

Downley Parish Council
Minutes of the Staffing/HR Committee held online, via Zoom
on Friday 8th January 2021 at 2pm

Present: Councillors M Lazenby, A Lenard, S Monroe-West, and
S Steneskog

Officer: M Kennedy, Locum Clerk

1. Election of Chairman

The Chairman, Councillor M Lazenby welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Staffing/HR Committee and invited nominations for the position of Committee Chairman. It was proposed by Councillor W Steneskog, seconded by Councillor W Munroe-West, and **RESOLVED that Councillor A Lenard be elected Chairman of the Staffing/HR Committee for the remainder of the Local Government year.**

Councillor A Lenard in the Chair.

2. Apologies for Absence

None.

3. Declarations of Interest

None

4. Public Participation Session

None

5. Terms of Reference

Members had before them the Terms of Reference for the Staffing/HR Committee approved by Council on 15 December 2020. The Chairman made a point about the Committee's remit being entirely forward-looking, and that the Committee has no interest in any events that happened prior to today. The Chairman invited Members to articulate their interpretation on:

- the Committee's responsibility for the employment and welfare of its employees;
- the Committee's specific delegated powers, with particular regard to performance management;

- their views on confidentiality including how the Council handles this issue for example sickness, managing the clerk's performance and whether the whole Council should be aware of all issues.

It was acknowledged that before the Staffing/HR Committee had been established, there was an expectation that all Councillors needed to be party to all discussions involving the Clerk. However, moving forward, all Councillors need to put their trust in the Staffing/HR Committee as an elected committee of the Council. It was recognised that the Committee needed to earn that trust. Therefore the existence of a health dialogue between all councillors to ensure openness and transparency and an environment where all Councillors are listened should be established.

It was agreed that the Committee's delegated powers necessitated a collective responsibility with no one person responsible for issues such as line management. The Clerk is responsible to the Council not the Chairman. It was recognised that good processes needed to be in place for managing the Clerk's performance; what the clerk does well and what could be done better. It was suggested and agreed that 6 monthly reviews of the clerk's performance should be established following reviews after one month and three months following appointment, with a more comprehensive annual appraisal. Individual Councillors would be encouraged to participate in the process and at any time could bring to the attention of the Committee Chairman their concerns.

It was suggested that Councillors should be encouraged to share their concerns and problems with one another through a WhatsApp group. This would open lines of communication where all councillors can be involved rather than feeling excluded when omitted from specific email threads. It was **RESOLVED that the Committee's Terms of Reference as presented be adopted.**

6. Appointment of the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

The Committee considered the comprehensive report of the Locum Clerk which covered extending the Locum Clerk's contract beyond 31 January 2021; the procedure for recruiting a new Clerk and RFO; the job description; the person specification; the salary; and recruitment process.

Members considered each recommendation in turn and following a full and comprehensive debate **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that Council approves the following recommendations:**

- (i) an extension to the Locum Clerk's contract until 31 March 2021 or sooner subject to a satisfactory appoint and handover to his successor;
- (ii) that the post is advertised as Clerk to the Downley Parish Council and Responsible Financial Officer;
- (iii) that post of Clerk to the Downley Parish Council and Responsible Financial Officer is advertised with Indeed and the other free to use methods/agencies set out in the report; the Downley.org Community and Facebook page and the SLCC and NALC and that a sum of £600 be set aside for this purpose the cost to be met from reserves in 2020/21;
- (iv) that Members adopt the national agreement for Clerks salaries LC2, formally spinal column points (SCP) 26-29, now SCP 18-23 commencing at £24,982 pro rata (30 hours per week) and recruits on this basis.;
- (v) that the draft advertisement is used in the recruitment process, subject to a change in the pro rata salary to c£22,000 not c£20,000;
- (vi) that the draft job description is used in the recruitment process.
- (vii) that the draft person specification is used in the recruitment process;
- (viii) that a completed job application form is used in the recruitment process alongside CVs should candidates wish to provide one, all candidates to be assessed by the Staffing/HR Committee, against the person specification, with the Locum Clerk's support; the Locum Clerk to make himself available during office hours for an informal chat with prospective candidates;
- (ix) that all interviews of shortlisted candidates would be conducted by zoom and lead by the Committee Chairman who would ask all the questions, to be agreed by the Committee in advance, with all other Members of the Staffing/HR Committee and the Locum Clerk in attendance, Committee members to be permitted to ask supplementary questions if necessary; and
- (x) that a contract of employment is drawn up between the Council and the Clerk based on the model Contract of Employment agreed by NALC and SLCC.

7. Grievance Policy by Downley Parish Council

Members had before them the model Grievance Policy adopted by NALC, which deals with the process of handling complaints by officers. It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that Council adopts the NALC model Grievance Policy.**

8. Disciplinary Policy by Downley Parish Council

Members considered the Model Disciplinary Policy issued by NALC. The policy is designed to help Council employees improve unsatisfactory conduct and performance in their job. Wherever possible, the Council will try to resolve its concerns about employees' behaviour informally, without starting the formal procedure set out in the policy. It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that Council adopts the NALC model Disciplinary Policy.**

9. Capability Policy by Downley Parish Council

Members considered the Model Capability Policy issued by NALC designed to establish good management with clear expectations and appropriate support of staff and addressing weaknesses in performance. Members recognised the committee has discretion to hold additional performance review meetings as the situation requires and agreed an informal six-monthly catch-up meeting. It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that Council adopts the NALC model Capability Policy.**

Arising from the foregoing it was acknowledged and agreed that if Councillors have any concerns about the Clerk as regards disciplinary, grievance or capability issues then they should, in the first instance, refer these to the Chairman of the Staffing/HR Committee or to the Chairman of the Council.

10. Date of next Meeting

It was agreed to hold an informal meeting on 17 February at 2pm to consider all submitted applications and questions for interviewees.

11. Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 4.20pm

Chairman

Date