

**MINUTES of the Staffing Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices, Melksham Community Campus (First Floor), Market Place, Melksham, SN12 6ES at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Councillors John Glover (Chair of Council), 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.

**243/23 Apologies:** Councillor Stefano Patacchiola JP gave his apologies as had a school commitment, and his reason was accepted. It was noted that Councillor Robert Hoyle was not present.

**244/23 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.

**245/23 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 10, 13, 14 & 15) as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

**Resolved:** Agenda items 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16 to be held in closed session for reason 3d (a) engagement, terms of service, conduct and dismissal of employees.

**246/23 Public Participation** This item falls as there were no members of the public present.

**247/23 Policies: To note response received from NALC (National Association of Local Councils) following the council's request for clarification on what constituted as 'gross negligence' and 'gross insubordination' on the model policy and consider updating Disciplinary Policy**

Members felt that the advice was not particularly helpful as the terms were still not defined.

**Recommendation:** The Disciplinary Policy to remain unchanged until further information can be sourced to define "gross negligence" and "gross insubordination" in a more detailed way.

**248/23 To note the joint initiative between Wiltshire Police and Soroptimist International of Salisbury called 'Operation Awake' which provides additional support to local women in public life who might be at the receiving end of abusive emails and social media posts**

This was noted, and that the Clerk had shared with the female councillor and officers on the parish council and the female local MP. It was felt to be an important initiative that the parish council support and will take action if any of their members or staff were affected in this way.

**Recommendation:** The parish council make it known to all their staff (all genders) and members that they will be supported by the council if they receive any such abuse and wish to proceed with taking action.

**249/23 Health and Safety: To note any Health and Safety matters occurring since the last meeting (standing item as per the health and safety policy).**

The Clerk clarified that the parish council staff had not yet heard the fire bell or experienced a fire drill in the Campus, and have now been in the building for well over a year. This is due to the timing of when they are routinely carried out but it was felt that it should be done so the parish council can recognise the sound. It had also been established that the tannoy in the building can be heard in the parish council lobby but not in the meeting room or office, especially when the doors were closed; and the Campus staff were now aware of that.

There were no Health and Safety incidents to report.

Following the new safeguarding policy and recent training the staff had now been issued with photograph ID badges, with contact details; this was originally raised for the lone working groundsmen, particularly as they spend time in the play areas. Officers are also often at events meeting members of the public. The members felt that these would also be useful for councillors, for those in attendance at consultation events for example.

**Recommendation:** The council provide photograph ID badges and lanyards for all councillors.

**250/23 To note latest update on 2023/24, pay increase negotiations (nationally)**

There was still no news on this nationally agreed pay increase, that was due to come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. It was hoped that news would come soon, in time for implementation at the November pay run, as the latest ballot by the GMB closed on 24<sup>th</sup> October.

**251/23 Staff contract: To note staff contract consultation underway and consider any matters arising**

The Clerk and Councillor Robert Shea-Simonds reported back from the session on 17<sup>th</sup> October, when they ran through the proposed new model contract with all staff. There were no queries or concerns raised, and the Clerk confirmed that no staff member's proposed contract had any worse terms, in fact they were all better. The staff members were all provided with a copy of the new model contract and their

current contract and asked to come back to the Clerk with any further queries of concerns.

With regards to the consultation period, the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) advice note stated 1 week for every year of service, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. The Clerk had mentioned to the staff at the review session, that a good time to start the contracts would be 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024, but recognised that this was 11 weeks' time. There were two staff numbers with at least 12 years' service. Further investigation with ACAS though had not found any advice on notice periods.

**Recommendation:** The parish council close the staff consultation on proposed new contracts on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023, and commence the new contracts for all staff on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

The following items were held in closed session.

**252/23 To note staff additional hours up to September 2023 and Actual vs Budget for staffing (by individual) for this financial year to date**

Members were pleased to see that the Clerk did take "Time off in Lieu". It was clarified that the staff could choose to take time off in lieu or to be paid for additional hours, as long as the workload was achieved. It was important to ensure that staff were taking the time off in a regular, timely manner, to achieve a good work-life balance, and not saving it up to use as additional holiday later in the year.

The bulk of additional hours is in attendance at council meetings, and for the two officers that was their additional hours. For the Clerk, it was also sometimes to catch up following annual leave (in the summer), or the impact of projects such as the Neighbourhood Plan workload which has necessitated some weekend working (in October for example) and general workload if unable to delegate to officers. Members discussed if an additional staff member would assist with the workload and it was not felt that it would assist in these circumstances.

As the groundsmen work part time hours, it's a more practical working solution for them to alter their working day, rather than work additional hours if there are task specific events on their non-working days.

**Recommendation:** The Clerk to check with officers that they are happy with the current situation in mainly remuneration for additional hours, rather than feeling that they cannot take time off in lieu due to the rhythm of the meeting cycle and workload.

The members reviewed where they were on actual figures vs budget for staffing at the 6-month period. These were at the expected percentage figures, at just under 50% of budget to date; however, the impact of the forthcoming planned cost of living increase (Min 250/23) was still not confirmed, and may be well more than budgeted for. The Clerk's actual figures were slightly more than 50%, reflective of the additional workload at present.

**253/23 Staff Training: To consider any requests for staff training and to note current training log**

Members noted the staff training log, and following recent appraisals there were no specific training requests other than the Clerk would like to continue with topic related training with examples cited such as Cyber Security, Minutes & Agendas, and new day long online topic summits run by the SLCC such as “Managing Community Buildings” or “Finance” and Scribe online conferences that cover a variety of subjects and different/multiple officers can attend as appropriate. On 17<sup>th</sup> October, all staff undertook new safeguarding training, and a first aid refresher, together, allowing the opportunity to discuss shared experiences.

It was identified that the staff may need some database training ready for when the new Allotment and Asset Management databases ready are implemented. The Clerk had also identified that some investigation into whether the officers and council were making the best use of the Microsoft Office subscription suite of programmes and apps would be useful.

**Recommendation:**

1. The parish council support the training requests and training needs as identified above.
2. To offer some shadowing opportunities for the Finance & Amenities Officer and Parish Officer at the other disciplines in the council business, and to attend occasional meetings, to allow for capacity in terms of developing staff knowledge and for ongoing personal development.

**254/23 To receive feedback following staff appraisals and consider any actions arising.**

The Clerk and Councillor Shea-Simonds fed back from the staff’s appraisals held in October, which the members considered.

**Recommendation:**

1. The Clerk to hold informal, regular 1:1 “mini appraisal” sessions with staff in addition to the annual, more formal, appraisal.
2. The parish council support the individual staff’s Action Plans as identified in their recent appraisal.

**256/23 To consider any amendments to Job Descriptions**

It was noted that the groundsmen do use their own tools on occasion, mainly hand tools, but some with battery chargers that are annually PAT tested by the parish council.

**Recommendation:**

1. To update the groundsmen’s job descriptions to reflect that some of the equipment that they use, are their own.

To remove the words “issued by the Council” from the following:

The person appointed will have a “duty of care” to ensure that any equipment **issued by the Council** is stored safely and maintained in good order. He/she will inform the Council immediately when repairs are required.

2. To add to the Finance & Amenities Officer Job Description under Emergency Plan, ....”and develop Melksham Emergency Support following the split with Melksham Community Support (via Age UK), with the Clerk”.

The Clerk left the room.

**255/23 To receive feedback following Clerk’s appraisal and consider any actions arising**

The Chair of the Staffing Committee, Councillor Baines and the Vice Chair of the Council, Councillor David Pafford fed back from the recent Clerk’s appraisal, which the members considered. Noting that Councillor Shea-Simonds had attended the other staff appraisals, who the Clerk line managed, and fed back from those in broad terms before the start of the Clerk’s appraisal.

**257/23 To consider scale point reviews for all staff following appraisals**  
**Recommendation:** To postpone the scale point review for all staff, to give the Staffing Committee time to evaluate.

Meeting closed at 21:25

Signed.....  
Chairman, Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023