

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 14th September 2022 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr John Haywood, Chairman
Cllr Gareth Deboos, Town Mayor
Cllr Jeremy Heron, Chairman of Policy & Finance Committee
Cllr Gloria O'Reilly

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

ABSENT: Cllr Glenys Tuner

Prior to the start of the meeting, a minute's silence was observed in memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

S/0076 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

S/0077 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Turner.

S/0078 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

S/0079 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2022, having been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

S/0080 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Town Clerk gave an update on staff changes and working arrangements since the last meeting, and noted that the last day of work for the Visitor Information staff would be Saturday 17th September. A few members of staff continued to work some days in the office and some at home; this was being operated on a flexible basis and had not caused any operational issues.

A recommendation arising from the recent Health and Safety audit was to look to arrange external support for managing stress in the workplace. This had been investigated, but costs were high and therefore difficult to justify. In order to better understand the need, all staff had been invited to complete a voluntary questionnaire about stress in the workplace, the results of which indicated the majority of issues relate to factors outside of work. Managers are in regular contact with staff and it is unlikely a significant issue would occur without their knowledge, and support could be arranged if needed. Members were satisfied with the approach being taken.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

S/0081
TOWN CLERK'S ANNUAL REVIEW

RESOLVED: That Cllrs Haywood and O'Reilly be appointed to undertake the Town Clerk's annual review.

S/0082
LEAVE FOR PUBLIC DUTIES POLICY

Members considered the Town Clerk's report (*Annex A*), noting that Worknest had recommended amendments to the section in the Employee Handbook relating to leave for public duties, rather than adopting a specific policy.

With regards to jury service, Members agreed that the Council should pay the difference between normal pay and the allowance received from the court, providing "normal pay" was adequately defined.

For those staff who may wish to undertake voluntary public duties (as specified in paragraph 2.3 of the report), it was agreed that a maximum of 5 days, pro rata to hours worked, could be paid in any 12-month period. However, each request for time off would be considered on its own merits taking into account how much time is reasonable and how the absence would affect Council business.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Council pay the difference between normal pay and the allowance received from the court for any staff undertaking jury service.
- 2) That the Council grant up to 5 days' paid leave, pro rata to hours worked, in any 12-month period to staff undertaking public duties, subject to each request being considered on its own merits.

ACTION J Hurd

S/0083
EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public were excluded because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature.

S/0084
REGRAIDING OF STAFF POSTS

Members considered the Town Clerk's confidential report, noting that the consultant's findings had yet to be communicated to staff and should therefore be regarded as provisional at this stage.

Members were broadly supportive of the findings but had some specific concerns about the proposal to link pay to performance management, and wished to ensure that the evaluation had fully captured each role.

The Town Clerk agreed to review the findings with the consultant prior to communicating the outcome to staff, after which a further report would be prepared for consideration by Members.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ACTION C Wilkins

The Town Clerk left the meeting at 8.16pm.

S/0085

REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

Members considered a request for flexible working and discussed the impact this might have on Council business.

RECOMMENDED TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE: That the request for flexible working be supported.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.28pm.

Note: The text in the Action Boxes above does not form part of these minutes.

*RECEIVED
28th September 2022*

*APPROVED
15th March 2023*

TOWN MAYOR

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

STAFFING COMMITTEE

A

14th September 2022

Report on staff leave for public duties

1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1 At the last meeting on 16th March, committee members directed officers to prepare a draft policy on this subject for consideration at this meeting (see minute ref. S/0073).

2. Background information

- 2.1 The Council's human resources advisors, Worknest, have recommended that this issue be addressed by altering the Employee Handbook rather than the establishment of a separate stand-alone policy. They have prepared a suitable wording for this but a couple of issues require decisions of principle by members before the wording can be finalized.

- 2.2 The first issue concerns jury service. Two options are recommended: either

- 2.2.1 Commit to pay basic pay for a specified maximum period (two weeks is typical); or

- 2.2.2 Commit to pay the difference between normal pay and the allowance received from the court.

The latter could result in complications defining 'normal pay' and result in an open-ended commitment so the former might be preferable.

- 2.3 The other issue concerns the number of days of paid leave to allow in any 12-month period for defined voluntary public duties (duties as a tribunal member, magistrate, local councillor, member of an NHS Trust, prison visitor, police station lay visitor or school governor). Since this could arise every year of an extended period of service it needs to be capped at a number that is reasonable and affordable; five perhaps?

3. Issues for decision and any recommendations

The Committee is invited to decide the issues of principle indicated above so officers can finalize changes to the Employee Handbook.

For further information, contact:

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
Direct Dial: 01425 484720
Email: chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk

Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
Direct Dial: 01425 484721
Email: jo.hurd@ringwood.gov.uk