

## THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, ON  
TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JULY 2015, STARTING AT 5.00 P.M.

Present:

Councillors

R F W Brame (Chairman)  
T J Jermy

Mrs B J Canham  
M Taylor

Officer in attendance:  
Maurice Howard Town Clerk

Minutes

- 205/15 DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS  
None.
- 206/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE  
Apologies were received from Councillors M P Brindle, J C Moorman and M S Robinson.
- 207/15 MINUTES  
RESOLVED that the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015 received by Council on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 be confirmed as a true record and that they be signed/initialled by the Chairman.
- 208/15 REVIEW OF FOLLOW UP ACTIONS
- Compliments and comments had been passed on as appropriate.
  - Two further Town Council policies were presented by the Town Clerk (Mobile Phone Usage and Safety Policy and Model Publication Scheme) and these will be discussed under item 214/15 below.
  - The 'Common Land, Village Greens and Open Spaces' course dates had not yet been announced and had therefore not yet been booked for the Deputy Town Clerk.
  - The Town Clerk had created a Ceremonial Instruction Sheet for Councillors for the recent Civic Service. However, he was also using best practice from other Town Council's in order to create a more wide ranging Civic Policy document. This would be placed as an agenda item on the next Civic Meeting.
  - An update on the review of the H&S Policy would be given by Councillor Canham under Agenda Item 211/15.
  - The Town Clerk had commenced a review of the Staff Handbook and had agreed a way forward in conjunction with the Town Council's Solicitor (see Agenda Item 214/15 below). This would include a new section regarding the Council's Sickness Policy.
- 209/15 BUDGET REVIEW  
The Committee reviewed the two main cost centres attributed to the Personnel Committee. These being 'Staff Training and Welfare' and 'Recruitment'. The Town Clerk pointed out that there had been an unusually large spend on training in the early part of this year. This was

mainly attributable to CiLCA Training, RoSPA (3 yearly qualification renewal), Trailer Training and Safeguarding Training. Therefore, in addition to the £2,000 currently showing on the budget report there was a further £2,000 committed that had not yet been paid. The Town Clerk stated that the only other expected large spend for the remainder of the year would be First Aid Training and Fire Training for the Works Team. Therefore, provided nothing changes, then the remaining budget would be sufficient for the rest of the year.

210/15

#### DEVELOPMENT OF A FOUR YEAR FINANCIAL STRATEGY

##### Staff Welfare/Training.

The committee were presented with a spreadsheet showing the previous year's expenditure as well as this year's budget. It was pointed out that whilst there were recognised mandatory annual, 3 yearly and 5 yearly courses that could be calculated into the budget. It was impossible to calculate the requirement should an individual leave the organisation. There could be significant training differences for instance between recruitment of a Civic Secretary/Receptionist and a Works Foreman. Therefore, there was a necessity to hold sufficient budget to cover a typical average year but also to cover eventualities such as departures and new staff. It was felt that the current years budget of £7,500 met with this but would generally mean that the law of averages suggests that not all of this would be required.

##### Recruitment

Again it was difficult to predict whether £1,000 would be sufficient to cater for a typical years use. In the Town Clerk's first year in post there had been four personnel recruited at significantly greater cost than the current budget. However, in 2014/2015 only three positions had been recruited into (with only one going to advert) and the budget had been sufficient to cover this. It was felt that allowing for one senior position to be recruited each year (typical cost £1,000) would be sufficient.

**RESOLVED: The Staff Welfare and Training budget remain the same at £7,500 for the next 4 years.**

**RESOLVED: The Recruitment budget remain the same at £1,000 for the next 4 years.**

211/15

#### HEALTH & SAFETY

Councillor Mrs B Canham presented the minutes of the 17 Jun 2015 Health and Safety Committee. It was stated that at least one of the outstanding actions from the Annual Inspection relevant to the Fire Risk Assessment was still outstanding and that better monitoring needed to take place. This was currently monitored by the Works Foreman using an excel spreadsheet. The committee felt that this review of outstanding inspection findings needed to be an agenda item on each quarterly Health and Safety Committee. The Chairman was asked to ensure that this was taken forward. There were two resolutions within the minutes and no recommendations.

It was proposed by Councillor R F W Brame and seconded by Councillor T J Jermy that the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee be accepted and recommended to Full Council.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the Health and Safety Minutes of 17 June 2015 be accepted by Full Council.**

212/15

#### COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The Town Clerk commented that a complaint had been made by a member of the public who had witnessed what she thought to be three

councillors entering her property without permission to view an area that had Planning Application pending. The Town Clerk had carried out an investigation to determine who this may have been and this had proven inconclusive. It was of course possible that these were Breckland Officers/Members. However, he had promised that this information would be passed on to the Town Council's Planning Committee.

213/15

#### TRAINING REQUESTS

The Town Clerk briefed on a new Planning Course that was being delivered by the Local Council Public Advisory Service. Following comments made by certain Planning Members that they felt that the Breckland induction sessions could have been better, he suggested that we may wish to run this 3 hour course in Thetford for all members at a cost of £100 + £20 travel.

It was proposed by Councillor R F W Brame and seconded by Councillor Mrs B J Canham that the cost of £120 to the Local Council Public Advisory Service for the Planning Training Course be paid from the training budget and the date for the training be agreed at the next Planning Meeting.

**RESOLVED: The cost of £120 to the Local Council Public Advisory Service for the Planning Training Course be paid from the training budget and the date for the training be agreed at the next Planning Meeting.**

Both the Works Foreman and the rest of the Works Team were required to renew their three yearly RoSPA qualification for the playground inspections and inspectors course. This was mandatory training and therefore had already been pre-booked but required resolution of the cost to be agreed prior to order numbers being issued and the training taking place.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs B J Canham and seconded by Councillor R F W Brame that the Routine RoSPA Inspection Course, and the Inspectors Course and Exam be agreed at a cost of £2,198.50 + VAT.

**RESOLVED: That the Routine RoSPA Inspection Course, and the Inspectors Course and Exam be paid at a cost of £2,198.50 + VAT.**

214/15

#### UPDATE ON TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

The Town Clerk presented the updated 'Mobile Phone Safety and Usage' Policy. Updates were mainly as a result of the Health and Safety requirement to warn users of the risks of prolonged use of such devices. A query had previously been raised over the security aspects of using devices that could now potentially contain confidential Town Council information within e-mails. The Town Clerk stated that this aspect had now been addressed within the policy.

It was proposed by Councillor T J Jermy and seconded by Councillor R F W Brame that the Mobile Phone Safety and Usage Policy be approved by Full Council.

**RECOMMENDATION: The Mobile Phone Safety and Usage Policy at Appendix 1 be accepted by Full Council.**

The Town Clerk presented a revised Model Publication Scheme. Changes had been made following issuance of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the slightly revised guidance from the Information Commissioners Office. It was proposed by Councillor R F

W Brame and seconded by Councillor Mrs B J Canham that the Model Publication Scheme at Appendix 2 be approved by Full Council.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the Model Publication Scheme at Appendix 2 be accepted by Full Council.**

The Town Clerk also stated that he had updated the Bullying and Harassment Policy and the Compliments Comments and complaints Policy and asked that members review these with a view to approving them at the next meeting. The Town Clerk was asked to forward these to members electronically.

The Town Clerk presented an Index of Town Council Policies (Appendix 3) which showed the current status of all policies. It was understood that reviews of both the Health and Safety Policy and the Staff Handbook were underway. This left three remaining policies requiring review. It was decided that these would be reviewed following completion of the Health and Safety Policy and the Staff Handbook.

The Town Clerk commented that the Staff Handbook required a major overhaul and he had agreed a way forward with the Town Councils HR Solicitor. The Town Clerk would be determining what needed to go into this over and above the Green Book and the Solicitor would be reviewing the currency of the existing policies within the Staff Handbook. Whilst a deadline had been set for August it was felt that it was unlikely that this would be accomplished by this time due to current ongoing projects. However, the Town Clerk agreed to give an update and hopefully a first draft at the September meeting.

215/15

#### COMPASSIONATE LEAVE POLICY

The Town Clerk presented information from ACAS and had also extracted information from the policies of three other large Town Councils as a way of developing a 'best practice'. All three councils had followed the ACAS guidance and the committee discussed the merits of each element and were of the mind that we should develop our own policy based on elements of all three. The Town Clerk was asked create a new policy that could then be included as part of the Staff Handbook. A draft of this was to be sent to committee members for agreement prior to inclusion in the Handbook.

216/15

#### PENSION AUTO-ENROLMENT

The committee were informed that all council employees are automatically enrolled into the Norfolk Pension Fund upon employment. Although this did not currently apply to sessional workers who had been unlikely to hit the lower earnings limit for inclusion into the existing scheme. In addition, there were two employed members who had opted out of the scheme and this was either because they were past pensionable age or were earning less than the minimum required for automatic entry into the scheme.

The Town Clerk went on to state that the rules going forward under the new pensions reforms were broadly the same and that the two individuals would continue to have a choice whether they were entered into the scheme. However, the Town Clerk had thought it prudent to highlight these new rules to the individuals and to explain that they could still opt-in to the scheme if they wished. As the staging date under the new rules for Thetford Town Council was 1 July 2016 he had written to both and asked them to re-affirm their decision by no later

than 1 January 2016 so that the Council would have time to submit the necessary paperwork prior to the staging date, should they change their mind.

217/15

#### MAINTENANCE TEAM SCHEDULE

Councillor Jermy stated that he still did not understand the level of work that the Maintenance Team undertook on a regular basis even though he had been a member of the Personnel Committee for several years. He was also aware that numerous contracts were given to external contractors and wanted to understand why these could not be accomplished by existing manpower.

The Town Clerk stated that on his arrival he had struggled to understand the same and was aware that there had been very little oversight of the regular tasks allocated and how the team were performing against these. Shortly after arrival he had therefore created a database of all standard yearly, quarterly, monthly, weekly and daily tasks. Against these, the Works Foreman now allocates manpower and confirms the task is completed against these jobs. The task is also logged onto each individual's worksheet, thereby providing full accountability for the tasks undertaken. In addition to this there were many ad-hoc tasks that pulled them away from these standard duties. Again it had proven difficult to understand why certain standard tasks had been delayed when no accountability had been kept of these ad-hoc often urgent tasks. Therefore a further spreadsheet had been created to log these tasks as they were identified. This additional spreadsheet provided the ability to keep track of these non-standard tasks. It also meant that there was now full accountability when authorising each individual's worksheet, as every task could be identified on either the standard task list or the non-standard task list. It was pointed out that this system had been shown to the previous committee at about the same time last year and had been accepted as a good method of maintaining control.

The Town Clerk was asked to send a copy of these spreadsheets to members of the new committee. This would help identify if further contracts could be taken in-house or whether additional manpower would be needed. He was also asked to bring to the next meeting a list of all external contracts and the requirements for these. This would help identify if these tasks required specialist skills. It was therefore decided that a full review of the existing tasks would be weighed against the current Town Council workforce and contractors to see if the correct balance had been achieved.

Councillor T J Jermy left the meeting at this point

218/15

#### CILCA QUALIFICATION

The Town Clerk updated the committee on the amount of work required to be completed in order to gain the new CiLCA qualification. It was now expected that up to 200 hours work would be required within one year rather than the previous two. This meant that, in order to allow for leave and submission and checking of the portfolio, the Town Clerk and Deputy would need to spend approximately 8 hours per week over a 26 week period. Up to present, with over a month gone since the induction course, neither member had been able to spend any time at all gathering evidence or carrying out work towards this. The committee discussed the merits of the course with some questioning the benefits.

However, the Town Clerk stated that even from the initial induction it was clear the value that this would bring in terms of knowledge.

The Town Clerk briefed that they needed specific time each week in order that they could go through records or build evidence to support their portfolios this could only be carried out at work and required uninterrupted time to be able to do this and then put it all together. It was suggested that Friday was probably the day of the week when least meetings were held.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs B J Canham and seconded by Councillor M P Taylor that the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk be given sufficient time to carry out the work required for the CiLCA qualification and therefore that Fridays be allocated to carry out this task so as to cause minimum disruption and allow uninterrupted study.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk be given sufficient time to carry out the work required for the CiLCA qualification and therefore that Fridays be allocated to carry out this task so as to cause minimum disruption and allow uninterrupted study.

219/15

#### DEPUTY TOWN CLERK REPRESENTATIVE DUTIES

The Town Clerk stated that up until present he had thought it prudent that the Deputy Town Clerk attend the standard representative functions throughout the year. These functions being Mayor Making, the Civic Service, Battle of Britain and Remembrance Day This would enable her to understand what would be required of her in the absence of the Town Clerk. However, now after having attended all events, going forward he realised that this may be seen by some as not required. He therefore asked the Committees views on this as this attendance had implications for Time-off-in-Lieu. This was discussed and the merits of having a Deputy Town Clerk in attendance, who wanted to be there, to help host guests and provide additional assistance was accepted as being beneficial. The Town Clerk was therefore asked to pass on this information.

220/15

#### PAYMENT FOR CASUAL I.T. ASSISTANCE

The Town Clerk briefed on the work carried out by one of the Council's SEETEC workers in instigating a GIS Mapping System for all Town Council assets (land, bins, benches etc). Unfortunately the individual had left without notice due to poor communication by SEETEC. Therefore, no handover had taken place and almost 6 months of work would be lost unless this handover could be completed and further work be carried out to bring the data up to the current state of play. This would be an extremely valuable tool for the Council and the Town Clerk asked if the committee would consider, if agreeable to the individual, paying up to £125 per week for approximately 6 – 8 weeks in order for the project to be completed and handed-over. This would allow for between 10 and 15 hours per week (at the Living Wage) depending on NI and Tax.

The committee were agreeable to this and believed the benefits were obvious, but understood that there may be implications to the individual in terms of state benefits and also whether the individual was willing to return under these terms. The Town Clerk was asked to carry out further investigation and forward an e-mail to the committee with the findings.

221/15

ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

a. Start Times of Personnel Meetings

A request had been received that the time of future Personnel Meetings be brought forward to 2.00 p.m. The committee discussed this as an option and looked at the implications to the majority of the Personnel Committee. It was felt that this change could not be accommodated without a greater loss of members.

b. Medical Appointments

The Town Clerk referred to the earlier discussion over Compassionate Leave (Agenda Item 215/15) and stated that there was also no guidance in the Green Book or Staff Handbook over time off for medical appointments. Clearly there would be times when individuals through no fault of their own (injury at work etc) would need to attend a hospital or doctor's appointment. He stated that he would therefore look to address this element in the review of the Staff Handbook but would treat each case on merit in the interim.

222/15

PRESS RELEASES

There were no press releases presented.

Chairman

Appendix:

1. Mobile Phone Safety and Usage Policy.
2. Model Publication Scheme.
3. Index of Town Council Policies.

ACTION POINTS

| <b>ACTION POINT</b>  | <b>BY WHOM</b>   | <b>BY WHEN</b>       |
|--|------------------|----------------------|
| Compliments, comments and complaints to be passed on as appropriate.                                   | Town Clerk       | 4 Aug 15             |
| Further update Town Policies as and when possible  | Town Clerk       | As soon as possible. |
| Distribute the Compliments, Comments and Complaints and Bullying and Harassment Policies to Committee  | Town Clerk       | 4 Aug 15             |
| Book 'Common Land, Village Greens and Open Spaces' course for Deputy Town Clerk as and when available. | Town Clerk       | As soon as possible. |
| Town Clerk to ensure that Civic Policy is on the agenda for the next Civic's                           | Town Clerk/PPP&C | 4 Aug 15             |

| Meeting  | Officer                                     |          |
|--|---|----------|
| To ensure that the Health and Safety Policy is ready for presentation to the H&S Committee meeting in October (to include all related policies Smoking Policy, Stress, Lone Worker etc). | Chair H&S Committee                         | Oct 15   |
| Ensure that a review of the Annual Inspection checklist is an agenda item on all future H&S Meetings.  | Chair H&S Committee                         | Oct 15   |
| Town Clerk to ensure that the Planning Committee are made aware the requirement not to enter private land without permission.  | Town Clerk/<br>PPP&C Officer                | 4 Aug 15 |
| Inform PPP&C Officer of decision to pay for Planning Course and for committee to agree a date.   | Town Clerk                                  | 4 Aug 15 |
| Confirm bookings for RoSPA Inspection and Inspectors Course and pay for exam fee.  | Town Clerk                                  | 4 Aug 15 |
| Works Team Standard and Ad-Hoc Schedules to be sent to Personnel Committee   | Town Clerk                                  | 4 Aug 15 |
| Provide committee with a list of all external contracts for discussion at next meeting   | Town Clerk                                  | 4 Aug 15 |
| Inform Deputy Town Clerk regarding decision on representational duties   | Town Clerk                                  | 4 Aug 15 |
| Further investigate option of Casual employment of previous SEETEC worker. E-mail findings to committee.   | Town Clerk                                  | 4 Aug 15 |
| Staff Handbook to be reviewed (to include new Sickness Policy, Compassionate Leave and Medical Appointment Policies.   | Town Clerk in conjunction with HR Solicitor | 1 Sep 15 |

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