

THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, ON
TUESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER 2015, STARTING AT 5.00 P.M.

Present:

Councillors

M P Brindle (Chairman)
J C Moorman
Mrs S J Armes

Mrs B J Canham
M S Robinson
M Taylor

Officer in attendance:
Maurice Howard Town Clerk

Also in Attendance: Councillor J Newton

Minutes

- 351/15 DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS
None.
- 352/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies were received from Councillors R F W Brame and
T J Jermy.
- 353/15 MINUTES
RESOLVED that the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on the
7th July 2015 received by Council on 28th July 2015 be confirmed as a
true record and that they be signed/initialled by the Chairman.
- 354/15 REVIEW OF FOLLOW UP ACTIONS
- Compliments and comments had been passed on as appropriate.
 - Three further Town Council policies had been updated by the Town Clerk ('Compliments, Comments and Complaints', 'Bullying and Harassment' and 'Whistleblowing') and these would be presented at Agenda Item 358/15.
 - The Compliments, Comments and Complaints and Bullying and Harassment Policies had been sent out the Committee directly following the July meeting.
 - The 'Common Land, Village Greens and Open Spaces' course had been booked for the Deputy Town Clerk and was scheduled for 8 Sep 15.
 - The PPP&C Officer had been requested to ensure that a proposed Civic Policy be included on the next Agenda of that committee.
 - The Deputy Town Clerk had stated that the H&S Policy review was underway and a draft should be available for the October meeting
 - It had been confirmed by both the Chair of the H&S Committee and the Deputy Town Clerk that a review of the Annual Inspection Checklist would be an Agenda item for all future H&S meetings.
 - The Planning Committee had been made aware via the previous Planning meeting that Councillors should not enter private land without permission.

- The Planning Committee had been informed of the decision to pay for the Planning Course and this had since been booked for 19 October 2015.
- The various RoSPA courses had been booked and all but the Inspectors Course (scheduled for mid September) had been taken and passed.
- The Works Team Standard and Ad-hoc tasks had been distributed to the Committee in July.
- A list of the Council's outsourced contracts had been distributed as part of the above e-mail.
- The Deputy Town Clerk had been informed of the decision regarding representational duties.
- Further investigation of the casual employment of a previous SEETEC worker had taken place and would be discussed under Agenda Item 361/15.
- 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. A meeting date had been set for 4 Sep 15 to iron out the more difficult issues and amendments.

355/15

BUDGET REVIEW

The Town Clerk pointed out that a recent Finance Committee appeared to make a recommendation that the Maintenance budget should in future fall under the Personnel Committee. With no detail available as to why this had been recommended, the committee found it hard to justify a reason why this should be the case going forward. It was also felt inappropriate to move the budget at this stage, with no further detail and with the September deadline approaching. Councillor M S Robinson proposed and Councillor Mrs B J Canham seconded that this be referred back to finance as the more appropriate committee to handle this budget.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Maintenance Budget be handed back to Finance, it being the more appropriate committee to deal with this.

356/15

HEALTH & SAFETY

Councillor Mrs B J Canham briefed the committee on the Annual Health and Safety Inspection of Town Council properties that had been carried out on 31 July 2015. It was pointed out that this inspection included fire safety and that the RAG (Red Amber Green) System was utilised in the reporting process. Where a serious discrepancy is found then a Red designation is given which allows the tenant or premises holder one month to take corrective action. Amber gives 3 months and green by the next inspection in twelve months time.

The next step was for the Town Clerk to send individual letters to the occupants identifying actions that had been agreed during the inspection. The Works Foreman would then conduct follow inspections to ensure that the respective deadlines are met.

Councillor Canham concluded by stating that in general the premises were in compliance with H&S and Fire requirements save for the relatively few findings. She noted that strides forward had been made by tenants of properties and now they were generally aware of their responsibilities for record keeping. There were issues with the emergency exit for the Art Gallery and these were to be addressed as soon as possible. It was also pointed out that any work carried out in Town Council run properties needed to be addressed through the

Works Foreman (as H&S Officer) so that all H&S concerns could be addressed.

Councillor M S Robinson asked that, when Town Council run properties were inspected in the future, the relevant Chair of the Committee that controls the property be informed. In addition, that the reports be copied to the relevant Chairs rather than just the venue manager. The Town Clerk stated that he would speak to the Deputy Town Clerk and ensure that this takes place.

357/15 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The Town Clerk stated that he had received an email regarding the considerable effort that had been put into the Thetford Festival Preview Event. In particular it highlighted the amount of time spent on this by Council staff before, during and after the event. He would pass on these observations to the relevant staff.

358/15 UPDATE ON TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

The Town Clerk presented the following draft Town Council Policies for review and recommendation to Full Council:

Compliments, Comments and Complaints

The Town Clerk commented that he had made minor changes to Stage 3 of the draft policy which had been sent out to councillors in that he had added timelines by which the Town Clerk would respond to any Stage 3 complaint. This was accepted by the committee.

It was proposed by Councillor J C Moorman and seconded by Mrs S J Armes that the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy be accepted by Full Council.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy at Appendix 1 be accepted by Full Council.

Bullying and Harassment

The Town Clerk pointed out that, other than slight re-organisation, the only changes to content was with regards to the section on 'Bullying and Harassment by Councillors' where the option of *undergoing appropriate training as directed by the Council* had been added. This was accepted. Councillor M S Robinson proposed and Councillor J C Moorman seconded that the policy be accepted by Full Council with the exception that the option of Banning from any or all Committees be amended to state that they can be 'excluded' rather than banned and that this be 'for a period of up to 6 months'. A vote was taken on this recommendation. For: 4 votes Against: 2 Votes. The recommendation was carried.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Bullying and Harassment Policy at Appendix 2 be accepted by Full Council with the exception that the option of Banning from any or all Committees be amended to state that councillors can be 'excluded' rather than banned and that this be 'for a period of up to 6 months'.

Whistleblowing

The Town Clerk reported that this Policy had been reviewed and was now re-organised and expanded to comply more fully with the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA).

It was proposed by Councillor M S Robinson and seconded by Councillor Mrs B J Canham that the Whistleblowing Policy be accepted by Full Council.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Whistleblowing Policy at Appendix 3 be accepted by Full Council.

Thetford Town Council Constitution

The Town Clerk stated that more and more Councils were now adopting a Constitution. These were mainly District Councils but some of the larger Town Councils had recently adopted their own, although these varied significantly in their content. Some were simple 'Mission Statements', whilst others stretched to over 100 pages. He therefore presented a draft Constitution for consideration that tried to meet halfway.

This topic produced much conversation and debate with vastly varying views on what this should look like. It was generally agreed that the Operational aspects were likely to vary from Council to Council and changes to policies could well affect these statements. In addition, if left in these may need expanding on considerably. Therefore the consensus was that these be removed. However, it was decided that this was a subject requiring greater consideration than just the Personnel Committee and therefore the Town Clerk was requested to place this on the next Full Council Agenda.

Compassionate Leave Policy (for inclusion in the Staff Handbook)

The Town Clerk presented a Compassionate Leave Policy based on the discussion that had taken place in July's Personnel Meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor Mrs B J Canham that the Compassionate Leave Policy be accepted by Full Council for inclusion in the Staff Handbook.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Compassionate Leave Policy wording at Appendix 4 be accepted by Full Council for inclusion in the Staff Handbook.

359/15

REVIEW OF OUTSOURCED CONTRACTS

The Town Clerk referred to the e-mail that he had sent to councillors following the previous meeting which highlighted the relatively few contracts that the Council outsourced. Details of the contracts including costs and the specialist skills required for some of these contracts took place. It was suggested that the due to the specialist skills required it was appropriate that some of these continue to be outsourced. However, it was decided that a Task and Finish Group be set up consisting of Councillor M Robinson and Councillor Mrs S J Armes which would look at these contracts in greater depth and ascertain value for money and the potential longer term vision.

360/15

MAINTENANCE TEAM SCHEDULE

The Town Clerk had previously sent out copies of the management system that he had implemented to control tasking of the Maintenance Team. This consisted of standard tasks carried out on an annual, six-monthly, quarterly, monthly weekly and daily basis. He also explained the system for logging and maintaining the priority of ad-hoc tasks that came up from time to time or as a result of project work. He explained how these were transferred to the individuals on the team and then how the records of completion were transferred back to these maintenance sheets in order to show due diligence and act as proof in case of insurance claims etc. The committee stated that the system was clear and it was commented that this seemed to be a great step forward. The Town Clerk commented that he was pleased that

Councillors on the Personnel Committee had taken the time to review and understand this element of the Council's workload and requirements so early in their term of office.

361/15

PAYMENT FOR CASUAL I.T. ASSISTANCE

The Town Clerk had carried out further investigation on the possibility and implications involved in employing one of the SEETEC workers who had been removed from the workplace with no notice. He reiterated the loss of 6 months work that this had caused and also the benefit to council of having this GIS Mapping software in place. He stated that he had spoken to the Department for Work and Pensions to check on the implications on the individuals benefits of short term employment. He had also spoken to the individual to see if he would be willing to return given the relatively small difference in benefit payments and the lowest starting point for office workers on the NJC Pay Scale. The suggestion was for the individual to be employed for 2 days per week over the course of six weeks in order to complete the project and also handover the knowledge required for maintenance and update of the system. Total cost for this 6 week period would be £774.90.

It was proposed by Councillor M Robinson and seconded by Councillor J C Moorman that the SEETEC worker be offered temporary employment of 6 weeks up to a total cost of £774.90.

RESOLVED: That the SEETEC worker be offered temporary employment of 6 weeks up to a total cost of £774.90.

362/15

LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER

The Town Clerk had been asked to collate detail on the implications of the Council becoming a National Minimum Living Wage (NMLW) Employer. He therefore presented a leaflet from the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) and followed a flow diagram which explained how the application process could be made and what would be required of the employer. He then explained that, as far as current Council Employees are concerned, all were currently above the £7.85 lower limit recommended by the foundation. It would therefore be fairly easy and painless to implement this for council employees as it would simply mean that any new employee would be taken on at a point above this level and not the lower of their relative scale (as they could be under current agreements).

One thing that was more difficult to ascertain, and was a requirement of the LWF is that all contractors must pay this minimum wage or be willing to work towards it (depending on the term of their contract). In addition, it was unknown what the impact would be on future contracts if this were implemented.

Another aspect that was briefed related to the new Accredited Living Wage (ALW) to be introduced by the Government in April 2016. This was scheduled to start at £7.20 and rise to £9.00 by the year 2020. Again, despite research it was unknown how the two schemes (NMLW and ALW) would interact and whether this new legislation in effect would eventually make the LWF and therefore the NMLW redundant.

The committee discussed this at great length and felt that there were too many unknowns at present in order to enforce this on contractors or to be able to determine what the implications on future contracts would be. It was therefore felt that at the moment councillors were content that council staff were being fairly treated in terms of the minimum scales that the council currently offer employees. However, they felt that they would prefer to see how the NMLW and the ALW were likely

to co-exist (if at all) in the months leading up to the introduction of the ALW in April 2016. It was hoped that a better understanding of the future intentions and working mechanics of the two schemes would be evident in the not too distant future.

363/15 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

a. Annual Takeover Day

The Town Clerk pointed to a press release sent out by Norfolk County Council which related to a scheme set up by them approximately 3 – 4 years ago. This encouraged employers for one day only to invite school leavers and other young adults into the workplace to experience ‘the world of work’ and get involved in and understand what it is like to be a decision maker. They had asked that this scheme be promoted around businesses in Norfolk in the hope that this would grow into an annual event that spreads the country.

The Town Clerk stated that, unless he received any objections he intended to participate in this scheme and would pass on his details to the organiser in the hope that places could be offered in three areas (Office, Venues and Maintenance). Councillors stated that this was a good idea all round and they welcomed the initiative.

364/15 PRESS RELEASES

There were no press releases presented.

Chairman

Appendix:

1. Compliments Comments and Complaints Policy.
2. Bullying and Harassment Policy.
3. Whistleblowing Policy.
4. Wording for Compassionate Leave Policy (for insertion into the Staff Handbook).

ACTION POINTS

ACTION POINT	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
Compliments, comments and complaints to be passed on as appropriate.	Town Clerk	6 Oct 15
Further update Town Policies as and when possible.	Town Clerk	As soon as possible.
Refer the Maintenance Budget back to Finance.	Town Clerk	6 Oct 15
Ensure that the Deputy Town Clerk is aware of the requirement to send copies of the H&S Inspection report to the relevant Chairs of Committees	Town Clerk	6 Oct 15

Ensure that the Constitution is placed on the Agenda for Full Council.	Town Clerk	29 Sep 15
On resolution of Full Council pass the wording of the Compassionate Leave Policy to our Solicitor for inclusion in the Staff Handbook.	Town Clerk	6 Oct 15
Set up a meeting of the Contracts Task and Finish Group.	Town Clerk	6 Oct 15
Liaise with SEETEC Worker over the offer of temporary employment.	Town Clerk	6 Oct 15
Pass the point of contact details for the Town Clerk on to Norfolk County Council agreeing to participation in 'Annual Takeover Day'.	Town Clerk	As soon as possible.