

**MINUTES of the Staffing Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday, 16 March 2020 at 1 Swift Way, Bowerhill, Melksham at 8.30pm**

**Present:** Councillors Alan Baines (Chair), John Glover (Vice Chair of Council) David Pafford, Robert Shea-Simonds

**Officers:** Teresa Strange (Clerk) & Lorraine McRandle (Parish Officer)

**482/19 To appoint Chairman & Vice Chair of Staffing Committee**

Councillor Pafford proposed Councillor Baines as Chair, which was seconded by Councillor Shea-Simonds.

**Resolved:** To appoint Councillor Baines as Chair and to ask Councillor Holder if he is happy to continue as Vice-Chair.

**483/19 Welcome, Announcements & Housekeeping**

Councillor Baines welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**484/19 To Receive Apologies and Approval of Reasons Given**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Wood who-due to the on-going public health situation was unable to attend public meetings and Councillor Holder, due to work commitments.

**485/19 To Receive Declarations of Interest**

Staff members present declared an interest in items 9c, 12b,c,d,e,f on the agenda relating to staff appraisals, staffing structure and pay scale reviews

**486/19 To consider holding items 12b-f in Closed Session due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.**

**Resolved:** That Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of these items of business, as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**487/19 Public Participation**

There were no members of public present.

**488/19 To note previous Staffing Committee minutes for 2019/20 for background information**

Members noted the previous Staffing Committee minutes of 2019/20 for background information, as well as items on Full Council meetings relating to staffing items.

- a) **To consider ACAS (The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) advice regarding Coronavirus and make any policy and operational recommendations as necessary**

The Clerk went through the various precautions that had been made within the office and what precautions staff were undertaking. They noted the advice from ACAS recommended that employers should provide hand sanitiser and tissues, unfortunately it was impossible to find supplies of hand sanitiser at present; but antibacterial handwash and wipes had been provided at the Pavilion office and the Swift Way meeting space. Precautions had been discussed with the Caretaker for outside working. The Clerk was to contact the Allotment Warden shortly.

The Clerk explained that within the advice from ACAS it stated if an employee had to go into self isolation they should receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). However, if the employer offers contractual sick pay, it was good practice to pay this and sought a steer from members on this issue. It was also noted within the documentation that employers might need to be flexible if they required evidence from the employee, as it might be difficult for employees to provide a sick note if self isolating.

The Clerk asked if Members were happy for officers to work from home and/or close the office if necessary and explained various local government professional bodies were looking at how local councils may be impacted in undertaking their statutory duties/activities, such as end of year Audit sign off and Annual Parish meetings etc during the current public health crisis.

The Clerk explained there was at least one staff member over 70, who undertook play area inspections and sought guidance on a suitable way forward if over 70s were asked to stay at home and

self isolate by the Government, this advice would also impact meetings, as some Members were over 70 or would need to stay at home for health reasons of themselves or their spouses. It was noted that members had responded to an email poll earlier in the day advising of their availability in such circumstances. It was therefore unlikely that meetings would be quorate and asked if Members were happy that the Clerk and officers had delegated powers. These would be following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and/or relevant Committee Chair and/or committee or whole Council (as appropriate) to act on any statutory or commercial obligations that need to be carried out. An example draft wording had been emailed to all councillors earlier in the day; and to date no councillor had objected, only supported.

The Clerk explained she had met earlier in the day with the Town Clerk, the Mayor and Peter Dunford, Community Engagement Manager to discuss a co-ordinated approach to helping the most vulnerable in the community, following well meaning people over the weekend offering to help on social media, but not necessarily in a co-ordinated fashion which had also raised concerns that the most vulnerable could be exploited by unscrupulous people.

It had been agreed to have one phone number (diverted if necessary to a mobile phone number), which the Area Board agreed to pay for and one email address, with one point of contact, as well as providing a leaflet with information on, which will be distributed shortly. It was anticipated that this could be open to the wider Melksham Community area if necessary.

The Clerk asked Members, if they were happy Melksham Without staff, along with those of the Town Hall, including grounds team and Assembly Hall staff assist with this.

### **Recommendations:**

1. To pay contractual sick pay to all staff (if sick or self isolating) during the current Covid-19 pandemic; and encourage self isolation, if this is the guidance from the Government.

2. Clerk and officers have delegated powers as per the example text:

*"In response to the Covid-19 outbreak in the UK and in the event that it is not possible to convene a meeting of the council in a reasonable time, the Clerk or Officers shall have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the council where such decision cannot reasonably be deferred and must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline. This will be carried out where possible by consultation with members by electronic means or telephone. The clerk will further consult with the chairman for guidance as necessary. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or Financial Regulations. Any decisions made under this delegation must be recorded in writing and must be published in accordance with the relevant regulations. This delegated authority ceases upon the first meeting of the council after the council meeting at which the delegation was put in place"*

3. That officers take the necessary precautions given Government advice and work from home if required to do so and to keep residents and councillors up to date on how officers can be contacted.

4. If an employee needed time off to care for a dependent, this be looked at as and when the matter arises (in terms of receiving pay).

5. If the Government changed its advice that over 70s should stay at home, members of staff affected should stay at home as advised and J H Jones in combination with staff undertake play area inspections.

**b) To note that NALC (National Association of Local Councils) have produced a suite of HR policies for use by Councils**

A suite of HR policies had been circulated with the agenda pack.

**Resolved:** To note NALC have produced a suite of HR policies for use by Councils.

**c) To review current policies:**

- **Habitual or Vexatious Complainants**

The Clerk explained the Council's current policy was very similar to the one supplied by NALC, therefore the policy did not need to change.

**Resolved:** To re-adopted the Habitual or Vexatious Complainants policy.

- **Equal Opportunities**

The Clerk explained the NALC policy was more comprehensive than the SLCC one that the parish council had adopted in the past and linked to the 'Green Book' (The National agreement on pay and conditions of service for local government services) of national statutory guidance which councils worked to and felt this one was more appropriate.

Councillor Shea-Simonds asked if the Policy could be entitled Equality and Diversity in line with other organisations.

**Recommendation:** To adopt the Equality and Diversity Policy as produced by NALC.

- **Health & Safety**

The Clerk explained the current policy was more comprehensive and had been updated to include the new office address and staff members, an eye wash station had been provided at the allotment shed.

It was also noted an emergency evacuation practice of the meeting room at 1 Swift Way had not been undertaken as easy to exit but it would be worth simulating a power cut and evacuation at the same time. The Fire Emergency Plan needed updating, this would be done by the Clerk and Parish Officer after they had undertaken planned fire warden training in the next couple of weeks.

**Recommendation:** To adopt the current Health & Safety Policy.

- **Training**

The Clerk explained she felt the NALC training policy was too complicated and did not include mandatory training such as Fire Warden or First Aid training, whereas the current policy did.

The Clerk explained that the Parish Officer wished to undertake their CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) and the Finance & Admin Officer wished to undertake ILCA (Introduction to Local Council Administration) qualifications and sought guidance on whether this could be done during work hours, given both officers were full-time; this would be contrary to the current policy.

**Recommendation:** To keep the current policy and rename it the Learning & Development policy with the following amendment:

That officers be allowed a paid working day per module, up to 48 hours, (potentially Fridays when the office was less busy) in order to complete CiLCA and ILCA qualifications.

- **Social Media**

The Clerk having looked at the NALC policy felt the current policy was more comprehensive.

**Recommendation:** To adopt the current Social Media policy with no amendments.

▪ **Disciplinary Policy (as per Min 010/19a ii)**

The Clerk noted the NALC's policy was in line with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice; whereas the current policy was based on the 2009 ACAS advice. A more up to date one had not been provided by the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks).

There was one change made previously in the current policy that the Chairman remained independent.

**Recommendation:** To adopt the NALC Disciplinary Policy to include the following sentence from the current policy '*The Chair of the Council needs to remain independent should the need for staff disciplinarys arise and there is the possibility that an appeal hearing will be required. Therefore, should any disciplinary matter be discussed then the Chair of the Council will leave the meeting and not be party to the discussion. The Chair of the Council will also not be copied in on any emails, correspondence or documentation relating to disciplinary issues in order that independence is maintained.*'

**490/19      Staffing Training**

**a)      To note staff training undertaken**

The Clerk had circulated a log of the training undertaken by staff for Members information.

**Recommendation:** To note.

**b) To note staff training booked**

The Clerk informed Members both herself and the Parish Officer were due to attend a training day in Warminster provided by the SLCC on Friday, however, this had been cancelled both were also due to attend Fire Warden Training on 24 March in Salisbury.

Members felt given the current public health crisis and advice from the Government on unnecessary travel, officers should cancel this course.

The Clerk explained there was an SLCC & Wiltshire Council Joint Training Day on 5 June, which one other person could attend also.

It was agreed to wait and see what would happen in the future regarding this Training Day, given advice was constantly changing and the current public health crisis, may have hopefully passed by then.

**c) To note staff training requests following appraisals**

The Clerk informed Members of training requests following recent appraisals:

The Parish Officer wished to undertake a CiLCA qualification and had already completed the course, cost £350.

The Finance & Amenities Officer wished to undertake ILCA, costing £99.

Both the Clerk and Parish Officer needed to update their First Aid qualifications at a cost of £60 each.

The Clerk also wished to attend the SLCC Annual Regional Roadshow, costing £80 as this provided useful information for Clerks, she also wished to attend a Procurement/Project Management course.

The Chairman of the Staffing Committee advised that the Clerk's Appraisal should be held soon so on the same timeline as the rest of the staff. It was noted that the last Clerk's appraisal was held in July 2019.

**Recommended:** To approve the training requests and to undertake the Clerk's appraisal when convenient

**490/19            To consider results of Work Station Risk Assessments**

The Clerk informed Members all officers had undertaken Work Station Training online, but were still to complete the Work Station Risk Assessment checklist. Whilst a few issues had been highlighted following the training, these had been resolved. She also noted the Council should offer annual free eye tests to officers working on computers.

**491/19            To note results of recent Disclosure Barring Service checks and to consider if there is a requirement to view individual's certificates**

The Clerk explained she had undertaken DBS checks with approximately 8-10 Flood Wardens (CAWS CEVs). Wiltshire Council had advised that it was good practice once DBS checks had been received to arrange an appointment with volunteers/employees to check the hard copy of the certificate. However, on the Wiltshire Council online database it recorded 'none recorded' on the various sections and therefore the Clerk felt it was unnecessary to look at the hard copies.

The Clerk informed the meeting it was recommended DBS checks take place every three years, therefore both herself and the caretaker needed to reapply for their DBS checks.

**Recommendation:** Not to look at the hard copies of the DBS checks and that the DBS checks are undertaken again for the Clerk and Caretaker.

**492/19      Wiltshire Council Pension**

**a)      To note Employer Rates for the next 3 years, commencing 1 April 2020.**

Correspondence had been received from Wiltshire Council stating the valuation of the Pension Fund was now complete and the rates set for the next three years, rates becoming payable from April 2020 as follows:

The employer rates for town and parish councils:

2020/21: 20.7%

2021/22: 19.7%

2022/23: 18.7%

**Resolved:** To note.

**b)      To note Communications Strategy**

Correspondence had been received from Wiltshire Council regarding Wiltshire Council Pension Funds new Communications Strategy.

**Resolved:** To note.

**c) To note Pension Administration Strategy**

Correspondence had been received from Wiltshire Council regarding Wiltshire Council's Pension Funds new Administration Strategy.

**Resolved:** To note.

**d) To note Memorandum of Understanding for GDPR purposes**

The Clerk advised that she had requested this before the Wiltshire Council pension scheme set up an online system for transferring personal data on employees on a monthly and annual basis.

**Resolved:** To note.

**e) To consider adopting Employer Data Retention Policy**

Further to the introduction of GDPR & the Data Protection Act 2018, the Local Government Association (LGA) have been working to develop a data retention policy for adoption by sponsoring Employers of LGPS funds. Whilst there was no requirement for a Scheme Employer to adopt this policy, they strongly advised employers did so, as Pension Funds often need to retain personal member data for a much longer period, with best practice being 28 years.

**Recommendation:** To adopt the policy once a new template has been issued.

**493/19 Staffing**

**a) To note current situation with negotiations on (National Joint Council for Local Government Services) NJC new pay scales for 2020-2021 to be implemented from 1 April 2020**

The Clerk advised that negotiations were still underway, with a way forward not yet agreed by both parties.

**Resolved:** To note current negotiations on (National Joint Council for Local Government Services) NJC new pay scales for 2020-2021.

**b) To receive feedback following Staff Appraisals**

The Clerk reported back that all staff appraisals had been undertaken and any training requests dealt with.

**c) To review how new staffing structure is working**

The Clerk reported that the new staffing structure was working well.

**d) To review Staff additional hours report for 2019/20**

Additional hours were circulated to those present for their information.

The Clerk noted that there had been more additional hours due to covering for one member who had left in September and to cover work required for the Neighbourhood Plan.

**e) To review Staff Salaries vs Budget for 2019/20**

Members reviewed staff salaries vs budgets and were satisfied with the figures provided.

**f) To review Scale Points for Staff**

**Resolved:** The Finance & Amenities Officer salary be increased to scale point 7 as from 1 April 2020 to recognise the increased responsibility within the role.

The Parish Officer's salary be increased to scale point 10 as from 1 July 2020 on satisfactory performance and completion of their 6 month probation.

Meeting closed at 10.05pm

Chairman .....

Approved Full Council on 27 July 2020