

## HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### Personnel Sub-Committee

15<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at 6.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	K Wattingham D Abbott C Copleston D Jones	Chairman
	Officers:	Debbie Marsh Louise Senior	Corporate Services Manager Head of Democratic Services
	Public:	1	

#### PE92 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Members were invited to put forward nominations for Chair of the Personnel Sub-Committee.

Nominee: Cllr Wattingham      Nominated by: Cllr Jones  
Seconded by: C Copleston

No other nominations were received.

On being put to the vote Cllr Wattingham was elected as Chair of the Personnel Sub-committee.

#### PE93 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

None.

#### PE94 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public:

- Asked why the declarations of interest were not showing on the Houghton Regis Town Council website.  
*The member of public was advised that this would be looked into as the information needed was received from Central Bedfordshire Council.*
- Asked whether party affiliation should be displayed on the Houghton Regis Town Council website as for one member it did not show any information.  
*The councillor questioned, advised that he would only answer questions which related to agenda items.*
- Asked why a councillor's information had been removed from the website.  
*The member of public was advised that updated information was awaited and would be uploaded once received.*

#### PE95 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

#### **PE96 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

Members were invited to put forward nominations for Vice-Chair of the Personnel Sub-committee.

Nominee: Cllr Jones          Nominated by: C Copleston

Seconded by: Cllr Abbott

No other nominations were received.

On being put to the vote Cllr Jones was elected as Vice-Chair of the Personnel Sub-committee.

#### **PE97 MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub-committee meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 for consideration.

**Resolved: That the minutes of the Personnel Sub-committee meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.**

#### **PE98 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.iii. Council was required to review its delegation arrangements to committees and sub committees.

Members received the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

**Resolved: To note the information**

#### **PE99 APPOINTMENT OF APPOINTED PERSON**

As part of the Committees Functions one member of the Sub-committee was to be appointed, preferably the Chair, to act as contact for the clerk for day to day matters, to provide support, handle leave requests, absence from work and to feed matters to Committee where any decisions/action were needed and to undertake the Clerks appraisal.

Nominee: Cllr Wattingham          Nominated by: Cllr Abbott

Seconded by: Cllr Jones

No other nominations were received.

Members voted in favour of Cllr Wattingham being appointed as the Clerks appointed person.

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**PE100 REVIEW OF STAFF SICKNESS**

Members received a rolling twelve-month record of sickness absence for all members of staff.

A member asked if any of the sickness was work or stress related. Members were advised that as this section of the meeting was in public session, this could not be answered, however, the Town Clerk would manage the sickness and report to council if there were any concerns or action needed.

**Resolved: To note the information.**

**PE101 TOWN CLERK'S ANNUAL LEAVE AND MATTERS RELATING TO OVERTIME WORKING**

The Town Clerk had:

- Booked 9 days annual leave between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019, up to 4 additional days may also be booked.
- Attended 12 meetings outside of normal office hours from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (compared with 15 meetings in the previous quarter).

**Resolved: To approve the Town Clerks annual leave request.**

**PE102 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS**

For the period April to July one Freedom of Information request had been received. It was confirmed that this request had been responded to within the statutory timeframe.

Members requested that a general overview of the request be provided to members on future Freedom of Information requests.

**Resolved: To note the information.**

**PE103 STAFF CAPACITY REVIEW**

Members were informed that the consultant who was undertaking a staff capacity review, as agreed at the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting (PE85) held on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019, was due to start work week commencing 12<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

As staff capacity issues had been raised with members it was felt that this review was necessary to formalise capacity issues and to help guide the new council in setting an achievable corporate plan.

Members raised concerns over the cost of this review and it was suggested that this should not be to the detriment of Health and Safety support as Health and Safety was a prime consideration of keeping staff, visitors and councillors safe. It was requested that details of the costs involved be circulated by the Corporate Services Manager.

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**Resolved: To note the information.**

**PE104 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- Managing Negative Social Media Comments
- Staffing matters – staff appraisals
- Town Clerk’s appraisal
- Managing Staff overtime budget

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Jones; Seconded by: Cllr Copleston

Members for: all in favour

**Resolved: In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.**

**PE105 MANAGING NEGATIVE SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS**

Members were informed that legal advice had been sought in regard to continued defamation being experienced by staff and councillors on social media. These comments have had an ongoing negative impact on those named and also to the Town Council.

Members were made aware that there had been a number of derogatory comments on social media sites.

Members discussed the issue at length and supported certain steps that could be taken in trying to resolve the issue.

**Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the use of steps 1 and 2, be agreed by the clerk in consultation with the Mayor, be instigated when dealing with those who continue to make defamatory comments in regard to staff and Councillors.**

**PE106 STAFFING MATTERS – STAFF APPRAISALS**

At the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 Members were informed that staff appraisals were currently underway and that any significant outcomes would be reported to the next meeting.

Members were advised that all staff appraisals had been completed and were advised of significant outcomes.

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Members were advised that staff were supported by an open-door policy in order to speak to their Line Manager if they had any concerns regarding any issues raised in their staff appraisal or any other issues.

**Resolved: To note the information**

**PE107 TOWN CLERK'S APPRAISAL**

Members were advised of significant points made at the Town Clerks appraisal in April 2019.

In addition to this Members agreed that the Town Clerk should be supported by councillors. Members discussed ways in which to support the Town Clerk and discussed the option of reporting matters to the Monitoring Officer, however, members felt that this could be ineffectual.

It was proposed that Members should disclose any areas of critique in regard to any officer of the council, away from the public domain.

It was suggested that when chairing a committee or sub-committee, the chair remind members not to undermine officers at the time of members making disparaging remarks.

Members considered the use of mediation and requested that the cost for this be sought, however Members were fully aware of the current budgetary constraints therefore requested that officers try and identify an appropriate budget heading and report the outcomes to the Corporate Services Committee.

**PE108 MANAGING STAFF OVERTIME BUDGET**

Members received a report, for consideration, on options for possible staff savings costs and equality in pay, when working at Town Council events.

Members discussed this item at length and requested that this item be deferred until further investigative comparisons were made over a full year of events, and whether other councils used casual contracts for employees for staffing events and to report findings back to this committee at its next meeting.

**Resolved: To consider charging staff costs arising from working at events to the events budget at the 2020/2021 budget setting process**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.03pm**

**Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of October 2019**

**Chairman**