

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2019

Present

Chairman: Cllr B. Larcombe

Members: Cllr J. Broom, Cllr Miss K. Ellis, Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr J. Scowen, Cllr Ms G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Williams

Officers: Mr J. Wright (town clerk), Mr. M. Green (deputy town clerk), Mr M. Stainer (temporary finance manager)

Other members: Cllr L. Howe

19/01/HR Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe, opened the meeting.

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis nominated Cllr B. Larcombe as chairman of the Human Resources Committee, seconded by Cllr J. Scowen.

Cllr B. Larcombe was duly **ELECTED** as chairman of the Human Resources Committee.

Cllr Miss K. Ellis nominated Cllr Mrs M. Ellis as vice-chairman of the Human Resources Committee, seconded by Cllr D. Sarson.

Cllr J. Scowen nominated Cllr Ms G. Stammers as vice-chairman of the Human Resources Committee, seconded by Cllr G. Turner

Cllr Ms. G. Stammers was duly **ELECTED** as vice-chairman of the Human Resources Committee.

19/02/HR Terms of Reference

The committee **RECEIVED** its terms of reference.

19/03/HR Public Forum

There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.

19/04/HR Apologies

There were none.

19/05/HR To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 10 January 2018

Cllr Mrs M. Ellis referred to minute 18/100/HR and clarified that she had not been present at the meeting so could not have seconded the decision to exclude the press and public for an item on the agenda. The correct seconder was Cllr J. Scowen.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, the minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2019, with the above amendment, were **ADOPTED.**

19/06/HR Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

19/07/HR Dispensations

There were none.

19/08/HR Matters arising from the minutes of the previous Human Resources Committee meeting held on 24 April 2018

Administrative assistant

Cllrs B. Larcombe and J. Scowen complimented the new administrative assistant on how quickly she had got to grips with the role and the support she was already offering in their roles as mayor and deputy mayor. They also complimented the input provided to-date by the new temporary finance manager.

Personnel issue

It was reported that there were no outstanding issues and members wished the postholder all the very best for the future.

19/09/HR Update Report

Members asked whether there was any more clarity about the likely timescale for resolving the formal award of the qualifications referred to in the report and were concerned about the potential implications of any ongoing delay.

The town clerk explained that the issue had arisen as a result of the training provider going into receivership. The council was doing everything it could to get the qualifications formally accredited and awarded but its power to influence the process was limited.

In the circumstances and in line with the council's approved policy, the council had already awarded an extra increment to postholder 217 for 'passing' his level 3 qualification.

19/10/HR Health and Safety Committee Membership

The town clerk explained that the relevant legislation referred to the need for a health and safety committee but it was not a 'formal' committee of the council and reported to this committee after each of its quarterly meetings.

In response to comments from Cllr J. Scowen, the town clerk explained that membership of the health and safety committee needed to be voted on and approved by a council committee in the usual way.

Members discussed the work of the committee and the processes involved and suggested it might be a suitable subject for the weekly member briefing.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that Cllrs J. Broom, Ms. G. Stammers and S. Williams be appointed as members of the Health and Safety Committee.

19/11/HR Employees' Pay Period

The temporary finance manager explained the various problems and complications caused by the council's current method of paying staff salaries, i.e. for a period that did not coincide with complete calendar months. This was particularly problematic at year-end, when it increased the chances of mistakes being made with the various returns which were required at that time.

He emphasised that making the recommended changes would not increase the overall cost to the council, it was purely an issue of cashflow which would be reconciled at the point an individual employee left the council's employment.

In response to questions from members, the town clerk advised that the proposed change would not involve an amendment to contracts of employment; these simply stipulated the pay date, not the pay period. If agreed, the change would be notified to staff in the normal way.

There was some discussion about four-weekly pay periods, but it was generally accepted this would create other issues, not least a constantly shifting pay date each month.

Proposed by Cllr J. Scowen and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the council's pay period be changed to the last day of each month, i.e., that staff be paid on or before the 25th of each month for that entire calendar month.

19/12/HR Finance Manager Recruitment

In response to questions, the town clerk explained where the job would be advertised. He also confirmed that the opportunity would be advised to Dorset Council.

Cllr B. Larcombe questioned the stated responsibility of the post for matters relating to information communications technology. He was concerned this area of work might grow to the point where it required a greater degree of specialism; especially if the aim of the council was to move to a 'paperless office'.

Proposed by Cllr J. Scowen and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the recruitment timetable, job description and person specification for the post of finance manager be approved and that Cllrs B. Larcombe, Mrs M. Ellis and J. Scowen be appointed to sit on the recruitment panel alongside the town clerk.

19/13/HR Staffing Structure and Pay Review

The town clerk introduced the report and explained that the last review was undertaken internally about six years ago and was done by 'benchmarking' posts with similar posts at other local town councils. This was the basis of review agreed by members at that time and the intention had been to ensure this council was paying in line with other councils and neither at the bottom or the top of the range.

After six years, he considered it to be an appropriate time to undertake a further review. He supported it being carried out and validated externally and independently by South West Councils (SWC), based in Taunton, who had relevant and local expertise in this area of work.

In response to questions from Cllr Mrs M. Ellis, he emphasised the need to keep external and other costs under control. He would provide members with an indicative cost of carrying out the exercise if members supported the principle of going forwards using SWC.

Cllrs B. Larcombe and Mrs M. Ellis made various points about the need to manage the review carefully to avoid creating unnecessary concerns or unrealistic expectations, either among staff or outside of the organisation.

Cllr B. Larcombe supported the use of SWC who he thought were ideally qualified to carry out the exercise and had considerable experience with the local council sector.

Cllrs Mrs M. Ellis and J. Broom both emphasised the need to agree an overall budget within which the exercise should take place.

Proposed by Cllrs Mrs M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that a review of the staffing

structure and pay be undertaken by South West Councils subject to a budget/cost being reported to and approved by Full Council.

19/14/HR Human Resources' Annual Review

Various members raised issues relating to the transparency of staff roles and responsibilities and their desire for greater clarity about staff work programmes, deployment and priorities. The need to better understand the real cost of specific council services; both to manage those costs more closely and to enable benchmarking or cost comparison with other models of service delivery, was also highlighted.

Members emphasised the concern was not about whether staff were working hard, it was about how they were deployed and whether the work being done matched priorities and objectives. They also wanted to be reassured that when changes were made to the staff establishment, newly-appointed members of staff were subsequently deployed performing their agreed duties and responsibilities.

Members asked to receive a sample work programme for the gardening and/or external works' teams in the first instance.

The town clerk explained that more information could be provided about staff roles and responsibilities as part of the member induction programme.

He confirmed the operations manager produced an extremely detailed work programme for all external staff and an example of this could be provided; but he emphasised that no such specific request had been made to-date.

He stated it would be possible to provide indicative costs of individual teams or services and to compare those costs with other teams or services in similar organisations or with other models of service delivery, but members needed to be absolutely clear about what they wanted to achieve.

It was important that members treated staff with respect and consideration and that this ongoing issue was moved forwards quickly and constructively. He was happy to undertake to provide members with a work programme for the gardening team, for instance.

Proposed by Cllr J. Scowen and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the human resources annual review for 2018/19 be noted and a sample work programme for the external team for the summer and winter periods be brought to the next meeting of the Human Resource Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm.