recommendation:** *The Council hold a stock of "Hi-Viz" vests with Melksham Without Parish Council written on the back to provide to volunteers and Councillors to wear whilst conducting tasks such as tree planting, litter*

*picking, applying spray paint to dog fouling; to demonstrate that the Parish Council has given authority and approval for the task.*

*Meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.*

*Chairman, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014*