

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 16 May 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, John Murray, Christian Newsome (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger and Nick Webb (substitute member)

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

147. Welcome

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

148. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sonia Barker, Jen Jones, Keith Patience and Elise Youngman, with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

149. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

149.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – There were none.

149.2. Written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – There were none.

150. The draft minutes and confidential notes of the meetings on 7 March, 16 April and 7 May 2024

It was queried whether the confidential notes had been provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the public minutes of the three meetings, and to defer the confidential notes to the next meeting; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

151. Public forum

No advance comments had been received and there were no members of the public in attendance.

152. The staff handbook, inclusion of policies within and approval to issue

Under the policies section, it was noted that it currently directed staff to read other, separate policies. The agreement had been that any policies for the attention of staff should be inserted into the handbook, instead of being cross-referenced. The Communications Officer was enacting the amendments as discussed. Standalone policies would be retired and cross-references removed from the handbook. Wording of the policies should also be clear and relevant to staff, and it was suggested categorisation of the policies within the handbook should be rationalised. Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate authority to officers to remove the cross-references to the policies, review the handbook to staff's satisfaction and take on board the comments raised regarding categorisation and rationalisation, then release the handbook for year one and add it to the list of policies for annual review, to ensure it remains relevant. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

153. Implementation of new model contracts of employment (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

154. Matters relating to staff absence (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

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155. An update from the Acting Town Clerk (some aspects may be confidential):

155.1. Recruitment: The Acting Town Clerk had provided a report to members.

155.1a. Grounds Maintenance Team Leader – To be considered during the confidential session.

155.1b. Caretakers – It was noted there had been a good level of interest in the vacancies. There was no reference to a pension scheme, however it had been agreed previously that all staff would be offered access to the Local Government Pension Scheme, and this has been budgeted for. The Acting Town Clerk advised there were some outstanding queries on pensions with WorkNest. It had been agreed there would not be a requirement for Councillors to sit on the interview panels for the caretakers.

155.1c. Sports Development Officer – The position was being advertised. Some Councillors had put forward their expressions of interest to be on the interview panel. For certain positions, a separate panel of Councillors to undertake shortlisting had been appointed, and this may also be relevant to the Facilities and Contracts Manager position. Cllr Pearce proposed for staff to decide whether a shortlisting process is required, then email Councillors for expressions of interest if so; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

155.1d. Facilities and Contracts Manager – This had been included with the consideration of the previous item.

155.1e. Finance Assistant – The Acting Town Clerk had provided a note on this and was hopeful for the Committee's support of the decision taken by officers, which will progress in due course.

155.1f. Heritage Trainee – Confirmation from an external party was pending.

155.2. Staff appraisals and linking corporate objectives to continuing professional development – The Acting Town Clerk's appraisal had been completed, and appraisals for other members of staff would now be scheduled, and should be completed by November. It had been agreed that individual staff objectives should align with the overall corporate objectives of the Council, which will be built into the appraisals.

155.3. Health and safety – To be considered during the confidential session.

156. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 6 June 2024 – 10:00 (subject to consideration of the meeting schedule at the Annual Meeting)

157. Items for the next agenda and close

Councillors were advised to send any requests to the office.

Cllr Pearce proposed to move the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

158. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

158.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required:

153. Implementation of new model contracts of employment (confidential) – WorkNest had been supplied with two contracts of employment to revise to include the latest employment law and legislation. Subject to checking with them on pension entitlements, the Acting Town Clerk understood they could be issued to new members of staff, and she would check with WorkNest how they could be issued to existing members of staff. There was a discussion regarding professional studies. The Council had made a general commitment to sponsor professional study and would need to be informed of such, particularly for budgeting.

Cllr Parker temporarily left the meeting 10:29 and returned 10:31

Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the new model contracts of employment, subject

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to tailoring to each member of staff, and confirmation of the legal position on issuing them to existing members of staff, with a delegation to the Acting Town Clerk to take legal advice where appropriate and needed; seconded by Cllr Murray; all in favour.

155.1a. Grounds Maintenance Team Leader – The Acting Town Clerk provided an update. Cllr Brooks volunteered to sit on the interview panel. Cllr Newsome also volunteered, subject to his availability. Cllr Pearce would step in as reserve if Cllr Newsome could not make it. Cllr Newsome confirmed his availability for the week commencing 10 June.

155.3. Health and safety – The Acting Town Clerk had provided a briefing and requested the Committee’s approval for WorkNest to arrange an occupational health assessment to see if any adjustments were needed. The cost of the assessment should not exceed £500. Although the Committee did not have a delegation to approve expenditure, Cllr Pearce proposed to support the Acting Town Clerk to use the staff health and safety delegation to authorise the expenditure, and to ask Full Council for a delegation from the staff contingency for any such requests in future, with a per-item expenditure limit of £2,500. Cllr Pearce further proposed to delegate authority to the Acting Town Clerk to liaise with the health and safety consultant regarding general practises relating to staff. Cllr Newsome seconded the proposals and all Councillors voted in favour.

The Project and Committee Clerk left the meeting 10:50 for the consideration of the remainder of the agenda items

Signed:
6 June 2024