



John Wright
Town Clerk

Lyme Regis Town Council

Town Council Offices
Guildhall Cottage
Church Street
Lyme Regis
Dorset
DT7 3BS

Tel: 01297 445175

Fax: 01297 443773

email: enquiries@lymeregistowncouncil.gov.uk

Human Resources Committee

Core Membership: Cllr G. Stammers (chairman), Cllr D. Sarson (vice-chairman), Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr P. May, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr G. Turner

Notice is given of a meeting of the Human Resources Committee to be held at the **Guildhall, Bridge Street, Lyme Regis** on Wednesday 12 April 2023 commencing at 7pm when the following business is proposed to be transacted:

John Wright
Town Clerk
31.03.23

The open and transparent proceedings of Full Council and committee meetings will be audio recorded and recordings will be held for one year by the town council.

If members of the public make a representation to the meeting, they will be deemed to have consented to being audio recorded.

If members of the public have any queries regarding audio recording of meetings, please contact the town clerk.

Members are reminded that in reaching decisions they should take into consideration the town council's decision to declare a climate emergency and ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030 and beyond.

AGENDA

1. **Public Forum**

Twenty minutes will be made available for public comment and response in relation to items on this agenda

Individuals will be permitted a maximum of three minutes each to address the committee

2. **Apologies**

To receive and record any apologies and reasons for absence

3. **Minutes**

To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 22 February 2023 (attached)

4. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members are reminded that if they have a disclosable pecuniary interest on their register of interests relating to any item on the agenda they are prevented from participating in any discussion or voting on that matter at the meeting and to do so would amount to a criminal offence. Similarly if you are or become aware of a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter under consideration at this meeting which is not on your register of interests or is in the process of being added to your register you must disclose such interest at this meeting and register it within 28 days.

5. Dispensations

To note the grant of dispensations made by the town clerk in relation to the business of this meeting.

6. Matters arising from the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 22 February 2023

To update members on matters arising from the previous meeting that are not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda and to allow members to seek further information on issues raised within the minutes of the previous meeting

7. Update Report

To update members on issues previously reported to this committee

8. Civility and Respect

To brief members on the Civility and Respect project

9. Town Clerk's Retirement Interview

To inform members of the 'retirement' interview held with the town clerk and of his intention not to retire

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded while members consider this item in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

10. Exempt Business

To move 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 in view of the likely disclosure of confidential matters about information relating to an individual, and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, 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.

(a) Agenda item 7 – Update Report – Pay Review

(b) Agenda item 9 – Town Clerk's Retirement Interview

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2023

Present

Chairman: Cllr G. Stammers

Members: Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr P. May, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr G. Turner

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

Absent: Cllr R. Smith

22/60/HR Public Forum

There were no members of the public present.

22/61/HR Apologies

None.

22/62/HR To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 4 January 2023

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr P. May, the minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2023 were **ADOPTED**.

22/63/HR Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

22/64/HR Dispensations

There were none.

22/65/HR Matters arising from the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 4 January 2023

Pay review

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if there were any updates on the appeals and if there was a sense of the nature of the appeals.

The town clerk said the appeals had been sent to South West Councils the previous week and officers had hoped the process would be completed by the end of February but this was now unlikely as the person managing the process was on leave this week. He said the nature of the appeals were varied and adding during the appeals' process, South West Councils had been more transparent about how the scoring criteria was constructed.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if any of those who had appealed had reached or were close to reaching the top of their pay band.

The town clerk said at least two were. He said he hoped the outcome of the appeals would be confirmed within a week.

22/66/HR Update Report

Gardener/maintenance person

Cllr B. Larcombe noted there were a lot of applications and asked how widespread the role had been advertised.

The support services manager said it had been advertised in the local newspapers, on the council's website and social media and employment websites. She said applicants had come from Lyme Regis and the surrounding areas, including Axminster, Chard and Bridport.

The town clerk said he believed the recently increased level of pay had encouraged more applications as previous recruitment rounds for these types of roles had attracted far fewer candidates.

22/67/HR Human Resources Committee – Objectives

The town clerk said the council's objectives had been delegated to him and he was now delegating them down to committees and lead officers. He said a version of this report would go to each committee and that the report would hold officers to account, along with committees and chairmen, so there was a greater shared accountability.

Members asked for more details about the Civility and Respect project.

The support services manager said it related to good governance, undertaking training to promote civility and respect, signing up to a pledge to demonstrate high standards of conduct, and supporting the introduction of sanctions. She said a report would be brought to the next meeting with further details.

22/68/HR Town Clerk's Annual Appraisal

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/69/HR Deputy Town Clerk, Spinal Column Point Progression

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/70/HR Operations Manager, Performance Appraisal Summary

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/71/HR Support Services Manager, Spinal Column Point Progression

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/72/HR Finance manager, Performance Appraisal Summary

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/73/HR Spinal Point Column Progression and Pay Arrangements for Other Employees for 2023-24

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/74/HR Overtime Threshold

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/75/HR Finance Assistant, Six-Month Probation Review

Proposed by Cllr G. Stammers and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, 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.

22/76/HR Exempt Business

The town clerk left the meeting at 7.18pm.

a) Town Clerk's Annual Appraisal

Cllr P. May asked for clarification over why the town clerk had said in his appraisal there was an issue with member behaviour but had also said an away day to improve member behaviour wasn't needed.

The support services manager clarified that the town clerk had said member behaviour was an issue but he felt there wasn't an appetite among members to employ a consultant to address the issues.

Cllr G. Stammers said efforts had been made to try and find a consultant and two had been interviewed, one of which was appointable, but they didn't want to take up the work.

Cllr B. Larcombe said the issue of poor member behaviour was at its height a year ago and it was now too late to address. He said if it wasn't being pursued, this needed to be explained to all members.

It was noted the town clerk had said in his appraisal that he could go back to the council to establish if his assumption was correct and members agreed this was should be done. It was agreed this would be discussed with the town clerk when he returned to the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the town clerk's annual appraisal summary and approve his progression to spinal column point 46 on 1 April 2023.

The town clerk returned to the meeting at 7.28pm.

The town clerk explained his position on member behaviour. He said it hadn't been possible to find a consultant and he had also sensed at council meetings there was no appetite to proceed. He said the exercise would cost around £15-20k and asked

members to consider if was the right investment with only one year left in this administration.

Cllr P. May said his concern was the council would drift on and the town clerk's next internal audit report would state members' behaviour was a big risk, so he felt the council needed to find a way of moving on from this impasse.

As there was already a decision in place to engage a consultant, members agreed there didn't need to be another formal debate. Instead, it was agreed there would be a member-only discussion following the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting on 22 March 2023 to determine the appetite for an away day.

b) Deputy Town Clerk, Spinal Column Point Progression

It was noted the deputy town clerk dealt with some of the council's most difficult issues, particularly the time spent dealing with issues surrounding the chalet and caravan park. It was also noted there was some crossover with the work the operations manager did.

The town clerk agreed the time the deputy town clerk spent on issues around the chalet and caravan park was a concern. He agreed there was some crossover between the deputy town clerk and operations manager; this was due to the deputy town clerk having specific expertise in some operational issues.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the deputy town clerk's annual appraisal summary and approve his progression to spinal column point 37 on 1 April 2023.

c) Operations Manager, Performance Appraisal Summary

Members praised the operations manager for his work with environmental groups in the community, specifically those working to clean up the River Lim. Members also noted there was a good working relationship between the operations manager and operations supervisor.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to the operations manager's annual appraisal summary and approve his progression to spinal column point 33 on 1 April 2023.

The support services manager left the meeting at 7.50pm.

d) Support Services Manager, Spinal Column Point Progression

Members praised the support services manager for the work she undertook on the council's behalf.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr C. Reynolds, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the support services manager's annual appraisal summary and approve his progression to spinal column point 27 on 1 April 2023.

The support services manager returned to the meeting at 7.54pm.

e) Finance manager, Performance Appraisal Summary

Members acknowledged the finance manager had stepped up to the role when the council needed it and agreed the standard of her reports to committees was very good.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the finance manager's annual appraisal summary and approve her progression to spinal column point 27 on 1 April 2023.

f) **Spinal Point Column Progression and Pay Arrangements for Other Employees for 2023-24**

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if there was anyone's performance that had not reached the level to allow them to progress on their pay scale.

The town clerk said he had had conversations with all managers and there were no employees whose performance was unsatisfactory and would therefore not progress through their pay scale.

Cllr M. Ellis asked if there was anything that came out of the appraisals that the members as employers could do to help employees in their jobs.

The town clerk said issues in the council chamber affected employees so it was important members demonstrated they were doing their best to improve behaviour.

Cllr M. Ellis asked if there were any courses or training employees would like to do to progress through the organisation.

The town clerk said he was very keen to see people progress through the organisation and he would particularly like to see more people in the external works' team doing a level 3 qualification, which would attract another grade on their pay scale. He said he would also like the operations supervisor to do a management course.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if there were any staff who had a poor attendance record that the members should be aware of.

The town clerk said several employees had reached or were near the trigger points in the sickness absence policy to warrant review and conversations had taken place with those employees.

It was noted Covid-19 accounted for a large proportion of the sickness absence as the council's approach was employees should not come to work while they were testing positive. This approach was more flexible in the external works' team because an employee could work alone outdoors and not have contact with colleagues.

Cllr M. Ellis said perhaps the council should review its approach as the guidance now stated people could continue as normal if they had Covid-19.

The town clerk advised members to continue with the current approach so people were not put at risk. He said office staff could and did continue to work from home when they had Covid-19 and employees appreciated this approach.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the spinal column point progression, detailed in paragraph 6, for post holders 217, 216, 203, 205, 206, 202, 210, 218, 107, 106, 104, and 109.

g) Overtime Threshold

Cllr M. Ellis said she would be in favour of increasing the maximum threshold at which overtime could be paid as it was critical to the council as a business to have staff available out-of-hours.

Cllr B. Larcombe said it should be noted overtime to any employee should be paid for the unforeseen and extra commitment and if it was foreseen work, it should be contracted.

Cllr G. Stammers was concerned increasing the overtime threshold would only benefit one employee.

The town clerk said the suggested threshold meant that managers wouldn't benefit, so this felt like the right level to set it at. He said increasing the threshold would benefit one employee, but that employee was normally the person who came in at weekends and to support events, which was essential for the good running of the council. He added the amount of overtime claimed was very low so the impact would not be significant.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to increase the overtime threshold to spinal column point 25, inclusive.

h) Finance Assistant, Six-Month Probation Review

Proposed by Cllr C. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the finance assistant's (post holder 107) continued employment with the council, effective from 11 January 2023.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Committee: Human Resources

Date: 12 April 2023

Title: Matters arising from the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 22 February 2023

Purpose of the Report

To update members on matters arising from the previous meeting that are not dealt with elsewhere on this agenda and to allow members to seek further information on issues raised within the minutes of the previous meeting.

Recommendation

Members note the report

Report

22/65/HR – Matters arising from the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 4 January 2023

Pay review

As reported previously to this committee, seven employees appealed against the outcome of their pay review. South West Councils has now considered the appeals and a verbal update will be given in exempt business.

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded while members consider this item in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

22/66/HR – Update Report

Gardener/maintenance person

Following interviews on 9 February 2023, Kai Sparks and Matt Davies were appointed and started in their posts on 20 February 2023.

John Wright
Town clerk
March 2023

Committee: Human Resources

Date: 12 April 2023

Title: Update Report

Purpose of Report

To update members on issues previously reported to this committee

Recommendation

Members note the report

Report

National Joint Council (NJC) trade union pay claim

On 30 January 2023, the national employers received the NJC joint unions' pay claim for local government services. The details of the claim were reported to this committee on 22 February 2023.

This was followed on 23 February 2023 by a one-year (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024) full and final offer from the employers, as follows:

- With effect from 1 April 2023, an increase of £1,925 (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive.
- With effect from 1 April 2023, an increase of 3.88 per cent on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.42)
- With effect from 1 April 2023, an increase of 3.88 per cent on all allowances (as listed in the 2022 NJC pay agreement circular dated 1 November 2022)

Following the offer, the unions requested a meeting with the National Employers, which took place on 8 March 2023. The unions sought a 'significant improvement' to the headline offer. The National Employers rejected the unions' request and reaffirmed their offer as full and final.

The national committees of all three unions (Unison, GMB and Unite) have rejected the employers' final offer. Unison has announced a ballot for industrial action and GMB and Unite members will be consulted on the basis of a recommendation that the offer be rejected.

John Wright
Town clerk
March 2023

Committee: Human Resources

Date: 12 April 2023

Title: Civility and Respect

Purpose of Report

To brief members on the Civility and Respect project

Recommendation

Members consider the report and recommend a full discussion on the Civility and Respect project at the Full Council on 17 May 2023

Background

1. Concerns over ethical standards in public life and the conduct of public officials and elected members are not new.
2. In response to a widespread belief about poor standards of conduct in public life, in 1995 The Committee on Standards in Public Life established a set of seven principles¹ - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership - that should guide the behaviour of those in public life.
3. The Localism Act 2011 made changes to the arrangements for the adoption of a Member Code of Conduct and for the consideration and investigation of councillor conduct complaints by the council.
4. The legislation allowed councils to determine their own Code of Conduct; in reality, Codes of Conduct are based on model documents supplied by national bodies, i.e., the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
5. Unsurprisingly, Code of Conducts are informed by the seven principles that guide behaviour in public life.
6. The Localism Act 2011 ended the Standards' Regime and reduced the level of sanctions that can be applied to councillor behaviour which is assessed as breaching the Code of Conduct; the most serious level of sanction that can be applied is censure.
7. Throughout the sector, concerns about the impact of bullying, harassment and intimidation are having on councils, councillors, and staff have remained and appear to have got worse.
8. In a 2019 report, Local Government Ethical Standards, the Committee on Standards in Public Life highlighted numerous areas of concern, not least of which related to standards of behaviour from elected members.
9. The committee made 26 recommendations for improvements in governance, standards, and behaviour, including:
 - the ability for a principal authority to impose sanctions on a parish councillor following a review
 - the ability for a local authority to suspend councillors

¹ The seven principles of public life became known as the Nolan Principles after Lord Nolan who led The Committee on Standards in Public Life.

- mandatory training for clerks.
10. The local council sector considers the government's response to this report as somewhat lacklustre and, in part, the Civility and Respect Project is a response to the government's lack of enthusiasm to confront behaviour standards in the sector.

Report

11. The Civility and Respect Project was founded by the Civility and Respect Working Group.
12. The project is supported by representatives across the sector, including councils, county associations, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and One Voice Wales (OVW).
13. The project is a 'bottom-up initiative that promotes good governance, positive debate, and supports the well-being of councillors, officers, and staff.
14. The project has called for the adoption of the LGA 2021 Code of Conduct by local councils, as well as advocating training for councillors, clerks, and council staff so they know how to recognise and address bullying, harassment, discrimination, and promote inclusion.
15. The project has been going for two years and completed its first phase of work in November 2022; the second phase is underway.
16. The project has six workstreams, some of which overlap. Progress among the workstreams is varied.

Governance

17. This involves the development and endorsement of policies and procedures that support good governance and minimise opportunities for bullying and harassment. These include adoption of the LGA Member Code of Conduct, a member/officer protocol, clarity of councillor and officer roles and responsibilities, an up-to-date social media policy, a dignity at work policy, a zero-tolerance statement (this is currently being drafted by the project team) and a grievance policy that reflects the dignity at work policy.

Collaboration

18. This includes the Association of Democratic Services Officers, lawyers in local government, the Local Government Association, the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, Vereniging Van Griffiers (Netherlands Clerks) and the Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland.
19. The workstream includes communications (a flyer and short video has been produced), culture change, lobbying for sanctions, and support for victims.

Enabling

20. The project uses a multi-channel approach to marketing and engagement with councils. Analytical platforms are used to record activity and responses.

Intervention

21. The workstream is recommending the sharing of best practice between county associations and is discussing low-cost interventions with HR support consultants.

Legislative

22. The workstream aims to monitor and influence relevant legislation and raise the profile of the Civility and Respect Project among parliamentarians, government departments and civil servants.
23. Local councils can write to their members of parliament (MPs); the aim is to increase cross-party awareness.
24. Dr Julian Lewis MP has offered to sponsor a second early day motion. Lobbying is ongoing.

Training

25. The workstream's overall objective is to upgrade skills and knowledge to help councillors and officers deal with challenging personal relationships and situations. The mechanism: training packages delivered through several channels, e.g., eLearning, webinars, and videos.

The Civility and Respect Pledge

26. At the centre of the Civility and Respect Project is the pledge. The Civility and Respect Pledge was launched in August 2022. The pledge, which is a voluntary public statement of commitment, helps to define the right behaviours within councils, prevent bullying and support councils demonstrating high standards of conduct.
27. By signing the pledge, a council is agreeing it will treat councillors, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations and volunteers, with civility and respect.
28. The pledge signs a local council up to essential policies and procedures and, more importantly, to behaviours which will improve the dynamics and performance of the organisation, its culture, and public perception.
29. The pledge is attached, **appendix 8A**. Its requirements are detailed below and are accompanied by observations:

Requirements	Observations
Treat other councillors, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles.	There is a reality and perception gap that needs to be breached within and outside the organisation to address the council's commitment to adhere to the concepts of civility and respect. Before the council signs up to the Civility and Respect agenda, it must consider whether it has a realistic chance of adhering to it. The town clerk suggests community organisations and local businesses are added to this list.
Commit to training councillors and staff. Sign up to the code of conduct for councillors	Training opportunities are regularly briefed but take up among members is low. Officer commitment to short course training and courses leading to formal qualifications is good. The council is signed up to a modified version of the Code of Conduct; modifications reflect the way the council

	operates rather than substantive changes to the code clauses.
Have good governance arrangements in place	<p>The council has a member/officer relations protocol and an up-to-date social media policy. The roles and responsibilities of councillors and the town clerk are detailed in the member/officer relations protocol and are part of the member induction programme. A separate document can be created that specifically details these roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>As part of the Civility and Respect project, a dignity at work policy has been drafted by the Society of Local Council Clerks. The policy has been reviewed by officers and requires amendments to amend and integrate its content into the council's policies and procedures on bullying and harassment, complaints, grievance, disciplinary, Code of Conduct, and equality and diversity.</p> <p>When the town clerk receives the zero-tolerance guide/statement from the Civility and Respect project, it will be reviewed by officers and presented to the council for consideration.</p>
Commit to seeking professional help at early stages should civility and respect issues arise	<p>The council already indicated it is committed to seeking professional help to resolve civility and respect issues but engaging professional help isn't easy; there doesn't appear to be enough providers. The town clerk has spoken to Dorset Association of Parish and Town Council's (DAPTC) chief executive about the lack of human resource consultants and suggested a panel of participants is drawn up; DAPTC's chief executive is part of the project's intervention work stream.</p>
Call out bullying and harassment if, and when it happens.	<p>The town clerk suggests this is extended to include other behaviours which detract from the business and reputation of the council; councillors and officers should jointly agree these behaviours.</p> <p>Councillors should commit to calling out the behaviour of all members, not just those with which they do not identify. Intervention should not be brutal and where appropriate, should be done privately.</p>

Continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council	The council can periodically review best practice in the sector through regular committee reports. The council should start the process of preparing for a new administration in May 2024 and suggest the early steps it could take to promote good behaviour.
Support the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	The council should consider whether it supports further sanctions against members; this cannot be taken as a given. There is a copy of a draft letter to our member of parliament, Chris Loder, appendix 8B which pushes for further sanctions to be applied against councillors. If members support further sanctions, this draft letter can be sent to Chris Loder MP.

30. To take the pledge, councils sign up online, the pledge certificate is emailed to the council and the council is added to a digital map which identifies others who have signed the pledge.
31. Local town and parish councils who have signed the pledge are Axminster, Ilminster, Verwood, Shaftesbury, Blandford Forum, and West Moors.

Considerations

32. Member behaviour is a live issue for Lyme Regis Town Council. If the council signs the pledge, it must commit itself to its conditions and members must unconditionally adhere to them.
33. There is little point in signing up to something if you know in your heart of hearts that either you or your organisation will fail to comply with its conditions; this undermines the town council's credibility and the credibility of a national initiative which others are passionately committed to.
34. Accusations inside or outside the council chamber about breaches of the pledge won't do anything to promote the council's reputation.
35. A more measured approach might be to keep member behaviour under review and sign the pledge when there is enough of a consensus that behaviours are sufficiently under control.
36. As well as modifying behaviour and keeping it under review until the election in May 2024, the council could prepare a lessons learnt and suggestions' paper for the new administration.
37. Although this report is presented to this committee, its content requires consideration by the whole council. For this reason, it is proposed the report, along with any recommendations from this committee, is considered by the Full Council on 17 May 2023.

John Wright
Town clerk
March 2023

By signing the Pledge, your council is agreeing that the council will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles and that it:

- Has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors
- Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy
- Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise
- Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens
- Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through for example the **Local Council Award Scheme**
- Supports the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

SLCC – Model letter for SLCC Members.Nov.2022

Dear **(name of local MP)**,

As a **town/parish/community clerk**, working for **name of town, parish or community council**, I am writing to you in a personal capacity to draw your attention to growing concerns about the bullying, harassment and intimidation of local town and parish councillors and their staff, all working in and for their communities. This is clearly an issue at all levels of government and one that affects our MPs whose day-to-day work is made more difficult through incivility, online and in person abuse, stalking and even threats. As public servants, we deserve protection from this.

At a local level, this lack of civility and respect is an issue with significant impact. It is partly reflected in the low numbers of candidates, particularly females, stepping forward as local councillors, uncontested elections and, in some cases, a reluctance to take on public facing work for fear of abuse (e.g., attendance at councillor surgeries and meetings). With more than 10,000 town, parish and community councils (plus 735 in Wales) and with around 100,000 councillors, this worsening situation is magnified and clearly bad for democracy.

In all of this, I'd like to highlight the effect on staff working in local councils, particularly for clerks. (A clerk is the executive officer steering the council, whether in a large city or town council or a small parish council). In the last 2 years, the high turnover of professional clerks is now heading towards a major recruitment and retention issue. Some are experiencing not only casual abuse from the public as they run their councils but, sadly, in some documented cases, persistent incivility from the councillors they serve. Unlike most other employees, clerks have no recourse to this unacceptable behaviour and often, with little in the way of sanctions, the only option is to resign.

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), the professional membership body for clerks, as well as the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales (OVC) and County Associations representing local councils and councillors in England and Wales, have all recognised this. Investment has been made in a Civility & Respect Project which is coordinating a programme to support councillors and staff within our sector via training, good governance, clear policies and intervention processes. It will also work to influence relevant legislation to combat online abuse, introduce sanctions and enhance the role of monitoring officers. It is also calling for the government to revisit the recommendations set out in the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) report on local government ethical standards.

This is now the subject of an Early Day Motion – Intimidation at community, parish and town councils. (EDM 611 – tabled on 23 November 2022, primary sponsor - Dr Julian Lewis, MP.)

I would welcome your support in raising this important national issue affecting local town and parish councils via parliament and, as a clerk, I encourage you to join your fellow MPs in adding your signature to EDM 611.

Yours sincerely