

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Human Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 30 November 2015

Present: Cllrs P Aldis, T Cole, A M Hill (Chair), A Jackson, C Osborne, M Pettitt (Vice-Chair), and S Sutton

In attendance: Chris Robson (Town Clerk)

1 **Apologies for absence**

No apologies had been received.

2 **Declarations of interest**

- i) *Disclosable Pecuniary Interests - none*
- ii) *Non-disclosable Interests - none*

3 **Minutes of previous HR Committee Meetings**

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of a meeting of the HR Committee meeting held on Monday 7 September 2015 and to confirm them as a correct record of proceedings.

4 **Health and Safety/Accident Report**

Members noted there was nothing to report since the last meeting of the committee.

5 **Training**

Members received and discussed a report from the Town Clerk.

Members enquired on the setup of the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification assessment. The Town Clerk informed Members that the applicant was assessed and awarded the qualification based on the submission of a large portfolio of work. The portfolio includes essays on Council functions, powers and duties as well as the scrutiny and annotation of various Council documents by the applicant.

It was noted a fee of £250 would need to be paid to the Society of Local Council Clerks at the time of submission. This fee was covered by the Council's training budget.

A Member asked if the IT search engine training course referred to in the report would make it easier to locate documents on the Council's website. The Town Clerk confirmed he hoped the training would address how to improve the website's efficiency in picking up search documents more effectively.

6 **Office Open Hours**

A Member asked now that Council staffing was back to full

Action

Admin

Sandy Town Council

complement whether the office should consider opening for longer hours during the week, potentially between 9am and 2pm each day of the week.

Members discussed the matter at length and commented as follows;

Two Members reported they had received comments from members of the public that the office was not open for more hours during the week.

Another Member commented he had sympathy for the views expressed but that the office should not be open for five days a week as one day closed to the public would allow for in house staff training.

A Member expressed concern at how often opening hours had changed and the confusion this could cause for the public. A decision needs to be made and allowed to run for a year without further changes.

It was noted that when the office is closed to the public people still knock on the window and a member of staff deals with their enquiry. It was queried whether the gates could be locked to stop this happening.

A Member felt that the current hours do not provide much access for part time workers or parents fitting in school runs. By closing reception later this may provide an opportunity for a greater number of people to use the service.

A Member suggested that the office did not need to be open for four days a week but hours should be extended on the days the office is open to allow greater accessibility. 10am to 4pm was suggested.

It was commented that older members of the public prefer to access the Council services from 9am.

A Member referred to the staffing restructure previously approved and stated that when fully implemented this should help cover the reception area and allow for increased opening time.

The Town Clerk was asked to provide an update on how the training process was progressing. The Clerk informed Members that staff had started the process and had held successful group workshops identifying the way forward and priority areas. However, there was a substantial amount of training to be undertaken for some members of staff.

Sandy Town Council

A Member suggested that Councilors could be proactive in coming into the office to help with reception duties if it meant the office could be open to the public for longer hours. Other Members disagreed with this and stated that it was not the place of Councilors to come into the office and work.

A Member reminded Councilors that the current opening hours were only ever intended to be temporary.

The Chair noted that there were a lot of differing views on what times the office should be open and asked that Councilors provide some general consensus to help guide the matter forward;

- Members agreed that they wanted the opening hours to be modified to allow greater accessibility and that the Council would not need to be open five days a week to accommodate time for staff training and meetings.

A Member asked what percentages of people coming into reception were asking for CBC services. The Town Clerk informed Members he did not know exact percentages but the majority of queries were CBC related. Members went on to discuss whether it should be the Council's role to contact and liaise with CBC for individual requests and whether the Council should run a survey on how satisfied people are with the service we provide.

It was proposed and agreed that the Town Clerk would bring back a report with a workable proposal based on the broad outline provided by Members.

Town
Clerk

7 **Outdoor Work Schedules**

Members noted that the grounds team was now carrying out its winter work schedule. Cllr. Aldis stated that the previous Deputy Town Clerk had set up daily worksheets for the ground staff which were used to monitor jobs and progress; it was queried as to whether this was still happening.

The Town Clerk confirmed the process was still in place and that he and the grounds team supervisor met regularly through the week to review and amend as necessary.

It was noted that conditions at the Stratford road depot site were poor, with litter and potentially dangerous items covering the area. Concern was expressed that people still use this area as a way to access the cemetery and that the Council may need to consider prohibiting access. The Town Clerk confirmed he would look into the matter with the grounds team.

Town
Clerk

Sandy Town Council

8

Officer Run Events

Members confirmed they wanted the Council to continue organising a programme of talks and walks in 2016. It was felt that Sandy had become known for the guided walks especially and that both activities were positive for Sandy and the Council.

Members asked about the level of work Council staff had carried out for the Christmas Light Switch On event. The Town Clerk confirmed the week leading up to the event had taken up a large amount of time for two of the council's administrative employees. The two days following the event would involve all members of staff helping in the cleanup and storing of event resources.

A Member suggested that the level of staff involvement in the event needs to be reviewed and questioned whether more of the work should be passed to volunteers. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would include this in his review of the event as a whole.

Town
Clerk

9

Chairman's Items

Cllr. Hill commented that the Christmas Light Switch on event had been a success and that all members of staff and 80% of councilors had attended on the day. It was felt that there was a good team culture adopted throughout the event and everyone worked well together. Given the weather on the day the event could not have gone better. It was noted that the Town Clerk was in attendance to review the event and make some recommendations for next year.

Members agreed to send thank you letters to the staff from the Mayor and Chairman of the Friends of Sandy Christmas Lights committee in recognition of their hard work.

Cllr. Hill
Cllr.
Jackson

Cllr. Hill suggested making a calendar of all events in Sandy throughout the year. It was noted that the Council did previously have one and still currently updates the What's On section of the Council website. The Town Clerk said he would look into the matter and see if a calendar could be developed.

Town
Clerk

10

Date of Next Meeting

Members agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Human Resources Committee on 14 December 2015 at 7pm to receive a report from the Town Clerk on proposed changes to opening hours.

11

COMMITTEE IN PRIVATE SESSION

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Sandy Town Council

It was proposed and agreed that in terms of schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, proposed and agreed that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

12 **Appraisals**

Members noted that the Town Clerks appraisal had taken place and the process for appraising other Members of staff was due to start. Members discussed the importance of moving the process forward and ensuring targets were hit.

The Chair confirmed dates for early January would be set with employees and supervision review meetings would happen every three months.

Chair/
Town
Clerk

13 **Staffing**

Members discussed the report from the Town Clerk and **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations there within.

It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** that the temporary role of Committee Clerk be extended for a further three months until the end of March 2016.