

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL 2026

Present

Chairman: Cllr M. Ellis

Members: Cllr G. Caddy, Cllr S. Cockerell

Other members: Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr P. May, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood

Officers: S. King (finance assistant), A. Mullins (assistant town clerk), J. Wright (town clerk)

25/64/HR Public Forum

B. Larcombe

B. Larcombe spoke in relation to agenda item 9, Employee Benefits. He said the £10k allocated in the budget was there if members wanted to explore the spend, there was no commitment to spend it and if not spent, it goes back into the pot. He noted this would also mean a £10k increase in the council's operating costs every year if some of the benefits were introduced. He said previous claims that most employers offered employee benefits were not entirely accurate. He said reference was made to retail businesses, but this sector was notoriously low paid so workers needed benefits to attract them to the roles. Benefits included staff discounts on products they sell or a free meal off their own menu. He said this council had carried out job evaluation and pay rises were given every year at least at the level of cost of living. He said council staff were actually quite well paid. Referring to the suggestion for a day off for your birthday, he said days off were normally part of the negotiation package, so if unions couldn't get a pay rise, it would claim for extra leave. It was not something that was granted outside the negotiating arena. He said in the public sector, a lot of areas had austerity and a pay freeze over a period of 10 years, but local government didn't. To get around that, some of the benefits that were available in negotiation were funded by salary sacrifice. He said the council negotiates a collective benefit, but the staff then join that scheme with a sacrifice to pay for it at their expense. He said the council's reputation was brilliant but if it went ahead with employee benefits, it would be judged as being greedy.

N. Ball

N. Ball said he believed a lot of pre-meetings took place before council meetings and that councillors were controlled by the office staff. He reminded members that council staff were paid by the taxpayer and by income from various sources. He said the council wage bill would soon exceed £1million

and he felt the council staff had a good rate of pay. He asked why the council staff asked for health insurance and suggested this could be deducted from wages individually if needed. He said health insurance had been pushed by office staff several times and this was where the control came by senior officers. He said councillors seemed pressurised in this situation, made to look second best if they disagreed on certain subjects. He believed the council office thought it had the right to push people about and said meetings in the back room before meetings should involve the whole council, not just the two or three committee members. He suggested that somebody had told other councillors not to attend, which gave the office more clout when being asked their thoughts. If he was wrong about this, he hoped members looked very closely at the discussion. He said at the moment, engagement with the office staff was not good and control was a marvellous thing but not when it's one-sided. He said free speech was being squashed. He encouraged all councillors to attend the town meeting, but said they had probably been told by the clerk they didn't have to attend. He said this was probably the best time to engage with the public and get true feedback of how things are going. He said the committee needed to listen to public opinion and not be oppressed by the few.

25/65/HR Apologies

Cllr C. Reynolds – illness
Cllr G. Stammers – holiday

25/66/HR To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 18 February 2026

Proposed by Cllr S. Cockerell and seconded by Cllr G. Caddy, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2026, were **ADOPTED**.

25/67/HR Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

25/68/HR Dispensations

There were none.

25/69/HR Matters arising from the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 7 January 2026.

Employee Benefits

A member asked that the details of the agreed health cash plan were provided to members so they were aware of exactly what it included.

The assistant town clerk said the welcome pack would be emailed to members.

25/70/HR Update Report

Enforcement officers

The town clerk said interviews were taking place on 10 April 2026.

25/71/HR Human Resources Committee – Objectives

Members noted the report.

25/72/HR Employee Benefits

Although members supported the agreed health benefits for employees, there was a general feeling the additional proposed benefits were excessive and unnecessary, as staff were well looked after. Members acknowledged that although a budget of £10k had been allocated for employee benefits, there was no obligation to spend the entire budget. It was also noted any expenditure would then become annual expenditure, rather than a one-off payment.

Proposed by Cllr G. Caddy and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** not to agree any additional employee benefits.

25/73/HR Regrading

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, 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.

25/74/HR Comparative Pay

A member queried why this item should be confidential as all the information was publicly available.

The town clerk explained the reasons for the report's confidentiality.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, 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.

25/75/HR Confidential Staffing Update

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, 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.

25/76/HR Exempt Business

a) Regrading

Members discussed whether it was necessary to carry out a formal re-evaluation of the role, but this would require external support. The town clerk suggested this would be a disproportionate expense for one job role.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve a regrading of post 209 from spinal column points 10-13 to spinal column points 16-19, and make the appointment at spinal column point 19, effective from 1 April 2026.

b) Comparative Pay

The finance assistant reminded members this was confidential data. She highlighted the staff to income ratio was between 35% and 53%, with this council sitting in the lower bracket at just under 40%.

It was noted the council's biggest income stream was car parking and it was suggested by a member that this council didn't have to put in as much effort as others for that income.

The town clerk said car parking also required significant management and expenditure, such as enforcement costs, repairs and maintenance, resurfacing, parking machines, cash collection and reconciliation. He said it also attracted business rates and VAT liabilities.

The town clerk said he hoped the data placed into context employees' pay in comparison to other councils, demonstrating this council had one of the lowest staff to income ratios.

c) Confidential Staffing Update

Members noted the latest position and were supportive of the officers' approach to deal with the issue. It was agreed officers should try to bring the matter to an early resolution, if possible, and noted any significant developments would be brought to members for a decision.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.