

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2021

Present

Chairman: Cllr G. Stammers

Members: Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr G. Turner

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

21/28/HR Public Forum

There were no members of public present.

21/29/HR Apologies

Cllr J. Broom – holiday
Cllr M. Ellis – work commitments
Cllr B. Larcombe – personal commitments
Cllr C. Reynolds – medical appointment
Cllr S. Williams – illness

21/30/HR To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 15 September 2021

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 were **ADOPTED**.

21/31/HR Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

21/32/HR Dispensations

There were none.

21/33/HR Matters arising from the minutes of the previous Human Resources Committee meeting held on 15 September 2021

Members' allowances

The town clerk said he had been asked to give evidence to the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel, following the council's response to the survey which outlined why the council felt the allowance was too low because of the size of its budget and the complexity of its business.

The town clerk said after the panel had heard evidence from himself and others, he understood it would then issue a timetable for informing town and parish councils of its decision.

21/34/HR Update Report

There were no updates.

21/35/HR Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting on 9 September 2021

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 9 September 2021 were **RECEIVED**.

21/35/HR Health and Safety Audit 2021

The town clerk said the compliance score of 87 was very good in audit terms and the council would struggle to improve on this in future. He said there were no areas of major non-compliance identified.

Cllr G. Stammers said she sat on the Health and Safety Committee and the operations manager did a very comprehensive job in complying with the requirements and reporting them to the committee. She felt he had done a good job in raising the score from 33% in 2017 and the council should be pleased with the progress.

21/36/HR Review of Employee Handbook

The town clerk said the first part of the handbook had been reviewed for members' approval and officers were proposing at least two more sessions to review the remainder. He said the amendments were based on changes in legislation and general updates, and in some cases, officers felt it didn't read properly and required updating.

The support services manager said reviewing the handbook had been a useful exercise to refresh her understanding of the council's human resources policies so if issues did arise, she was already familiar with the processes.

Cllr G. Stammers said it would be helpful if members had a copy of the handbook and it was agreed it would be circulated by email when the review was complete.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the proposed changes to the employee handbook up to page 47.

21/37/HR Christmas and New Year Working Arrangements

The town clerk said the approach to this period had always been to try and give every employee some time off but to also ensure busy times, such as New

Year's Day, were well covered. He said there were usually employees who were willing to work and earn overtime.

The town clerk said employees were entitled to two statutory days but when they were taken was up to the employer, and discretionary days did not have to be given but were usually granted by the council at this period.

The town clerk said last year the council made a decision to award the discretionary days to the enforcement officers, but there was an issue of equality as they had not been given to any other employees who were required to work during the Christmas and New Year period, i.e. the cleansing operative and seafront attendant.

Members were concerned that a precedent had been set and it would be difficult to move away from this.

Cllr G. Stammers asked if their contracts stated they were entitled to discretionary days.

The support services manager said it was not included in any contracts as it was in the council's gift whether to give them and how many days to grant.

The town clerk said the enforcement officer's remuneration took into account any hours worked at evenings and weekends, and this included the Christmas and New Year break. However, he said it had become custom and practice to give an additional payment for working during this period, which also created an equality issue.

The town clerk suggested the members could agree to award the discretionary days to enforcement officers this year, but officers could bring the calculations of how they are paid to members next year to help them make a decision.

However, the support services manager said this would set a precedent for two years, which would be even more difficult to move away from.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to apply 1.5 days' discretionary leave over the Christmas and New Year period, so the council's services will cease at 12noon on Friday 24 December 2021 and re-commence at 9am on Tuesday 4 January 2022; to apply discretionary leave from 12noon to 5pm on Friday 24 December and on Wednesday 29 December; and to apply statutory days on Thursday 30 December and Friday 31 December 2021.

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** not to extend the 1.5 discretionary days to the enforcement officers.

21/38/HR Finance Manager Recruitment

Cllr G. Stammers said three applications were received for the post; one was late and the recruitment panel felt other two applicants were not qualified enough for interview.

The town clerk said despite widely advertising the post, the three applications had come as a result of approaches to a recruitment agency. He said the post could be re-advertised, but on the basis there were no applications the first time round, he doubted there would be any next time. He said officers could also do more work with recruitment agencies but there was no guarantee it would produce suitable candidates and the council would have to pay a fee.

The town clerk said the third option was to have discussions with the assistant finance manager, who was competent and could perform the functions required of a finance manager. He said the postholder didn't apply for the post because she could currently only work 30 hours and the finance manager role was full-time, although her situation was likely to change in a year or so and she could work more hours.

The town clerk said the council would work with the employee on a programme to develop certain areas, although he didn't feel there were significant areas of weakness. He felt it would be easier to recruit a finance assistant to replace her than to recruit a finance manager.

Cllr G. Stammers said the assistant finance manager had made a significant impact on the finance team and if she was willing, it would be a good idea to develop her skills.

The town clerk suggested if this was taken forward, an interview of sorts could be carried out with the assistant finance manager to assess her competencies and then form a development plan. He suggested the appointment to finance manager was permanent to give the team stability.

Cllr G. Turner asked if there were any training courses the council could pay for.

The town clerk said she was already doing an accountancy course but there may be other short courses to help her develop in specific areas.

In terms of recruiting for a finance assistant, the town clerk there could be a wide pay scale to allow for developing from a finance assistant to an assistant finance manager.

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to permanently appoint the assistant finance manager to the post of finance manager on the basis of 30 hours a week; to offer additional training to develop the employee in specific areas; and to appoint a new finance assistant.

21/39/HR 2021-22 Pay Award and Industrial Action Ballot

The town clerk said officers wouldn't normally provide committee reports at this level but the unions and employers had got to a stage where they couldn't agree and there was the possibility of industrial action. He said there were four council employees in the union and if industrial action was taken, it would be manageable.

The town clerk said the information had been provided so members were aware of the situation if questioned.

21/40/HR Member Training and Development

The town clerk said officers were keen to offer follow-on training from the induction training members were given; this would involve more in-depth sessions on certain parts of the business, such as car parks or the cemetery, and officers could develop this if members were interested.

Members agreed they would be interested in further training about specific areas of business.

The town clerk said he would look at putting this together and also suggested some of the frontline staff could deliver the training.

The support services manager said if there was any training members would like that wasn't already offered by external organisations, it could be requested from an external organisation who would look to host it on council premises.

Cllr G. Stammers said she would be interested in health and safety training. She said any training that helped members make decisions was useful.

The town clerk said officers could provide some proposals at the next meeting about what training could be organised.

The meeting closed at 7.47pm.