

MINUTES of the Staffing & Resources Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 12th March, 2018 at Crown Chambers, Melksham at 8.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Alan Baines (Committee Chair), Richard Wood (Council Chair) and John Glover (Council Vice-Chair).

Observer: Cllr. David Pafford

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) and Jo Eccleston (Parish Officer).

- 485/17 **Housekeeping & Announcements:** Cllr. Baines welcomed all to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.
- 486/17 **Apologies:** Cllr. Nick Holder (Committee Vice-Chair) had an urgent family matter and Cllr. Kaylum House was visiting a relative; the Committee accepted these apologies. Cllr. Chivers had sent apologies, but with no reason for his absence; this was not accepted. The Clerk advised that the meeting was quorate.
- 487/17 **Declarations of Interest:** The Clerk and the Parish Officer declared an interest in all staffing matters.
- 488/17 **Dispensation Requests:** None.
- 489/17 **Items to be held in Committee: Resolved:** *Agenda items 14a, 14b, 15 & 16 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". Reasons:(a) engagement, terms of service, conduct and dismissal of employees.
- 490/17 **Public Participation:** There were no members of the public present.
- 491/17 **Minutes of the Staffing Committee Meeting, 26th June, 2017:** The members noted the minutes from the last full Staffing Committee meeting, the actions which had been addressed and those matters arising which were now agenda items for this evening's meeting.
- 492/17 **Policies:** The Clerk reported that an agenda item for the next Full Council meeting will be to note receipt of copies of a suite of new and updated policies, so that it is recorded in the minutes that all members have had copies of these. Additionally, staff members will sign to say that they have received copies.
- a) Adoption of New Policies:** The members reviewed the following new policies, which had been based on the policies of both Warminster Council and Calne

Town Council and written by professional qualified Clerks who represented the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) in advisory capacities.

- (i) **Dignity and Harassment at Work:** The members noted that this draft policy was based on an ALCC (Association of Local Council Clerks) model, which was also the basis of the Warminster Council policy which had been previously reviewed by the Council. If adopted this policy would need to be considered in conjunction with the Disciplinary Procedure and the Grievance Procedure. Members also noted the ACAS guide on bullying and harassment. **Recommended:** *The Council adopt the draft Dignity and Harassment at Work Policy.*
- (ii) **Disciplinary Policy:** It was noted that historically the Parish Council had relied upon the ACAS model, but the members reviewed the draft policy based on Warminster Council's policy. **Recommended:** *The Council adopt the draft Disciplinary Policy.*
- (iii) **Grievance Policy:** The members reviewed the draft policy based on Warminster Council's policy. A discussion took place on the protocol for appeals and how some members are not involved in any original discussions to allow for impartiality in any appeal. Additionally, if a grievance involved the Clerk, it was noted that locum Clerks can be appointed to give independent advice to the Parish Council. **Recommended:** *The Council adopt the draft Grievance Policy.*
- (iv) **Protocol on Member/Officer Relations:** The members reviewed the draft policy based on the Calne Town Council model in conjunction with the Warminster Council policy. **Recommended:** *The Council adopt the draft Protocol on Member/Officer Relations based on the Calne Town Council Policy removing the second sentence of point 9.3, as this contradicts the advice of WALC (Wiltshire Association of Local Councils) and include sections 14 Access to Premises & 15 Use of Council Resources, from Warminster Town Council's Policy.*
- (v) **Members E-Mail Protocol:** The members reviewed the E-Mail Protocol of Maiden Bradley with Yarnfield Parish Council; from another SLCC advisory Clerk. A discussion took place with regard to the possibility that ex-members of the Council may still have old email correspondence relating to Council business on their home computers. It was considered that a procedure was added to this Protocol which states that members must delete all council related emails when they cease being a councillor. **Recommended:** *The Parish Council adopt the Members E-Mail Protocol and add a procedure which states that members must delete all Council related e-mails when they cease being a member of Melksham Without Parish Council.*
- (vi) **First Aid Policy:** The Clerk explained that the Parish Council carried out due diligence as employers by ensuring that two members of staff were First Aid trained; herself and the Parish Officer, as the members of staff who worked the most hours, and thus were more available to administer first aid and who regularly attended evening meetings. Both these members of staff recently attended Emergency First Aid at Work training to renew their qualifications, and at this training not only did the trainers, EFA Training, suggest that all places of employment should have a First Aid Policy, they also highlighted the fact that while both members of staff were at the training the other members of staff were working in the office without a qualified first aider on site. To resolve this the Clerk had undertaken the EFA First Aid Requirements Calculator (a

checklist of the type of business and number and roles of employees, against the required first aid provision), drafted a First Aid Policy and had also spoken to the officers at the Town Council to ask if we could have a reciprocal arrangement with them, so that if this situation arose again then members of staff could call upon them if necessary. The Town Clerk had replied to say that a reciprocal arrangement was not necessary as they had adequate First Aid cover, however, they were more than happy to assist the Parish Council. However, it was noted that staff members from the Town Council would not be able to gain access to the Parish Council office in an emergency. The Clerk had therefore put the door code to Crown Chambers in a sealed envelope, signed her name across the seal and given this to the Town Clerk for use in emergencies.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had the required number of first aiders for the size of its workforce, and for evening meetings when the public may be present, but that two of its employees worked remotely. She reported that EFA (Emergency First Aid) Training also ran a Basic Life Saver Course, at a cost of £30 per person and she asked the Committee if they wished to consider sending the other 4 members of staff on this course, so that they could identify potential health issues or symptoms in themselves and therefore take appropriate action to call for assistance.

The Clerk had obtained further advice from EFA Training who had stated that the remote workers were working in low risk environments and that lone workers can only treat themselves to a certain extent and so what is most important is the means of communication (mobile 'phone) to call for help when needed and a protocol of checking into the office would help. In the case of Sudden Cardiac Arrest, a lone worker would be unlikely to receive any warning signs and symptoms with enough time to enable them to call for help, even if they recognised the signs. With regards to the office and meetings, the HSE (Health & Safety Executive) recommend 2 qualified First Aiders; only one is required and the 2nd was best practice to provide cover for the qualified First Aider in their absence.

Members felt that with two qualified First Aiders that they were fulfilling their legal obligation, and that additional staff training was not currently necessary. The Clerk explained that further to the risk assessment exercise carried out recently with the Parish Caretaker and Allotment Warden, a new "checking in procedure" had been adopted. This was detailed in the revised Working Alone policy and referred to in the First Aid policy draft.

The members also discussed if the two qualified First Aiders required a yearly refresher course, it was agreed that the Clerk and the Parish Officer should undertake an in-house session amongst themselves every 6 months to refresh their knowledge and understanding.

Members reviewed the draft First Aid Policy and noted that there was a First Aid kit in the office, in the Bowerhill Pavilion and the two remote workers had personal first aid kits. The contents of which were checked and recorded regularly with the remote workers required to bring them into the office to be checked by the Apprentice/Assistant Parish Officer. It was noted that the

policy should state that the contents of the first aid kits are checked to ensure that they remain within their expiry date, rather than stating that they have not passed their expiry dates. The two remote workers had personal first aid kits, but the Clerk highlighted that they were unable to access clean running water and although they had been provided with hand sanitiser, she felt that the Council should consider providing them with eye wash. Following advice from the Emergency First Aid training the Clerk reported that she had bought a face mask for carrying out resuscitation, at a cost of £3.99, and that at evening meetings the first aid kit would now be on the signing in desk with the torches to be taken out by the lead officer in the case of emergency evacuation.

Recommended: 1. *The Parish Council adopt the draft First Aid Policy with the amendments discussed. 2.* *The Council purchase eye wash to supply to the two Parish Council remote workers, namely the Parish Caretaker and the Parish Allotment Warden.*

b) Revision of Current Policies:

- (i) **Working Alone Policy and Procedure:** The members reviewed the Working Alone Policy and Procedure. The Clerk advised that following a risk assessment exercise with the two remote workers, it had been identified that in an emergency she and the other office staff would not know the exact location of the Parish Caretaker on his working days or which day and time that the Allotment Caretaker was at the Allotments; therefore the two remote workers now sent a text to the Parish Council emergency mobile phone to advise that they had completed their day and were home. The Parish Caretaker follows a weekly routine which is recorded in the office so that all members of staff are aware of his location in the Parish on each day that he works. If this varies from this he will inform the office staff. As the Allotment Warden works one hour a week and this is flexible, he will text when he visits the allotments and text when he has finished. **Recommended:** *The Parish Council adopt the revised Working Alone Policy and Procedure.*

493/17 **Staff Training:**

- a) **Training Log for Staff and Councillors:** The training log was noted.
- b) **Training Requests & Budget:** Members reviewed the training requests against the agreed budget. It was noted that Parish Caretaker was booked to undertake his RoSPA Playsafety Inspection practical exam the next day (13th March) to renew his qualification. As resolved under Min.319/17d), the Clerk is booked onto the RoSPA Playsafety Inspection current standards, governance and legislation element of this course in July, but without the practical exam. However, she will receive a certificate of attendance as proof of competence.
- It was noted that there was a request for the Finance Assistant to attend the SLCC Finance and separate VAT course. However, experience had shown that anyone carrying out the Finance Assistant role needed to be in post for a least a year in order to understand the processes and nuances which are particular to council finances before attending this training. The Clerk advised that she had been unable to find a working safely course for the Parish Caretaker and Allotment Warden being held anywhere. She stated that it was one of those courses that companies held in-house. It was queried whether the Town Council provided this training for their employees, and whether the Parish Council employees could join them. It was considered that Manual Handling training was

necessary for all members of staff as this informed staff members how to lift objects and goods correctly and would defend the Parish Council if an employee hurt themselves. Several providers offered this training at £60 per person if attending a session put on by them, a cost of £360 for the 6 Parish Council employees, or some offered in-house training for up to 12 people for £350. It was considered that the latter was not only a more cost effective option, but that it would also allow the Parish Council to extend an invite to members of the CAWS CEG (Community Action Whitley Shaw – Community Emergency Group) to attend. It was noted that the Clerk last carried out her Fire Marshall training in 2015, and the HSE advice is that this training is refreshed every 3 years.

Recommendation: Staff attend the following training courses:

1. The Clerk attends the SLCC Regional Roadshow Seminar in 2018, at expected cost of £75 (based on £69 cost for 2017).
2. The Finance Assistant attends the SLCC Finance Course at £125, when a local course is held.
3. The Finance Assistant attends the SLCC VAT Course at £125, when a local course is held.
4. The Parish Caretaker and Allotment Warden attend an IOSH Working Safely course, at an estimated cost of £100 each.
5. All members of staff (6no.) attend a Manual Handling course, with availability to 6no. members of the CAWS CEG volunteers at approximately £350.
6. The Clerk attends a Fire Marshall course at approximately £60.

At a total of approximately £935, excluding VAT, of a staff training budget for 2018/19 of £1,000. With the £420 cost of the Clerk's RoSPA PlaySafety course coming out on the 2017/18 budget as booked in that financial year.

494/17 **Staff Salaries:** The ALCC (Association of Local Council Clerks) update on national pay increase negotiations was noted; with the offer from the NJC (National Joint Councils) being rejected by the Unions at this stage of the negotiations.

495/17 **Staff Holidays:**

- a) **Staff Holiday Entitlement Calculations:** The Clerk advised that the staff holiday entitlement calculations now included bank holidays. She stated that the staff hadn't actually been given more holiday entitlement, rather that all the bank holidays were included in the entitlement and then this figure was calculated pro-rata dependent upon the staff working hours. It was noted that this was a fairer way of calculating holiday entitlement for part time employees who work different days of the week and was based on the advice from the SLCC. The SLCC provide an on-line calculator to work this out as some years were more complicated, as with this year where there were 9 bank holidays due to the timing of Easter.
- b) **Staff Holiday Arrangements at Year End:** It was noted that staff were only permitted to carry over 2 days holiday into the next year. Due to the recalculation of the staff holiday entitlements, some staff members had been unclear with regard to the amount of holiday they still had to take before the end of the year. As there had been an element of confusion and due to the fact that Easter fell during the first week of April, the Clerk reported to members that she had given authorisation for members of staff to carry more than two days over on the condition that they took this leave in the first week of April, as a one off. Moving forward, staff will receive their holiday status on their monthly pay slips, which

was a procedure that should have been carried out, and all members of staff are clear that in future they will only be permitted to carry over 2 days holiday. It was noted that for the two weeks of the Parish Caretaker's leave, the cover should be provided by the Allotment Warden but that he was off sick. The Committee suggested that Members could be asked to undertake the weekly visual inspections during this two week period, as they do over the Christmas period.

- c) **Statutory Holiday Dates for 2018/19:** The Clerk advised that the two Statutory holiday days were usually taken the Tuesday after the bank holiday Monday in late May and August. She therefore proposed that this year they were taken on Tuesday 29th May and Tuesday 28th August. It was considered that rather than approving these dates every year, it would be more appropriate to agree that these two Tuesdays are the Statutory holiday days every year. **Recommended:** *The Statutory holiday dates are set for the Tuesdays following the Bank Holiday Mondays at the end of May and end of August ad infinitum.*

496/17 **Staff Appraisals:** It was noted that the Clerk was due her appraisal as her last one was in February 2017. This would be carried out by the Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Staffing & Resources Committee. Cllrs. Wood and Baines requested that the Clerk send them some suitable dates for this to be held.

497/17 **Health & Safety:**

a) **Health & Safety Log:** The Health & Safety Log was noted.

b) **Response from Fire Risk Assessor for Crown Chambers:** The Members reviewed the response from the Fire Risk Assessor which highlighted the legal responsibilities for fire precautions and prevention measures for the Parish Council as an employer. Members felt that they had carried out due diligence by passing a copy of the Fire Risk Assessment Report to their landlord. As the Parish Council were now required to move out of Crown Chambers within the next few months, it was considered that short term solutions were required, rather than the installation of an expensive fire alarm system. There was more concern over the evening meetings. During the day, employees of the landlord were in the building and would therefore raise the alarm if a fire broke out in one of their offices or storage rooms. However, in the evenings it is only the Parish Council offices that are occupied, and therefore there is no one else in the building to raise an alarm. Potential short-term resolutions were discussed, including leaving the fire door open so that the audible alarm from the individual smoke detectors could be heard and checking the building at timed intervals. **Recommended:** *The Clerk produces a scored risk assessment to be considered at the next Full Council meeting.*

c) **New Procedures as a Result of the Fire Risk Assessment:** As a result of the Fire Risk Assessment, the Parish Caretaker now conducts a smoke detector test on a weekly basis and this is recorded.

498/17 **Job Descriptions:** Members reviewed the revised job descriptions of the Parish Officer, the Finance Assistant and the Assistant Parish Officer. It was noted that following the consultation period all of these job descriptions now included "to carry out office cleaning as required". It was noted that some of the duties of the Parish Officer and the Finance Assistant had been removed from those job roles and added to the Assistant Parish Officer Role, as the Apprentice Parish Officer would be required to take on more responsibilities when she had passed her apprenticeship and moved into the Assistant Parish Officer role. As many of the duties previously

listed in the job description for the Parish Officer had now been removed, it was considered that the job description no longer reflected her role, and that the additional duties delegated to her by the Clerk needed to be added. **Recommended:** *The job description for the Parish Officer to be reviewed and additional tasks and responsibilities now undertaken in that role to be added to the job description.*

In line with Standing order 3d, the following agenda items were held in Committee.

499/17 **Staff Contracts:**

- a) **Update on Change to Staff Contracts:** The Clerk reported that historically under the Parish Officer's contract, her role title was "Minute Secretary & Part-Time Assistant". It was agreed that this should be amended to read Parish Officer. The contract wording of two members of staff stated that they had to give a minimum notice period of one month. The HR advice received from radar was that this was too ambiguous, as it could give rise to employees giving months or even years of notice. The two members of staff affected had been consulted verbally, and this would now be followed up with a written consultation letter and their contracts amended to remove the word "minimum" from the notice period that they must give to the Parish Council.
- b) **Contract for New Starters: Recommended:** *The Finance Assistant and the Allotment Warden are issued their contracts following completion of their probationary periods.*

500/17 **Staff Sickness:** It was noted that the Allotment Warden had been signed off not fit for work for 6 weeks from 28th February, following his hip replacement operation. The Clerk had written to him to state that the Parish Council do not expect him to return to work until he has received confirmation from his doctor that he is fit to do so, and a return to work interview will be undertaken with the Clerk. It was noted that The Parish Caretaker will cover his duties during his absence. The Parish Caretaker attends a yearly health check-up for a historical serious health issue, for which the Parish Council has always paid sick pay and will continue to do so this year.

501/17 **Apprenticeship:** The Parish Council had previously resolved under Min.360/17b)2) that "The Parish Council offers the post of Assistant Parish Officer to the current Apprentice Parish Officer, Miss. Marianne Rossi, subject to the successful completion of her NVQ and the standard 3-month new employee probationary period" to commence on 1st April, 2018. It was noted that the 1st April was a Sunday and the 2nd April was Easter Monday, and the Apprentice Parish Officer would not be signed off by her training provider as having completed her apprenticeship until her final meeting with her training provider on 4th April. However, she had already completed 97% of her apprenticeship, so there was just a minor timing issue of her fully completing her NVQ and the Parish Council officially employing her. **Recommended:** *The Parish Council employ the Apprentice Parish Officer in the role of Assistant Parish Officer as of the 1st April, 2018, recognising that she has already successfully passed 97% of her course and will be signed off as completed on 4th April, 2018.*

Meeting closed at 10.07pm

Chairman, 26th March, 2018