

MINUTES of the Staffing & Resources Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 16th July, 2018 at Crown Chambers, Melksham at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Richard Wood (Chair), John Glover (Vice Chair), Alan Baines, David Pafford and Robert Shea-Simonds.

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk)

- 167/18 **Housekeeping & Announcements:** Cllr. Wood welcomed all to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.
- 168/18 **Election of Chair of Staffing & Resources Committee:** Cllr. Wood invited nominations for the Chair of the Staffing & Resources Committee for 2018/19. **Resolved:** *The Council unanimously resolved that Cllr. Baines be Chair of the Staffing Committee for 2018/19.*
- 169/18 **Election of Vice-Chair of Staffing Committee:** Cllr. Wood invited nominations for the Vice-Chair of the Staffing Committee for 2018/19.. **Resolved:** *The Council unanimously resolved that Cllr. Holder be Vice-Chair of the Staffing Committee for 2018/19.*

Cllr. Baines took the Chair.

- 170/18 **Apologies:** Cllr. Nick Holder was unwell and this was accepted.
- 171/18 **Declarations of Interest:** The Clerk declared an interest as a staff member.
- 172/18 **Dispensation Requests:** None.

- 173/18 **Items to be Held in Committee: Recommended:** *Agenda item 7 to be held in Committee under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 “That the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted”. This is in line with Standing Order 3d: “That in the view of the special/confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw”. Reason: a) engagement, terms of service, conduct and dismissal of employees.*

- 174/18 **Public Participation:** There were no members of the public present.

In line with Standing Order 3d the following agenda item was held in Committee.

- 175/18 **Staffing Structure:** Cllr. Baines explained that the Finance Assistant had tendered her resignation to take effect from Thursday 26th July, and that the Council therefore needed to consider how they would move forward from a staffing perspective. He gave some background history in that the position of Finance Assistant was created in 2007 due to increased workload. The Clerk had been in post as Finance Assistant, and then Assistant Clerk and RFO (Responsible Finance Officer) from that time until she herself

become the Clerk in 2014. Since 2014 there has been a frequent turnover of staff in this post which has resulted in a lot of staff hours being taken up in training and a supporting role, mostly from the Clerk. It was considered that the role of the Finance Assistant could not be a position where the finance work carried out was independent from the general running of the Council and that anyone taking on this role needed to have an interest in all council business and its function and not just the finance element. The Clerk advised that she had spoken to the Parish Officer and the Assistant Parish Officer who had both shown an interest in becoming more involved with the finance elements of the Parish Council and were happy to take on additional hours to do this. She had produced a cost analysis to compare the 15 hours per week currently worked by the Finance Assistant against a proposal for these 15 hours being split and added to the roles of the Parish Officer and Assistant Parish Officer. The Members reviewed this document, and expressed concerns that members of staff were already working additional hours and queried whether they would have the capacity to take on additional work. The Clerk reminded members that some additional hours recorded are for attendance at the council meetings for the Parish Officer and Assistant Parish Officers, and it was not all for “office work”. They also queried whether the existing staff had the expertise and knowledge to undertake this work. The Clerk explained that finance work was being duplicated as other members of staff have been supporting the Finance Assistants who have been in this role and spending time answering queries and rectifying errors that had been made. Therefore some of the financial role was already being carried out by the existing members of staff, who had expressed trepidation about the prospect of training a fourth person in such a short space of time. It was noted the Parish Officer had recently completed her ILCA (Introduction to Local Council Administration) qualification which included a complete unit on finance and the legal powers governing parish council finances. The Assistant Parish Officer was already carrying out some data entry and writing cheques. The members felt that this was an innovative approach to resolving the situation, but wished to see a trial period first to ensure that this way of working worked both for the existing members of staff and the Council. **Recommended 1:** *The role and duties of the Finance Assistant position to be carried out jointly by the Clerk, the Parish Officer and the Assistant Parish Officer under the direction and supervision of the Clerk as the RFO (Responsible Financial Officer).* **2.** *The weekly hours of both the Parish Officer and the Assistant Parish Officer to be increased to 30 hours per week, 7 ½ hours per day Monday to Thursday, with any meetings attended being additional hours.* **3.** *This staffing restructure to start on Monday 3rd September, 2018 for a trial period to be reviewed in November and then again before the financial year end, with this trial period being made clear to all staff members.* **4.** *Staff contracts to be amended to reflect the new working structure and responsibilities if this working structure is adopted following the trial period.*

Meeting closed at 7.00pm

Chairman, 17th September, 2018