

Newbury Town Council

Minutes of the Staff Sub-Committee held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Newbury at 10.00 am on 2nd March 2023.

Present:

Councillors Councillor Martin Colston (Chairman), Sarah Slack, Vaughan Miller, Andy Moore, Elizabeth O’Keeffe and Nigel Foot (substitute for Cllr. Jeff Beck)

In Attendance:

Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Apologies for absence

Councillor Jeff Beck

7. Declarations of interest and dispensations

The CEO said that Councillor Andy Moore is also a member of West Berkshire Council and that he had a dispensation to discuss any matters which might relate to that Council at this meeting.

There were no declarations regarding the items on the agenda.

8. Minutes of the Staff Sub- Committee meeting held on 5 January 2023.

The minutes were amended to show Councillor Andy Moore as apologies, not “In Attendance”.

Proposed: Councillor Elizabeth O’Keeffe

Seconded: Councillor Martin Colston

Resolved that the Chairman sign the minutes, as amended, of the Staff Sub-Committee meeting held on 5 January 2023 as a true record.

9. Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2022-23

The CEO told the meeting that the pay element of the Agreement had been approved by the Subcommittee on 23 November 2022 and applied to all staff employed by the Council. There was an additional clause in the agreement, which awarded all current staff an extra day of annual leave (pro-rata), from 1 April 2023.

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Sarah Slack

Resolved: To Approve the terms of the Agreement for all Council staff.

10. Exclusion of the press and public

Proposed: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Councillor Elizabeth O’Keeffe

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 the following items of business because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential and personal nature of the business to be transacted.

11. Services Delivery Manager

The CEO told the Meeting that 22 applications had been received for this post, which were screened down to 9 for the Selection Panel,. The Panel shortlisted five candidates, all of whom attended for interview on Monday 20 February.

The Selection Panel recommended that the post be offered to 3 candidates, in order of preference.

The CEO reported that since the Panel's first preference had advised him that he was accepting another job offer, rather than this one.

Proposed: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Councillor Elizabeth O'Keeffe

Resolved: To approve the recommendations of the selection panel for the post of Services Delivery Manager and to authorise the CEO to progress the recruitment with the preferred candidates, in order of preference.

12. Finance and Corporate Services Manager

The CEO reported that while the Council used the same recruitment channels as used for the Services Delivery Manager, only 4 applications were received. One of these has been invited for interview on 6th March. The CEO will update after the interview.

13. Changes to contracts

13.1: The Community Services Manager

The CEO told the meeting that the current contract was for a minimum of three days per week. The CEO had discussed with the CSM his position when the Services Delivery Manager was appointed. He was happy to assist with induction and to support the Council's capital and one-off projects, such as the cafe, the upgrading of the Wharf toilets, repairs to the bandstand roof and upgrades at the Nightingales. However, he wishes to reduce his hours with the Council from the date of the appointment of the Services Delivery Manager.

The Subcommittee thanked the CSM for his outstanding support to the Council.

Proposed: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Councillor Martin Colston

Resolved: that the CSM's contract of employment with the Council is amended to a maximum of three days' work per week from the date of appointment of the Services Delivery Manager.

13.2: Two officers re working hours

The CEO told the meeting that 2 officers had requested that their contracts of employment be amended from their current working hours arrangement, from 8:45 AM to 5:15 PM, Monday to Thursday and 8:45 AM to 4:45 PM on a Friday, with an hour for lunch break each day, to be amended to 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday to Thursday and 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM on Fridays, with 30 minutes for lunch break each day. This proposal does not involve any reduction in overall working hours. The request was made in order to facilitate childcare arrangements when one of the officers returns to work after her maternity leave. The Council's managers recommend to the Staff Subcommittee that this request be approved.

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Nigel Foot

Resolved: To approve amended contracts of employment, as requested.

14. Redundancy

Members noted the staff structure review approved by the Subcommittee proposed that the post of part time accounts officer is made redundant upon the appointment of the Council's Finance and Corporate Services Manager. The CEO has advised the officer concerned that her post will be made redundant and has discussed the terms of the redundancy with her. The officer has acknowledged the amount that would be due under statutory redundancy and has requested payment of a month's salary in lieu of notice in order to give her time to apply for replacement work, and attend interviews if required.

The CEO told the meeting that the statutory redundancy amounts to £616.47, having regard to the relatively short length of service and the fact that the officer is employed for only two days per week. The cost of statutory redundancy plus a month salary in lieu of notice would be £1,506.91.

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Sarah Slack

Resolved: That the Council offers a redundancy settlement of £1,000 to the council's part time accounts officer, Herington when the Council's Finance and Corporate Services Manager is appointed.

15. Other Staff Matters

The CEO told the meeting that the Council would be facing serious staff shortages from the 17th of March arising from three long term absences and three vacant posts. In effect the Council would be operating on only 55% of its full staff resources. He outlined to the Subcommittee the various measures that the Council had been taking in its efforts to fill these vacancies.

The issues arose as follows:

- A) The Civic Manager: commencing maternity leave on the 2nd of March, which will continue until the 31st of December 2023.

B) The Council had planned that the officer providing maternity cover for another officer would provide maternity cover for the Civic Manager, however she had tendered her resignation, for family reasons, with effect from the 17th of March 2023. Therefore, at the moment the Council has no cover arrangements in place for either of the two officers who will be on maternity leave from the 17th of March.

B) One officer has been on sick leave since September 2022, submitted a further doctor's certificate excusing her from work until the 30th of April 2023. She has advised that she wishes to return to work. In this event the Council was seeking temporary cover in order to ease the burden on the other community services officer employed by the Council. However the Council had not been successful to date.

C) One officer is not due to return to work after maternity leave until 9th May.

D) The Council is currently trying to recruit to the posts of Services Delivery Manager and Finance and Corporate Services Manager.

E) The new post of Civic Officer, as approved in the Staff structure review, is vacant.

The CEO outlined the various approaches that have been made by the Council to find cover for the three officers on long term absences, but so far without success.

The CEO advised the meeting that the Council would continue its endeavours to provide temporary cover.

He also asked for approval to commence the formal recruitment to the new post of Civic Officer (0.75 FTE) as recommended in the staff structure review. The salary for this post has been provided in the budget for 2023-24

Proposed: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Councillor Elizabeth O'Keeffe

Resolved: i) That the meeting noted the issues arising from staff shortages and

ii) That the CEO is authorised to continue to make appropriate arrangements for temporary cover, as required, and

iii) That the CEO is authorised to commence recruitment to the new post of Civic Officer, and

iv) That Council staff will prioritise necessary services and functions until adequate staffing resources are available, and

v) That the staff who have been taking on extra burdens and responsibilities are acknowledged and a suitable reward made to them (the CEO to consult the Chair of Staff Subcommittee in this matter)

The CEO to advise all members of the current staffing shortage and problems.

The meeting finished at 11.00 am.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____