

Wheatley Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 6th FEBRUARY 2017 IN THE MERRY BELLS HALL AT 7.30pm

Councillors: P Bignell, R Bell, J Carr, T Davies, A Davies (Chair), R Harding, P Hood, P Gregory, A Walkey, P Willmott

Officer: The Assistant Clerk - Annette Richards

There were no members of the public present.

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Cllrs Coleridge, Harding, Roberts & Stephens

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None

95. TO DISCUSS MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FULL COUNCIL TRAINING DAY 14th JANUARY AND AGREE PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGES PROPOSED AT THAT SESSION.

Copies of the email sent by the Chair to all councillors on 15th Jan 2017 were distributed to those present.

- a) **Covering staff holiday.** The Chair to email councillors with a Doodle Poll to find their availability to visit the office to check post, messages etc. Arrangements will be made for collection/allocation of office keys.
- b) **The current number of councillors.** To be discussed at the next full council.
- c) **Planning training.** Councillors felt that it would be very beneficial to have a bespoke training course and invite other parish councils to attend, preferably in the evening in May or June. This would be particularly beneficial to new councillors. **The Chair will approach OALC about the possibility of holding such training in The Merry Bells.**
- d) **Changes to standing orders.** The amended standing orders will be distributed before the next full council meeting.
- e) **Monthly meetings.** Most councillors were in favour of the full council meeting being held monthly, but the meetings need to be shorter and with a much more concise format. All reports should be submitted and read before each meeting to save time. It was felt there is currently a lot of duplication between full council and F&GP. However, financial matters should still be discussed in a separate meeting. Changes to the occurrence and structure of full council meetings to be made at the AGM only.

The Chair to write and distribute a paper on monthly meetings prior to the next full council.

- f) **Freedom of Information.** Each councillor to have a @wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk address to protect them from FOI requests about their personal email. Cllr Hood proposed an opt-out for email for all councillors, seconded by Cllr Wilmott. **This was agreed.**

96. TO DISCUSS THE PROCESS BEING FOLLOWED FOR RECRUITMENT OF THE CLERK AND THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTERIM PERIOD.

A copy of the 'Recruitment and Selection of the New Clerk to the Council' report and the 'Clerk - Selection Interview' questions were distributed to those present.

The Chair explained there had been eighteen enquiries and twelve applications. There are seven people shortlisted for interviews this week. The Staffing Committee has taken advice from OALC regarding the recruitment process to make it as objective and non-discriminatory as possible. The best practice is for all candidates to be shortlisted anonymously and to be asked the same pre-prepared questions in the interview so as to be measured against the same criteria. This lowers the risk of any accusation of bias.

Some councillors expressed concern that the full council was not consulted during the selection process and this may have an impact on the potential working relationship of councillors and clerk. In the past, the full council has interviewed at the second interview stage. Other councillors felt there should have been more time after the shortlisting to see the application forms and then to have informal meetings with shortlisted candidates prior to or after the interview to provide additional feedback to the selection panel.

The Chair reported that the selection panel will consist of herself, Cllr Gregory and Bethan Osborne (HR advisor from OALC) as a small panel is considered to be best practice. After the interview, the candidates will be met informally by Cllr T Davies for a walk around the village. Cllr Carr expressed concern that she was not informed about who was on the selection panel. The Chair reported that the other members of the Staffing Committee are unavailable on the interview days. Some councillors felt that there should be at least one more person on the interview panel.

After much further discussion, it was suggested that the candidates are told at their interview that they may be invited back to an informal meeting with councillors. **The Chair will speak with Beth Osbourne regarding setting up an informal meeting for councillors (if they wish) to meet with the two or three strongest candidates before a final offer of employment is made.**

97. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

*To propose that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph X of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, namely private contractual and employment matters. **No members of the public were present.***

98. PROPOSAL TO GRANT DELEGATED POWERS TO THE STAFFING COMMITTEE TO MAKE AN OFFER TO THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE, SUBJECT TO FULL COUNCIL APPROVAL, FOLLOWING INTERVIEWS SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 7th.

Concern was expressed that the job had been advertised using point thirty at the top of the LC2 scale. Cllr Hood pointed out that usually people are appointed mid-scale. The Chair concurred that this top scale would only be for someone with very high levels of skills, qualifications and experience; similar to the former clerk who had ten years of experience.

It was agreed that the Staffing Committee should make a recommendation to Council first, before making an offer of employment to the successful candidate. It was also agreed not to mention scale points when discussing salary with candidates.

Councillors were concerned that the job advert stated occasional weekend working when, in fact, the Clerk would be expected to do regular Saturday mornings. It was confirmed that the interview panel fully intend to ask the candidates' availability to work regular Saturday mornings.

The rationale for offering thirty hours a week rather than thirty-seven was to offer flexibility to the right candidate, who may wish to work part-time. The salary will be pro-rata.

The Chair suggested that a Personnel Committee be formed to provide appraisals and to cover disciplinary and grievance matters for council staff and that this should be discussed and put in place at the next full council meeting. This was agreed.

The Assistant Clerk was then asked politely to leave the room, due to the Council discussing wage related issues.

The Chair proposed an 'Acting up' allowance be provided to the Assistant Clerk for the period 1st February until one month following the appointment of the new Clerk. Agreed unanimously.

99. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – MONDAY 6th MARCH 2017 - Noted

Meeting closed at 8.45pm