

THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, ON
TUESDAY 6th OCTOBER 2015, STARTING AT 5.00 P.M.

Present:

Councillors

R F W Brame (Chairman)
M S Robinson

Mrs B J Canham
Mrs S J Armes

Officer in attendance:

Maurice Howard Town Clerk

Minutes

- 478/15 DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS
None.
- 479/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies were received from Councillors M P Brindle, M Taylor,
J C Moorman and T J Jermy.
- 480/15 MINUTES
RESOLVED that the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on the
1st September 2015 received by Council on 29th September 2015 be
confirmed as a true record and that they be signed/initialled by the
Chairman.
- 481/15 REVIEW OF FOLLOW UP ACTIONS
- Compliments and comments had been passed on as appropriate.
 - Two Town Council policies had been rejected by Full Council ('Compliments, Comments and Complaints' and 'Whistleblowing' as the old version had been mistakenly attached to the Full Council Agenda. This issue would be discussed under Agenda Item 485/15 below. In addition, the new Draft Staff Handbook had also been distributed (again see 485/15 below).
 - The Maintenance Budget had been referred back to Finance and this had been discussed in a recent Finance Meeting.
 - The Deputy Town Clerk had stated that the H&S Inspection Reports were in the process of being forwarded to relevant Chairs of Committees following her return from leave.
 - The Constitution had been placed on the Agenda for Full Council and it had been decided that, with Standing Orders and all Policies available on the Town Council Webpage, there was no requirement for this type of document.
 - The wording for the Compassionate Leave Policy had been passed to our solicitor and was now incorporated into the draft Staff Handbook that had been distributed.
 - A meeting of the Out-Sourced Contracts Task and Finish Group had been set for later that week (Thursday 8 October 2015).

- The SEETEC Worker has been re-employed for a 6 week period as per the agreement at the last meeting and he was currently in his second week.
- The Town Clerk had left messages for the point of contact at NCC for the Annual Takeover Day and was awaiting a call back.

482/15

BUDGET REVIEW

The Town Clerk went through the 5 month budget report and pointed out that the Staff Training/Welfare budget was showing an overspend for this point in the year. However, this was simply due to the fact that many of the necessary obligatory courses (RoSPA etc.) had been front-loaded to the beginning of the year. Therefore, there would still be sufficient funds remaining for any desirable courses later in the year.

In addition, he stated that for the 'Office Overheads' budget element which pertained to wages he had taken the stance that it was unlikely that any NJC recommended pay-rise would exceed 1% any time soon. Therefore, in calculating the budget for next 4 years, in addition to any increments for staff not at the top of their salary scale, the budget had been increased by a minimal 1% for the years 2016/17 to 2019/20, thereby making up the four year forecast. This was obviously based on staffing at current levels.

It was felt that these figures may need to take account of the new Accredited Living Wage proposals that the government had released which suggested that the living wage would increase to £9.20 per hour by 2020. Whilst a figure of £7.20 had been agreed from 1 Apr 2016 (A figure that the Town Council will currently meet) there was some debate if the target of £9.20 will be achievable and whether the government had understood the implications. Of course there would also be a knock on effect for all those Line Managers etc, who at the moment were sitting just above the lower paid staff, but would therefore also need to be increased in order to keep the correct pay structure. The Town Clerk was therefore tasked with looking in generalist terms at the implications to pay roll of this potential implementation.

483/15

HEALTH & SAFETY

The next meeting of the Health and Safety Committee would be on 12 November 2015 to discuss the draft Health and Safety Policy.

484/15

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

An e-mail had been received from a hotelier business in the vicinity of the Guildhall which complained of the chiming of the Guildhall Clock through the night. The Town Clerk had sent a holding reply stating that this had been passed to the Guildhall and Markets Committee. In the interim, the Works Foreman was investigating if the clock chimes could in fact be turned to silent through the night.

An e-mail had also been received from a member of the public who complained that grass was not being swept from graves subsequent to cutting. This was a follow-up of a complaint from 2 years ago subsequent to which the issue had been resolved until recently. The Town Clerk had spoken to the contractor. He had pointed out that at this time of year for approximately one month, prior the grass ceasing growing, the grass simply does not dry out. This means that it sticks to the graves and the blowers will not move it. He will therefore attempt to sweep the graves for this short period each year. However, he pointed out that this triples the time taken by his staff and should there be particularly long wet seasons it would be something that would need

review. These comments would be passed on to the Cemetery Committee for discussion. However, the Town Clerk pointed out that the complainant was happy with the response and as this had been dealt with in the past as a result of his previous intervention, she was confident that it would be again.

A letter of thanks had been received from the Town Crier for the help and support he had received both prior to and during the Town Crier competition. This was financial and staff support without which this excellent event for the Festival could not have happened. In return, the Town Clerk was asked to thank the Town Crier for putting on such a successful event for the Festival.

An e-mail had been received from the Chair of the Garden and Allotments Club thanking the Festival organisers for their support in putting on their Annual Show in King's House Gardens. It also specifically mentioned the Works Foreman and Deputy Venues Manager for their support and assistance.

The Town Clerk would pass on these compliments, comments and complaints as appropriate.

485/15

UPDATE ON TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

The Town Clerk pointed out that the old versions of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and the Whistleblowing Policy had been presented to the September Full Council rather than the versions that had been reviewed and recommended by this committee. This was an oversight and he had therefore placed these two policies back on the agenda for approval at this evenings meeting. However, he had since reviewed them again following a couple of comments made at the Full Council meeting and as a result he had added a statement in the 'Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy' to show that Councillors contact details were available via the Town Council webpage. In addition, he had removed the Standards for England details from the Policy as this organisation no longer existed. Finally, he had also added additional methods of contact for the Local Government Ombudsman.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor R F W Brame that the Compliments Comments and Complaints Policy be approved by Full Council.

RECOMMENDATION: The Compliments Comments and Complaints Policy at Appendix 1 be approved by Full Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor R F W Brame that the Whistleblowing Policy be approved by Full Council.

RECOMMENDATION: The Whistleblowing Policy at Appendix 2 be approved by Full Council.

486/15

UPDATE ON CASUAL IT EMPLOYMENT

The Town Clerk had spoken to the SEETEC Worker and had given him the terms under which the Council would like to employ him. Whilst there had been some scepticism from committee members over whether the terms were sufficient to attract him back to work, the fact that this employment would be attractive on his CV was the deciding factor. He was now in his second week of re-employment and he was working Tuesday's and Thursday's each week. The Town Clerk had identified that Breckland Council were using a different GIS mapping software system to that of Norfolk County Council and therefore that

which the Town Council had agreed upon. As a result this new system was currently being trialled by the temporary worker under a 30 day free licence from the company pending potential purchase.

487/15

CONTRACTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Town Clerk had prepared a detailed pack of all outsourced contracts in preparation for the Task and Finish Group meeting on Thursday of this week. In addition, he had prepared a list of other regular work for which the council seeks one-off provision. This would also be included in this meeting with a view to determining if any of these non-regular requirements could be met either by existing workforce or potential additional skilled/unskilled workers.

488/15

TRAINING REQUESTS

The Town Clerk briefed members on a new course that was being introduced by the Local Council Public Advisory Service called 'Rights of Way and Byways'. He stated that this fell nicely between the 'Open Spaces and Village Greens' course and a 'Land Management for the Brecks' course that the Deputy Town Clerk was due to attend. In addition the council was currently involved in gaining rights of way permissions in relation to the play areas that were being taken on. As a result it was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor R F W Brame that the Deputy Town Clerk attends the Rights of Way and Byways course at a cost of £25 plus travel costs to Bury St Edmunds.

RESOLVED: The Deputy Town Clerk attends the 'Rights of Way and Byways' course at a cost of £25 plus travel costs to Bury St Edmunds.

Further discussion centred on the training of Councillors, in particular Committee Chairs on these useful courses. It was pointed out that this matter had been discussed at length in a meeting earlier in the year and the decision had been that the officer who attended would ensure that the briefing pack was passed to the full committee at the next available opportunity. Clearly a change of committee members had taken place since this discussion and it was now felt that there was potential for both the Chair and respective officer to attend future courses in order to build up a greater in-depth knowledge of certain subjects. However, it was pointed out that within the current 2015/16 and already submitted 2016/17 budget no provision had been made for this additional expenditure. It was felt that this should be reviewed prior to the next budget (2017/18) being submitted but also that limited attendance for councillors could be found within the 2016/17 budget.

The Town Clerk presented two conferences that had been advertised. The first was the NALC Autumn Conference at Hillington on 12 November 2015. He briefed on the subjects to be discussed but felt that some of these were either outside of the responsibility of Thetford Town Council or were issues that the Council were well aware of. He therefore stated that this was not one that justified the expenditure.

The second Conference was the SLCC Annual Conference to be held in Leicester. He had been missed from the distribution of this but felt that the topics both in number and importance justified attendance. However, with one week to go before the conference he was unsure if he could gain a place. It was proposed by Councillor R F W Brame and

seconded by Councillor Mrs S J Armes that the Town Clerk attend the SLCC Annual Conference if places are still available.

RESOLVED: The Town Clerk attend the SLCC Annual Conference if places are still available.

489/15

TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

The Town Clerk pointed out that a discrepancy that had come to light regarding the issue of travel allowances. Whilst officers were paid appropriate travel allowances in line with their contracts and NJC rates and were taxed through their pay on benefit over and above the government limit, it was evident that there was no way of processing this for Councillors. Therefore the wording in the Training Policy would need to clearly state that Councillors were responsible for submitting details of any allowances claimed as part of their Annual Tax Return. The Town Clerk was tasked with reviewing the Training Policy and presenting a draft Training Policy for the November meeting. This would also need to be reflected in the draft Civic Policy (regarding Mayor's travel allowances).

490/15

ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

491/15

PRESS RELEASES

There were no press releases presented.

Chairman

Appendix:

1. Compliments Comments and Complaints Policy.
2. Whistleblowing Policy.

ACTION POINTS

ACTION POINT	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
Compliments, comments and complaints to be passed on as appropriate.	Town Clerk	3 Nov 15
Pass e-mail regarding Clock Chimes to G&M Committee	Town Clerk	ASAP
Pass e-mail regarding Cemetery Grass Cutting to Cemetery Committee	Town Clerk	ASAP
Update Training Policy	Town Clerk	3 Nov 15
Prepare an overview of the implications of the Accredited Living Wage on the Pay Structure and Payroll.	Town Clerk	3 Nov 15
Thank the Town Crier for his involvement in the Festival	Town Clerk	3 Nov 15

Book the Rights of Way and Byways course for the Deputy Town Clerk	Town Clerk	ASAP
Book a place on the SLCC Annual Conference for the Town Clerk	Town Clerk	ASAP
Ensure Training Policy updated to reflect Councillor requirement to enter travel allowances on their Annual Tax Return.	Town Clerk	3 Nov 15
Ensure Civic Policy updated to reflect Mayor's requirement to enter travel allowances on their Annual Tax Return.	Town Clerk	3 Nov 15