

KEYNSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on Tuesday 9th February 2021 starting at 7.30pm by Zoom conferencing.

PRESENT: Councillors D Cooper (Chairman), A McGuinness, D Biddleston, B Simmons, A Wait

IN ATTENDANCE: Cheryl Scott – Town Clerk, Cllr Halliday

86. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Sinclair

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

88. DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

89. RECORD OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the (previously circulated) Minutes of the Personnel Cttee meeting held on 26th January 2021 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman at a later date,

90. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

91. CHRISTMAS CLOSURE 2021/2022

RESOLVED

That the Annual Christmas closure will commence from end of Friday 24th December and the office will re-open on Tuesday 4th January at 8.30am. Staff will be expected to utilise annual leave or accrued TOIL for the period 29th-31st December. Staff working on Christmas Eve will be allowed to leave early at mid-day.

92. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

To note the next Personnel Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday 16th March 2021 to discuss skills audit.

93. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That pursuant to the provision of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business by reason of the confidential nature of business to be transacted. Items 13 onwards are to progress staffing issues.

Cllr Halliday left the meeting.

94. CLERKS UPDATE ON STAFFING MATTERS

The Clerks report was brief and included return to work arrangements that had been made for those staff who had contracted COVID over the Christmas period and details of recent training and development.

RESOLVED

To note the report.

95. RESOLVED

To move item 10 to the end of the meeting.

96. ANNUAL LEAVE/TOIL

- 96.1. Clarification was sought on the policy on when to apply the additional 5 days annual leave increment awarded at 5 years service and to resolve a discrepancy in the Clerk's contract.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council's annual leave calculations take place on 1st April. Any increments that may become due for long service will be applied on 1st April following attainment. This to be inserted into new contracts and the revisions to the Employee Handbook subject to review by Ellis Whittam and Unison.
- (ii) That the Clerk's contract will remain as written as it is specific to the seniority of the post.

- 96.2. A detailed report on both the Annual leave and TOIL currently accrued by the senior officers. Previous interventions such as restrictions on the number of evening meetings and a moratorium on new projects/work have been unsuccessful and not addressed the real issue, which was the lack of skilled resource to enable the senior officers to delegate some of their ever-increasing workload. Whilst it was recognised that additional resource was required, the skills audit and subsequent recruitment would mean that new staff would not be in post until the summer. A series of options were discussed.

- 96.3. A proposal was made that the Clerk should leave the room. The Clerk stressed that the Cttee were not being asked to make a decision on whether to pay any accrued TOIL or annual leave at this meeting to the clerk as the final figures would not be known until 31st March. Therefore, as the Committee were discussing in general terms how the Council could effectively reduce the current workload of the senior officers, to ensure they did not have to accrue TOIL in such quantities, the Clerk should be present to provide input. Policy decisions were being made that affected all employees, not specific decisions relating to payment or otherwise of an individual's TOIL. The Clerk remained for the discussion and during the discussion was asked to forward to Cllr Biddleston the legal requirements of possible payment for accrued Annual Leave and to provide details of any Town Council policies or other custom and practice relating to TOIL.

RESOLVED

That a definitive TOIL policy be drafted to be presented to the next Committee meeting on 16th March by Cllr Biddleston.

- 96.4. There was considerable discussion as to what support was required by the Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk and how this could be provided by the Personnel Committee both in respect of existing staff and future staff. Discussions were also had as to conducting

meetings with the existing staff, for what purpose and who should conduct those meetings.

RESOLVED

That the Chair of Personnel and the Town Clerk meet with each of the office employees as part of the skills audit over the next two weeks as a priority.

- 96.5. It was proposed that immediate help for a period of 6 months full time needed to be recruited at a level equivalent to Assistant Clerk if they were to be able to perform the type of work that needed to be delegated from the senior officers.

RECOMMENDATION TO TOWN COUNCIL

That a full-time administrator with suitable skills and experience be recruited immediately to support the senior officers to stop TOIL accruing. Council to be asked to approve the expenditure at its next meeting with a figure to be supplied by the Clerk.

RESOLVED

That further details on the skills and experience required/job description be presented to Personnel Committee at a meeting agreed to be held on Thursday 25th February 2021 at 7.30pm

- 96.6 The possibility of suspending all Council meetings for a period of time was discussed. Although the Council had agreed moratorium on new work back in September, this was still being generated by Council, individual Councillors and some of the Cttees resulting in the Clerk having to incur TOIL in order to meet deadlines at short notice. Recent examples of the Bristol Airport Consultation response for Planning and the Dog Bins report for Council were cited. The issue was that every meeting generated extra work and it was sometimes unpleasant when the senior officers tried to explain they were unable to take on new work by the deadlines required.

RESOLVED

- (i) That there would be no recommendation to suspend the business of Council.
- (ii) The Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to regularly discuss their workload with the Chairman and Chair of Personnel to prioritise their current task list.
- (iii) The Chair of Personnel contact Chairs of Committees that generate new work to advise them of the priority of such work and when it could reasonably be expected to be completed.

Cllr McGuinness left the meeting.

97. REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

RESOLVED

That the request for flexible working be approved to commence from 1st April 2021. This provided that the employee attend the Wednesday staff meetings and cover Cemetery work on Wednesdays in the event of staff leave/sickness.

98. RESOLVED

To take Item 14 and 15 next.

99. FUTURE BARRIER OPERATION/GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

- (a) The Committee were being asked to decide whether to extend the current two 21 hour temporary contracts that were due to end on 31st March or whether to terminate the contract and appoint two new permanent Grounds Maintenance positions, of which there were several options proposed in respect of Item 15, all of which were possible within the salaries budget approved by Town Council. In addition, the employee appointed to perform barrier operation would be unable to do some of the days/hours from 16th February so the Committee needed to discuss alternative arrangements.
- (b) The two new positions could provide for barrier operation if the Cttee so wished. This could be built into the new contracts in respect of Saturday/Sunday working by also including for the seasonal posts of litter picking and Bandstand. However, existing staff had been consulted on two occasions and were not prepared to accept a change in contracts to work Saturdays and Sundays. The prospect of the new public realm works commencing in Spring which would mean the High Street traffic would in any case need to be controlled as part of the construction works. It was felt that the Town Council should not have to pay for road closure operation necessary as a result of the works. A timetable was expected from the contractors imminently with a start date around 1st April.
- (c) Operation of barriers for the remaining hours (Thurs to Sunday and Monday mornings) from 16th February to 31st March could only be implemented by B&NES or volunteers. B&NES had asked the Town Council to organise a volunteer rota and it was felt that the Town Council could not do this owing to staff resource/cover at weekends by senior officers for volunteer no-shows, and insurance liability issues.

RESOLVED

- (i) To terminate the two fixed term contracts on 31st March 2021.
- (ii) That the Town Council continue to cover barrier operation up until 31st March on the days specified but that it was B&NES responsibility to organise the rest including the volunteer rota.
- (iii) To recruit for two full-time Grounds Maintenance operatives to absorb seasonal weekend duties of Bandstand and litter picking and to include provision for any potential barrier operation as may be required.
- (iv) To defer the matter of a policy relating to overtime and emergency cover to a future meeting.

100. MEDIATION

The Committee considered three tenders to provide mediation services for the staff to resolve workplace issues that had arisen over the course of the last 18 months as per the decision made in February 2020. This had not yet been implemented owing to COVID. Money had been made available in this year's budget.

RECOMMENDATION TO TOWN COUNCIL

To appoint Monkey Puzzle consultancy at a cost of £2400.

101. COUNCILLOR TRAINING

101.1 Town Council decisions related to Councillor training were noted as follows:

22 September 2020 Minute 115

- (i) That all Members of Personnel Committee should receive ACAS training. (Several opportunities offered).

- (ii) That all Councillors should receive training on their role as an Employer (no training course identified yet).
- (iii) That all Chairpersons of both Council and Committees should receive training (one course offered).

10th December 2020: Minute 200

All Councillors to receive training by the Clerk on Agendas/Motions/Standing Orders/Code of Conduct (date to be determined).

101.2 The list of Councillors who had undertaken training when offered was provided. It was noted that very few Councillors had taken up training opportunities when offered. Training was not mandatory however, this topic had arisen as a result of the Grievance hearing and the Committee would discuss this further as part of the next item.

RECOMMENDATION TO TOWN COUNCIL

That Councillors be encouraged to take up training opportunities when offered.

The Clerk and Cllr Wait left the meeting at 22.00

102. GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

The Chairman of the Grievance Panel gave the Cttee a verbal update on the outcome of the Grievance panel hearing on 4th February. The Committee discussed the various points in turn.

RESOLVED

To produce a written report on outcome and next steps for review at the next Personnel Committee meeting prior to presentation to Town Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TOWN COUNCIL:

To request approval for up to £2500 to be spent on professional mediation/resolution services should this be required as one of the outcomes.

The meeting ended at 22.45

SIGNED:..... (Chairman)

Dated:.....