

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Personnel Sub-Committee

13th July 2020 at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillors: K Wattingham Chairman
D Abbott
D Jones

Officers: Debbie Marsh Corporate Services Manager
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

Absent: Councillor: C Copleston

PE131 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

None.

PE132 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

PE133 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

PE134 COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS

Members were advised that in accordance with the Minute 11207 taken at Town Council on 18th March 2020 the following committee arrangements remained in place:

Chair and Vice Chair of Personnel Sub-Committee

The Chair and Vice Chair of Personnel Sub-Committee will remain as follows:

Chair – Cllr Wattingham

Vice Chair – Cllr Jones

Committee Functions & Terms of Reference

These remain as most recently approved.

PE135 MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 13th July 2020 for consideration.

Resolved: That the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 13th July 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.

PE136 REVIEW OF STAFF SICKNESS

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

Members noted the information contained in the report and agreed to discuss specifics within it under minute number PE144.

PE137 TOWN CLERK'S ANNUAL LEAVE, OVERTIME WORKING AND SICKNESSAnnual Leave

At the end of 2019/20 the Clerk had 4 days annual leave to carry forward. From April to June the Clerk had 1 day's leave.

The following leave requests were made:

5 days in July / August

5 days in September

Overtime Working

For the period from the 1st January to the 31st March the Town Clerk had attended 4 council meetings / members briefing sessions.

For the period from the 1st April to the 30th June the Town Clerk had attended 3 council meetings / members briefing sessions (virtual).

Sickness

There were no absences of sickness.

Resolved: To approve the Town Clerks annual leave request

PE138 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

Members were advised that for the period January to June 2020, one Freedom of Information request had been received. It was confirmed that this request had been responded to within the statutory timeframe.

Members received this report for information only.

PE139 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME - ANNUAL REVIEW

At the Town Council meeting held on the 30th January 2017 (minute number 8835) members agreed to support a recommendation from the Corporate Services committee (minute number 8835) for the introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) under a 5-year contract.

Employee Assistance Programmes were employee benefit programmes offered by employers. EAP's were intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health and well-being. EAP's generally included assessment, short-term counselling and referral services for employees. Employees' immediate family members also had access to the online help and support for issues such as: Alcohol/Drugs, Debt, Family Issues, Bereavement, Tax, Childcare and other Citizens Advice Bureau type advice.

Members unanimously agreed to the introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme in support of its commitment to the wellbeing of staff.

Members were provided with information, annually, detailing how many contacts and under which heading contact to this service had been made however, this information does not include names or details of those making contact, as this allowed those making contact to feel confident in the service being totally confidential.

Between 1st Jan 2019 and 31st Dec 2019

- 13 calls were made the helpline which received in the moment support from a counsellor
- 10 online portal hits were recorded

Members were assured of the confidential nature of this service.

Members received this report for information only.

PE140 ANNUAL LEAVE 2020/2021

Staff annual leave entitlement period was from the 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021.

As members were aware, COVID-19 regulations required employees to work from home as of the 23rd March 2020.

The government had passed new emergency legislation to ensure businesses had the flexibility they needed to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and to protect workers from losing their statutory holiday entitlement (The Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, laid before Parliament on 27 March 2020). These regulations enabled workers to carry holiday forward where the impact of coronavirus means that it had not been reasonably practicable to take it in the leave year to which it related.

Where it had not been reasonably practicable for the worker to take some or all of the 4 weeks' holiday due to the effects of coronavirus, the untaken amount may be carried forward into the following 2 leave years.

Due to the uncertainty on travel restrictions staff may not be requesting leave as they would do under normal circumstances. Therefore, members were being asked to agree that, should the need arise, staff could carry over up to 10 days (pro rata) annual leave from the 2020/21 period to the 2021/2022 period.

There was a slight concern that when staff were allowed to return to work there would be an unprecedented rush of leave requests to enable staff to use up their entitlement within the current period. Allowing staff to carry over this entitlement would allow for a more measured approach to staff leave absence between now and March 2022.

However, this arrangement would not change the current arrangements of staff not being able to take more than a two-week block of annual leave at one time. A longer

period than that of two weeks could only be agreed under special circumstances and with the Town Clerks approval.

In addition to the above, should an employee travel and find Government advice had changed in the interim and they then found themselves having to self-isolate on their return, the self-isolation period would be either unpaid or the employee could choose to take this time as annual leave. If they had no annual leave remaining, then it would be classed as unpaid leave. However, if they were self-isolating due to being unwell then this would be classed as sick leave.

Resolved: To agree to staff carrying over up to 10 days (pro rata) annual leave entitlement from the 2020/21 period to the 2021/2022 period.

PE141 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Jones, Seconded by: Cllr Abbott

Votes for: 3

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.

PE142 STAFF APPRAISALS

Members were advised that all staff appraisals had been completed.

Feedback from staff was that they felt that working from home, brought about by the COVID-19 restrictions, allowed them to be more productive in some aspects of their role. Members discussed the idea of staff continuing to work from home once restrictions were lifted.

Resolved: To provide a report to Corporate Services Committee on flexible working arrangements.

PE143 TOWN CLERKS APPRAISAL

Members were advised of significant points made at the Town Clerk's appraisal.

PE144 STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Review of staff sickness (discussion moved from minute number PE136)

Members discussed the report and the management of sickness absence.

Members received and discussed a report from the Town Clerk on various staff working arrangements.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.23pm

Dated this 12th day of October 2020.

Chairman