

**LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Present**

**Chairman:** Cllr G. Stammers

**Members:** Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr G. Turner

**Officers:** A. Mullins (support services manager), J. Wright (town clerk)

**23/14/HR Public Forum**

There were no members of the public present.

**23/15/HR Apologies**

Cllr C. Aldridge – holiday  
Cllr P. May – holiday  
Cllr C. Reynolds – illness

**23/16/HR To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 14 June 2023**

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 were **ADOPTED**.

**23/17/HR Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were none.

**23/18/HR Dispensations**

There were none.

**23/19/HR Matters arising from the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 14 June 2023**

**Two-year, fixed-term post to support the delivery of project, asset management and property-related work**

Cllr D. Sarson asked if there had been a good response to the job vacancy.

The town clerk said the response was better than anticipated; there were eight applicants and five would be interviewed.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if it was made clear this was a temporary post with no possibility of extension.

The support services manager said it was outlined in the advert and would be made clear to the successful applicant.

### **Evening seafront attendant**

Cllr M. Ellis said as there were no applicants for this post, she was concerned about recruitment for next year and felt the council needed to be more proactive and advertise the post earlier.

The town clerk said the council decided not to have an evening seafront attendant but then changed its mind so it was advertised late in the year. He said the Town Management and Highways Committee had decided to employ attendants much earlier in the season, but there was a budget implication to this, which would need to be agreed through the budget-setting process. If agreed, he said the council could try and engage with students from the Woodroffe School.

Cllr M. Ellis asked if members could have a post-summer review to the Town Management and Highways Committee so members could see the positives and negatives and prepare for next year.

## **23/20/HR Update Report**

### **Amenities assistants**

It was confirmed that when the wedding stewards were covering shifts at the amenities hut, they were paid the rate for the role, rather than the rate they were usually paid as wedding stewards.

## **23/21/HR Human Resources Committee – Objectives**

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the training requirements related to Carbon Literacy would come under the Environment or Human Resources Committee.

The town clerk said it was understood the council already had silver accreditation from the Carbon Literacy Organisation because the council had been invoiced for it. He said when the council sets the budget for 2024-25, this would include a budget for training but it had been agreed not all staff would be put on the silver level training and that training would be tailored to specific jobs.

## **23/22/HR 2024-25 Budget Proposals**

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if staff were comfortable with the level of IT and whether there were any gaps that needed to be filled in terms of awareness and skills.

The town clerk said the competency level was good within the office and if any employee said they needed to improve in a particular area, a course would be found to train them.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if there was a training package available to help with the objective to go paperless.

The town clerk said he felt staff could manage this themselves but it had been pushed back because it was labour intensive.

Cllr B. Bawden said the Parish Online system could help the council make information publicly available at a relatively low cost and suggested they were asked to do a presentation of their services to the council.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if there was a training need for the operations manager to manage the asset management register.

The town clerk said it was hoped the new property and projects assistant would be able to take on this work.

The town clerk said there had been discussions with the acting operations manager and acting operations supervisor about management training, which could be resourced in this year's training budget as there was an annual budget allocated for these purposes. However, if the council wanted to do a proper induction and development programme for the new council administration and deal with some of the member relationship issues, this would cost a significant amount.

Cllr M. Ellis suggested a budget for unexpected employment issues.

The town clerk said there was already a contingency built into the staffing budget.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to allocate £20,000 in the 2024-5 budget for induction and development work with the new council administration.

**23/23/HR To receive the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 7 September 2023**

Cllr D. Sarson said the acting operations manager had done very well in covering the meeting and health and safety matters.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting on 7 September 2023 were **RECEIVED**.

**23/24/HR Pregnancy Loss Policy**

Cllr M. Ellis said it was important for the council to have this policy in place as pregnancy loss was a bereavement.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the policy defined what the council should do as an employer but also pointed towards provisions already in place. He asked what the council's policy was on compassionate leave.

The support services manager said the town clerk had the discretion to grant up to 10 days' paid compassionate leave and 10 days' unpaid and this would apply to pregnancy loss. However, the specific timescales were not defined in the employee handbook.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he felt it would be helpful to have a framework to manage employees' expectations.

The town clerk said he was happy to make the decision based on the individual situation and he always tried to be reasonable in the length of time granted. He said he would normally grant five days for an immediate family member but this wasn't set in stone and having a firm set of rules could make things quite difficult to manage.

Cllr G. Stammers said there was a reference in the policy to 'pregnant people' and asked that this be changed to 'pregnant women'.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the proposed pregnancy loss policy, with an amendment to paragraph 4.2 to replace 'pregnant people' with 'pregnant women'.

## **23/25/HR Employee Time Recording**

Following a request from the Strategy and Finance Committee to discuss this, the town clerk said the council could consider introducing systems for recording the time staff worked but there wasn't really an issue that needed resolving. He said external works' staff now went straight to their work area and a manager and supervisor knew where they were. The system worked and there was a high level of trust so if the council did introduce a system of time recording, staff would see this as a trust issue.

The town clerk said he felt it would be a step backwards, setting up clocking in systems around the town, which would also have a cost implication.

Cllr M. Ellis asked how wedding stewards recorded their time.

The town clerk said they were paid a set two hours per ceremony, although officers could check when the alarm system was turned on and off if necessary. For other lone workers, such as the cleansing operative, he had a set round and if work was not completed, the line manager would know there was an issue. In the case of all external works' staff, the town clerk said the acting operations manager knew what work had been completed against the work that had been allocated so there were plenty of checks and balances that could be carried out.

Cllr B. Larcombe said on a number of occasions when he had called the office, staff had told him they didn't know if another member of staff was in that day.

The town clerk said he wanted staff to be aware of everyone else's whereabouts and if they were going out; he said this would be discussed with staff and managers should be setting an example.

**23/26/HR Employee Assistance Programme**

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential information relating to an individual within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**23/27/HR Fraud**

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential information relating to an individual within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**23/28/HR Employee Exit Interviews**

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential information relating to an individual within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**23/29/HR Gardener and Maintenance Person (post holder 204), Six-Month Probation Review**

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential information relating to an individual within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**23/30/HR Gardener and Maintenance Person (post holder 215), Six-Month Probation Review**

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential information relating to an individual within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**23/31/HR Exempt Business**

**a) Employee Assistance Programme**

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the programme could be extended to members.

The support services manager said she would find out and report back to the Full Council meeting.

Cllr B. Bawden felt this was a good benefit for employees as everyone was much more conscious of mental health and it was helpful to have an organisation removed from the council for employees to be able to talk things through.

The town clerk said it also offered an extra layer of protection if an employee took the council to an employment tribunal.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** approve the introduction of an employee assistance programme, to appoint PAM Wellbeing to provide this service, and to look into whether the service could be extended to members.

**b) Fraud**

The support services manager read out a letter which the relevant manager had asked to be presented to the committee.

The town clerk said discussions had taken place with the relevant line manager regarding an issue with timesheets as they had been signed off for two years without picking up the discrepancies. He added that submitting inaccurate timesheets was gross misconduct and the council could dismiss the staff involved, although there was no suggestion of this.

Cllr B. Larcombe said as the timesheets were signed off by the line manager, this would be part of the employees' defence because they were authorised. He said he had previously suggested the supervisor line managed the staff involved because he had more visibility of them. He asked if the supervisor knew of the discrepancies with the timesheets.

The town clerk said the supervisor was not aware of the discrepancies with the timesheets but was now managing the staff involved.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked the town clerk what he intended to do in relation to the line manager.

The town clerk said he would inform the line manager that the letter had been read out at this meeting.

Members agreed they understood the issues involved but the matter still had to be addressed with the line manager.

**c) Employee Exit Interviews**

Cllr B. Bawden said the interviews didn't make for comfortable reading and asked if the employees could be asked if they would be happy, given the number of references to members, for members to see the full exit interviews.

Cllr M. Ellis agreed members should see the full exit interviews as all the issue the raised were of members' concern because they could make changes.

The town clerk said he would be happy, with the employees' consent, to provide the full interviews to members but there was no obligation on them to consent. He asked members to bear in mind that when some employees left the organisation, they had issues which may have caused them to leave and therefore mainly negative comments would come across in their interviews.

Cllr M. Ellis asked if any of the issues raised by the two employees had been brought up during their annual appraisals.

The town clerk said some of the issues had been brought up during their appraisals.

Cllr B. Larcombe said there was no requirement for an employee to have an exit interview but they did have the right to ask for an interview. He said the two employees could write to members at any time with their views, it didn't have to be part of an exit interview, and how members responded was in their gift.

Cllr B. Bawden said if members didn't know employees' concerns, they were less able to be effective as an employer.

Cllr M. Ellis said in her own workplace, employees were asked to do a regular talk back survey and suggested this was something the council could consider so members knew how employees were feeling and being treated by managers. She said the issues could then be dealt with as they were happening, rather than when they left.

Cllr B. Larcombe said as the council was such a small organisation, he felt it would be a sad state of affairs if there had to be a survey of employees to find out what the issues were.

Proposed by Cllr B. Bawden and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to ask the two former administrative and community engagement assistants if they would be willing for members of the Human Resources Committee to see their full exit interviews.

**d) Gardener and Maintenance Person (post holder 204), Six-Month Probation Review**

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the gardener and maintenance person's (post holder 204) continued employment with the council, effective from 20 August 2023.

**e) Gardener and Maintenance Person (post holder 215), Six-Month Probation Review**

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the gardener and maintenance person's (post holder 215) continued employment with the council, effective from 20 August 2023.

*The meeting closed at 8.54pm.*