

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
11:00 on 12 August 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Keith Patience and Andy Pearce

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance (either in person or via Zoom webinar)

1. Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained and the meeting was welcomed.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Amanda Frost, Graham Parker and Alice Taylor. Cllr Brooks proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Patience; all in favour. Cllr Brooks advised she would need to leave the meeting by 12:30.

3. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

4. The draft minutes of the meeting on 3 December 2020 and the signing of previous minutes subsequent to 17 March 2020

Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes of 3 December 2020; seconded by Cllr Patience; all in favour.

5. Public forum

No advance comments had been received. There were no members of the public in attendance, either in person or via Zoom webinar.

6. Committee arrangements

6.1. Membership of the Personnel Committee – The membership was noted as Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Amanda Frost, Graham Parker, Keith Patience, Andy Pearce and Alice Taylor.

6.2. Appointing the Deputy Chair of the Personnel Committee – Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Parker for the position of Deputy Chair, subject to his agreement. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Brooks and all Councillors voted in favour.

7. A recommendation to Full Council regarding the recruitment process for new staff, including any payments required (confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

8. A recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee on the recruitment of a temporary employee for a period of five months, within a budget of £10,000

It was originally thought that this arrangement would assist with the transition period and the resignation of the Events and Communications Officer, however, if Full Council accepts the proposals the Clerk has put forward instead, the Clerk would strongly recommend that the Council proceeds with permanent recruitment instead, making it unnecessary to appoint a temporary employee. There is a pre-existing delegation for additional hours to be spent on staff, and some flexibility for some additional hours. It was suggested the recruitment of a temporary employee could be a contingency plan unless it is not possible to progress permanent recruitment as per the plan. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the

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Finance and Governance Committee to approve the recruitment of a temporary employee as a contingency only, in case there are any issues or delays with prospective recruitment, with delegated authority to the Clerk to determine the specification of work for the temporary employee, or additional hours for existing staff, subject to their agreement, within a budget of £10,000; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Cllr Pearce further proposed that these funds come from the staff earmarked reserve; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

9. A recommendation to Full Council on Christmas working arrangements

In previous years, the Council has decided to treat Christmas Eve as a discretionary day's leave for staff, but has not made the decision until quite late in the year. Cllr Pearce proposed that for all existing and new staff, Christmas Eve is granted as a discretionary day's leave and the days between Christmas and New Year continue to be treated as a statutory office closure; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

10. Support and consultancy arrangements

It was agreed to carry this item forward to a subsequent meeting of this Committee. Arrangements have just been put in place for support with Legionella monitoring and risk assessing. Legal support is important, particularly as the Town Council does not have an internal solicitor. The Council does however have an adequate legal budget which remains under review. The Council may require additional support with other matters, such as Planning, which will be brought back to this Committee to consider. When new staff are appointed additional support may be needed, which is likely to become a standing consideration of this Committee. It was queried whether the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) would provide the support needed. The Clerk declared that she used to be the Chief Executive of SALC and the Deputy Clerk also used to be an employee there. The Council previously decided not to join SALC but may feel there is a need to be a member in future. The Council has direct arrangements with the Lieutenancy Office, and as it is a large Council its need for immediate advice is more than what SALC could provide. This will be kept under consideration and taken back to Council if and when needed. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Clerk and Chair of the Personnel Committee have another scoping meeting to discuss a follow-up Personnel Committee meeting and any major changes in the near future, such as the development of the Town Hall, which may require additional consultancy support or third party project management; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. It was agreed that the scoping meetings between the Clerk and Chair of Personnel could become more regular. In her proposal for staffing, the Clerk has suggested that the next Committee meeting is held in October, which could tie in with the next scoping meeting.

11. Reviewing the Appraisals Guidance (as requested by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee)

A typographical error had been identified (spelling of 'appraisor' to be corrected to 'appraiser'). It was agreed to cross reference the Equality Statement within the Appraisals Guidance. Cllr Pearce proposed that any training requirements discussed within appraisals are not just limited to the employee's current role, but include future development and aspirations, including, where relevant, training required to development the employee into a new role in advance of it happening; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. The Council would also have to consider the adequacy of the training budget to support this.

12. Noting that appraisals have taken place and considering staff training and development in 2021 – 2022 (confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

13. Date of the next meeting

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It is likely that the recruitment process will require four meetings to be called at short notice across 6 – 8 October and 12 – 13 October inclusive. The timing of the meetings is likely to vary depending on interviews but Committee members will be advised.

14. Items for the next agenda and close

This will depend on confidential discussions. In general terms 2022 – 2023 training requirements need to be discussed to inform budgeting. A discussion on Councillor training needs was also requested, which would include a discussion on whether to make a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to have separate training budgets for staff and Councillors. At Parish and Town Council level there is not a requirement for Councillors to have training to be members of certain Committees but it was agreed that training would be beneficial, such as Planning training or Chair training. All Councillors will be emailed to ask what training they would like.

Cllr Pearce proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream and the live stream was closed as the meeting went into confidential session. It was confirmed the meeting would end following the confidential session.

15. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

15.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required – A document the Clerk had prepared regarding staffing structure and proposed recruitment was distributed at the meeting and discussed. There was a request for salary details of existing officers to be published, in line with the law and data protection regulations, and so long as individual officers are not identifiable and in a position where they could be asked to justify their salary.

Cllr Pearce proposed an in-principle agreement to the staffing structure, and a recommendation as such to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the recruitment timetable; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. If agreed by Full Council, advertisements should be published by the end of August.

The Chair closed the meeting 12:33.

Signed:
6 October 2021