

Wonersh Parish Council

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Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Committee of the Wonersh Parish Council held on Thursday 3 March 2022 at 11.45am, at the Wonersh Sports Pavilion.

Present: Cllrs Howard (Chair), Jenner, Lavender and Shutes

In attendance: Lisa Davison.

HR21/22 01 To receive and accept apologies for absence.

The Council received and accepted apologies from Cllr Band, Cllr Jennings deputised for him at this meeting. The Council noted that Cllr Shutes was in attendance at the meeting as a non-committee member with a role in the Clerk's appraisal, item HR21/22 06.

HR21/22 02 Wonersh Parish Code of Conduct – Declarations of disclosable interests and if requested consideration and approval of dispensations under the Code.

There were no declarations of disclosable interests.

HR21/22 03 Open meeting for members of the public to raise matters about personnel issues.

There were no members of the public present.

HR21/22 04 To receive progress reports about personnel matters previously considered and approved by the Committee or the Council.

Cllr Howard, noted that the emphasis for last year had been recognising that the Council required further staff hours and the result had been the successful recruitment of an Assistant to the Clerk. All matters requiring a decision now are in the agenda and matters for future consideration included under HR21/22 08.

HR21/22 05 To receive the Assistant to the Clerk's probationary appraisal report and approve next steps.

Cllr Howard provided an overview of the Assistant to the Clerk's probationary period and associated appraisal report and meeting, held in December with the Clerk and Cllr Howard as chair of the Personnel Committee. The Committee welcomed and thanked Jeannette Stevenson, noting her professionalism, responsiveness and the speed at which she adapted to the new role. They recognised the positive impact that this was having on the Council and the effective relationship between members of staff and also with councillors. The Committee recommended to the Council that the Assistant to the Clerk be confirmed in post and approved the following objectives for the coming year, noting that progress had been made on the majority of these already:

1. To research costs of the Playground Training from different providers and to carry out once approved towards the beginning of 2022.
2. To provide Council with the costs and timescale of the Finance training (FILCA). Currently proposed to start at the beginning of 2023.
3. Liaise with the internal auditor and Council to agree best process for signing off invoices. To link in with the decision around whether to switch to a specific accounting package and year end, March 2022.

4. Attend meetings with Scribe and Rialtas to gain a deeper understanding of the different accounting software packages and advise the Councillors on benefits and costs. Look to implement the change after year end if agreed this is the best course of action.
5. Understand the process and requirements for the 3-year finance / budget plan. Link in with the budget 2023/24 from October 2022.

HR21/22 06 To receive the Clerk's appraisal report and approve next steps.

Cllr Howard provided an overview of the Clerk's appraisal and noted how effectively she juggled a range of priorities within the role and more widely. The Committee thanked Lisa Davison for her approachability and professionalism and noted the achievements that the Council had made with her as the Chief Operating Officer. They stressed the importance of developing justified confidence and assertiveness within the role. The Clerk welcomed the positive and constructive feedback given on her appraisal forms, including the importance of recognising the team nature of a council in terms of what is achieved, including asking for assistance as required.

Together the Committee and the Clerk reviewed and suggested updates to proposed objectives and requested that these be reflected in the documentation prior to this being signed off by council. The Clerk noted that she was fully in support of the Council's strategy but had found transferring these directly to the objectives had been challenging, where the statutory and practical matters were often at the forefront of everyday tasks. Cllr Howard suggested an action planning session in advance of the Council away day looking at the council business plan, designed to target effort and resources effectively. In considering the SMART targets it was noted that extending some of these would also assist with this. In particular, the Committee were supportive of the Clerk completing CILCA in 2022/23 but suggested a longer timescale given council benefits to be derived from this.

Action: Clerk to consider the final objectives for the next year and circulate to Council.

Cllr Howard and the Clerk to complete action planning activity to assist in the constructive alignment of the staff priorities and Council strategy.

Council to hold an away day over the summer to develop the Business Plan.

HR21/22 07 To consider and approve staff hours and working pattern, within the approved budget and consider potential future budgetary requirements.

It was noted that the budget for the next year was set with a similar staff budget – increased by 5% - to this financial year but the opportunity to review this for next year was raised.

The Clerk noted that with changing family priorities the Assistant to the Clerk would be considering her working hours in the Autumn. The Clerk and Councillors noted that the Assistant to the Clerk brings many complementary skills to the council, which would assist the council in meeting the aims and objectives of the Strategy, as reflected in the Business Plan in due course. Should there be additional capacity the Council was supportive of her hours being increased. With this in mind the Committee agreed that appraisals be moved to September so that any increase in hours or rates of pay be reflected in the following year's budget.

The Clerk requested that, from September, she keep the same overall hours but transfer to working 26 hours per week, over four days, during term time and 10 hours per week, provisionally one week on, one week off during the school holidays. She noted that with the current working pattern holiday childcare costs would regularly exceed her weekly income. The Council agreed to trial this and the Clerk noted that she would continue to work flexibly to meet the requirements of the role year through and these proposals could be reviewed if it was found to be not suitable.

The Committee requested that the Clerk continue to include her working pattern in the signature and to explore how decisions can be made in her absence by the Chair and Vice Chair, plus lead councillors as appropriate, during times when she was not at work. It is likely that this should be reflected in the Standing Orders.

Cllr Shutes also noted that if the Clerk found that the requirements of the job meant that she was working beyond her paid hours to achieve them then this should be claimed as overtime.

There was not the opportunity to discuss this further but the Clerk also requested that hours spent on CILCA, or a proportion of the hours spent on CILCA, be covered by the Council, given the direct benefit.

Action: Appraisals to next be completed in September 2022 with a view to budgeting for any increase in staff hours and pay rate.

Council to consider changes to staff costs beyond annual increases with consideration for this during budget setting, commencing October 2022.

Personnel Committee to make the recommendation to council regarding the Clerk's working hours from September 2022.

The Council's contribution to the Clerk's hours spent on CILCA be considered further by the Personnel Committee or Council, as appropriate.

HR21/22 08 Members' business and other correspondence for noting or including on a future agenda.

The Council noted that the policies relating to the Council's role as an employer require updating and that suggested updates should be developed by Cllr Howard and the Clerk and brought to the next meeting of the Personnel Committee.

Appraisals, now scheduled in September 2022 should also be brought to this meeting.

HR21/22 09 To consider and approve the date of the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee confirmed that the next meeting of the Committee would be in

HR21/22 10 To consider and approve that the official record of this meeting be presented at the meeting of the Council on 10 March 2022 for approval.

The Committee resolved to approve this (proposed by Cllr Howard).