

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
11:30 on 16 April 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, John Murray, Christian Newsome (Chair), Andy Pearce and Elise Youngman

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

124. Welcome

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

125. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Graham Parker and Keith Patience, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Murray; all in favour.

126. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

126.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr Youngman declared a registerable interest in any matter relating to the cleaning contract.

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

127. The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 7 March 2024

The minutes and confidential note would be deferred to the next meeting.

128. Public forum

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

129. Recruitment timetables for the following, and any interview arrangements:

129.1. Facilities and Contracts Officer – It was noted the recruitment of the Heritage Trainee for the Town Hall also needed to proceed. All vacancies should be advertised from the following week. It was agreed the interview panels for the Finance Administrator and Cleansing Operatives would be officer only. It was agreed the interview panel for the Heritage Trainee should be the Acting Town Clerk, the recently appointed Heritage Manager, and the Heritage Project Manager in an advisory capacity. It was agreed the Acting Town Clerk would sit on the interview panel for both the Facilities and Contracts Manager and the Sports Development Officer. Councillor volunteers were sought for the panels for these two positions. Cllrs Barker and Brooks put their names forward for both, but would prefer to sit on the panel for the Sports Development Officer if they became oversubscribed. Cllr Pearce put his name forward for both but would prefer to sit on the panel for the Facilities and Contracts Manager if they became oversubscribed. Cllr Pearce proposed to email all Councillors for expressions of interest, to be received ahead of April's Full Council meeting, with the Acting Town Clerk to have the final decision on who sits on the panels; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Cllr Youngman put her name forward for the Facilities and Contracts Manager panel, but this would depend on what time of day the interviews are held. Cllr Murray would like to be on a panel but did not specify a preference. It was considered that the Sports Development Officer would report to the Acting Town Clerk initially, then the Facilities and Contracts Manager once that position has been filled, however, the staffing structure was due to be considered later on the agenda.

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129.2.Sports Development Officer – This was included in the consideration of item 129.1.

129.3.Finance Administrator - This was included in the consideration of item 129.1.

129.4.Cleansing Operatives - This was included in the consideration of item 129.1.

130. Essential Car User Allowance:

130.1.An Essential Car User Allowance scheme – It had been decided to cease the trial at the end of March, as there had been no specification as to how it would operate. This would need to be considered for any successor scheme. In response to queries relating to changes in roles and circumstances affecting eligibility, the Acting Town Clerk checked the draft policy and confirmed it contained provision for an annual review of eligibility. It was considered that the application of relevant legislation would need to be considered, to ensure equality of access for any users with a disability. The Town Council had already committed to be a Disability Confident employer. During the trial period, the Essential Car User Allowance was £846 per year, in line with the national threshold, which was paid monthly. This may have increased from 1 April, in which case it was agreed to follow the current national threshold figure for any successor scheme. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council introduce a permanent Essential Car User Allowance scheme, in line with the Essential Car User Policy. With regard to the effective date, it was considered whether this should align with the appointment of new members of staff, but it was agreed that for existing staff this should be backdated to 1 April 2024, and Cllr Pearce added this to his proposal. The Acting Town Clerk would review the wording of the policy at point 2.2, which was added as background information and referred to the trial scheme. The wording of point 2.3 would also be considered, to enable flexibility to review eligibility during the year, including for the eligibility of any new staff to be considered on appointment. The decision on eligibility will lie with the Acting Town Clerk. Cllr Barker seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

130.2.If appropriate, an Essential Car User Policy – This was included in the consideration of item 130.1.

131. An update from the Acting Town Clerk (confidential):

All items under this heading to be considered during the confidential session.

131.1.Staff absence, cover arrangements and financial considerations

131.2.Implementation of the three-tier staffing structure

131.3.Completion of training

131.4.Provision of HR Consultancy

132. Matters relating to the terms and conditions of staff (confidential):

All items under this heading to be considered during the confidential session.

132.1.Completion of the Acting Town Clerk's appraisal (confidential)

132.2.A variation to contracts of employment, to incorporate the decision of December 2023 to regularise annual leave entitlements (confidential)

133. The recovery of overpayment of pension contribution (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

134. Date of the next meeting

The Committee previously resolved to meet monthly, on the first Thursday of the month at 10:00. The Acting Town Clerk would not be available for May's meeting date. It was agreed for officers to make arrangements via email for an Extraordinary Meeting in May.

135. Items for the next agenda and close

Committee members were asked to email any requests to the office.

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

136. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

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

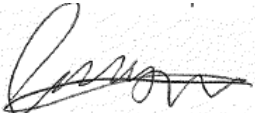
131.3. Completion of training – The new grounds maintenance staff had completed a full induction, Legionella and asbestos awareness training and manual handling training. First aid training had been booked for the new grounds maintenance staff and Heritage Manager. The completion of chainsaw training had been reported at the last meeting. Any requirements for new staff to have Police checks would be picked up.

131.4. Provision of HR Consultancy –

The Acting Town Clerk temporarily left the meeting 12:04 and returned 12:04

An invoice relating to current external HR support had been received. The Acting Town Clerk had requested a meeting with them to discuss the service being provided. Cllr Pearce made a proposal regarding this. Cllr Murray suggested exploring options to train current members of staff to a certain level of proficiency in HR, though the benefits of having an external HR consultant were acknowledged. Cllr Barker seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

The Project and Committee Clerk left the meeting 12:18 for the consideration of the remainder of the items

Signed: 
16 May 2024