

## THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, ON  
TUESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER 2015, STARTING AT 5.00 P.M.

Present:

Councillors

R F W Brame	Mrs B J Canham
M S Robinson	Mrs S J Armes
M P Brindle (Chairman)	T J Jermy
J C Moorman	

Officer in attendance:  
Maurice Howard Town Clerk

Minutes

573/15 DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

574/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None were received.

575/15 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015 received by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be confirmed as a true record and that they be signed/initialled by the Chairman.

576/15 REVIEW OF FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

- Compliments and comments had been passed on as appropriate.
- The e-mail regarding the Guildhall Clock Chimes had been passed on to the Guildhall and Markets Committee.
- The e-mail concerning the grass cutting at the cemetery had been passed on to the Cemeteries Committee.
- The Training Policy had been updated and was due for presentation under Agenda item 584/15.
- Looking at the proposed effect of the Accredited Living Wage is a large and complex task and there was no quick and easy way of compiling this information. While some of this was guesswork (how to reach the government's proposed £9.00 target), the actual indicative figures had to be fed into the pay structure and the knock on effect to line managers calculated as well. Time constraints had meant that this would have to be presented to the next meeting.
- Thanks had been passed on to the Town Crier for the work he had put into the Festival event that he had facilitated.
- The Rights of Way and Byways Course had been booked for the Deputy Town Clerk and she was due to attend on Friday 6 Nov 15.
- Attempts had been made to book the Town Clerk on the SLCC Annual Conference but due to the short notice he was unable to gain a place (hotel space being the issue).

- The Training Policy had been updated to reflect the requirement for Councillors to enter travel expenses on their own personal Tax return.
- The Civic Policy was still in the process of being created but the Town Clerk had passed on the information regarding the entering of councillor travel expenses on their own Tax returns. This would be included in the Final Policy.

577/15

BUDGET REVIEW

The 4 year budget proposals were reviewed in light of the request from Full Council to consider further savings measures. However, with little in terms of budget, and training being one of the most significant but still relatively small, it was felt that little could be done to reduce the overall Personnel Budget. However, the Town Clerk pointed out that there were implications under Agenda Item 580/15 and potentially under 583/15 that could further increase the budget requirement.

578/15

HEALTH & SAFETY

Councillor Mrs B J Canham updated the committee on the proposed agenda for the Health and Safety Meeting to be held on 12 Nov 15. This was an additional meeting following on from the review of out-sourced contracts. It was felt that a clearer understanding and formal contract needed to be adopted in terms of our H&S requirement. The Town Clerk pointed out that as a result of this request he had sought quotes from two of the largest providers to District, Town and Parish Councils and he was also obtaining a quote from our current provider.

Councillor Mrs B J Canham also reiterated the point that she had made at Full Council concerning the requirement for all Committees to ensure that where work was being carried out on Town Council properties that the Works Foreman be involved from the start of the planning process. This was to ensure that the appropriate H&S implications could be assessed prior to any work being agreed or carried out.

Councillor M S Robinson stated that he was disappointed that he had still not been sent the Annual Inspection Report for the Guildhall and Carnegie as he had a meeting this week and would have liked to have reviewed this prior to the meeting. The Town Clerk apologised, him having been assured that these reports had been sent to all Committee Chairs. He stated that he would speak to the Deputy Town Clerk and this would be with him first thing in the morning.

579/15

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The Town Clerk had received a letter from the Leader of Breckland Council thanking the Town Council and the organiser (PPP&C Officer) for all the hard work that had gone into the various local events surrounding the Tour of Britain. The Town Clerk would pass on thanks as appropriate.

Councillor Mrs B J Canham commented on the fact that another complaint had been raised by the Redcastle Action Group and that this had gone straight to the Amenities Committee for action. This concerned Trees, their Play Area and a Litter Bin. The Town Clerk was unaware of this and suggested that it may have been seen as a request (of which the council get many) rather than a complaint. However, he would look into this and ensure that the appropriate action was taken.

580/15

#### NEW NATIONAL INSURANCE REGULATIONS

The Town Clerk read from a Local Government Association brief on the implications of the ending of 'Contracting Out' options in April 2016. This was due to the introduction of the new single tier State Pension. The implication to the Council was that individuals NI contributions for those earning over £153.00 per week would increase by 1.4% and that Employers NI contributions would increase by 3.4% (up to the maximum earnings limit of £770.00). This meant that the council would require additional contributions for 2016/17 of approx £6,954.00. The Town Clerk stated that this was mandatory and therefore would need to be fed into the budget and also a letter sent to individuals informing them of their additional contributions (where applicable).

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor J C Moorman that, as a result of the government's decision to remove the contracting out option for pensions, the additional 3.4% Employers NI Contributions (meaning an additional £6,954.00 for 2016/17) be fed into the 4 year budget strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION: That, as a result of the government's decision to remove the contracting out option for pensions, the additional 3.4% Employers NI Contributions (meaning an additional £6,954.00 for 2016/17) be fed into the 4 year budget strategy**

581/15

#### FUTURE PERSONNEL MEETING TIMINGS

Previous discussion on the difficulty for certain councillors to attend the Personnel meetings at 5.00 p.m. resulted in debate over the best time for future meetings.

It was proposed by Councillor M S Robinson and seconded by Councillor Mrs B J Canham that future Personnel Meetings take place at 4.30 p.m. A vote was taken. For 7 votes, Against 0 votes, nil abstentions.

**RESOLVED: That all future Personnel Meetings take place at 4.30 p.m.**

582/15

#### OUT-SOURCED CONTRACTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor M S Robinson confirmed that the subject Task and Finish Group had met on two occasions and suggested that the Town Clerk may be able to explain how the process so far had been tackled. The Town Clerk started by thanking the two Councillors involved in this process who had spent around 6 hours of their time so far. The first meeting had concentrated on separating out specialist contracts that could not be done by the current workforce or may not be practicable in terms of employing a specialist/skilled individual. Should the employment of a specifically skilled worker be considered then it was clear that this individual may be required to carry out unskilled work for hours when his specialist skills were not required (i.e. qualified electrician). In addition it was unlikely that there would be cover for this individual in times of illness etc. This option was therefore discounted and the T&F Group were left with those tasks/contracts which it was felt could either be carried out by the current workforce (or additional staff) and which could therefore be grouped together, possibly to form one larger contract (i.e. grounds maintenance). The second meeting concentrated on this latter aspect and on determining the number of hours spent on each contract and how this compared to a typical Town Council Worker (utilising existing wage structures). In all but one case it had been determined that the cost difference between current contracts

and the potential of Council employees taking on this work was negligible. Therefore, initially it appeared that by increasing the current workforce there may be various contracts that could be carried out internally rather than by contractor. However, the specifications within the contracts were then viewed to see what additional implications there may be. This included things such as purchase of specialist equipment, servicing of said equipment, working hours etc. In all but one case it was determined that any slight difference there may be in wage costs was outweighed by the possible significant additional costs of equipment, servicing and materials etc.

Comments followed from Councillors which included the following:

- While there were additional costs there may be the possibility of hiring out staff, equipment and specialist skills to bring in money to the council.
- Instead of contracting out, even with the additional cost, it may be good for the Council to be seen as an employer.
- The committee would like to see the detail of the calculations.
- More flexible working could be employed to ensure that overtime did not become an issue.

At 6.05 p.m. Councillor M S Robinson left the meeting.

Through necessity some of the out-sourced contracts started either early morning and late into the evening and some required two men to carry out the task. It could therefore prove difficult to implement with the current workforce however flexible the individuals were able to work. With only one absence the result would be that one of these contracts would fall down. In addition most would need either two sets of equipment to carry out the task (in case of breakdown) or the ability to draw assistance from elsewhere quickly.

It was decided that in order to fully appreciate the implications the committee would like to see a fuller report and more detailed analysis of the costings. Therefore, a further meeting of the T&F Group would take place to look at this analysis and then make recommendations to the committee. It would also address the issue of whether smarter ways of working could be introduced.

583/15

#### SUPPORT TO COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Town Clerk presented a list of all committee meetings that had taken place over the last month as well as those scheduled for November. He stated that at the beginning of the year many additional meeting dates had been scheduled into the calendar to both ensure that a date was available and also to standardise meeting dates and times. The intention was not for all of these dates to be used, merely that they would be available if required. Unfortunately, in addition to the fact that those committees which used to sit less regularly now use all of these monthly dates, many other meetings were now also being scheduled (Task and Finish Groups and Special Full Council etc.). There were therefore two areas of concern from the Town Clerks perspective. The Committee Secretary did not have the hours available within his existing 24 hour contract to service these committees and in addition the officers servicing these meetings were spending so much time in meetings and in carrying out work as a result of the tasks falling out of these, that they simply could not cope. In addition, the Finance Section whilst not spending any greater amounts of money over recent years, had taken on many additional requirements (the Transparency

Code, the implementation of better monitoring systems, increased workload resulting from Allotments etc.). In short there was simply no slack in the system and many areas were falling behind. The Town Clerk was proud of the new systems and procedures that had been implemented by all of his staff and much greater accountability had been established, but this had been at significant cost in terms of manpower and time.

He also wanted to try and establish succession planning and a quick look at current members of staff meant that thought had to be given to the future.

As a result he had been in consultation with Norfolk Training Services over the provision of an apprentice to the Council. He had discovered that there was the possibility of a two year apprenticeship that would cover both an Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) qualification and a Business Management Qualification (both NVQ related). This meant that an individual could be employed full time (dependant on age) and their qualifications would be gained through 'at work' assessment. The cost to the Council in the first year would be approximately £3.30 per hour (16 – 18 year old) and for the second year or for those over 19 would rise to minimum wage.

The first element of the Committee Secretaries Toil was addressed and it was evident that he had been working on a weekly basis closer to full time (37 hours) rather than to the 24 hours he was contracted to. Councillor Jermy asked if an additional 10 hours paid TOIL per week would suffice. The Town Clerk felt unable to answer this as he could not tell how long the currently scheduled meetings would last and also if any more meetings would be requested in the interim. However an additional 10 hours per week would initially seem reasonable.. This could be a starting point to cover this particularly busy period and could be reviewed at the end of December.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor J C Moorman that TOIL built up by the Committee Secretary for meetings in October be reviewed and if necessary this be paid up to a maximum of 10 hours. A vote was taken: For 4 votes, Against 0 votes, Abstentions 2 votes.

**RESOLVED: That any TOIL built up by the Committee Secretary for meetings in October be reviewed and if necessary this be paid up to a maximum of 10 hours.**

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor J C Moorman that any additional TOIL built up by the Committee Secretary for meetings in November and December, up to a maximum of an additional 10 hours per week, be paid and that this situation be reviewed in the January Personnel Meeting. A vote was taken: For 4 votes, Against 0 votes, Abstentions 2 votes.

**RESOLVED: That any additional TOIL built up by the Committee Secretary for meetings in November and December, up to a maximum of an additional 10 hours per week, be paid and that this situation be reviewed in the January Personnel Meeting.**

Further discussion concentrated on the general workload of the office staff and the possible provision of an apprentice on a two year basis. The low starting wage was discussed, bearing in mind the current investigations being carried out by the Council on minimum wage implications. The Town Clerk briefed that he had been uncomfortable with this and had expressed this to Norfolk Training Services. They

assured him that virtually all the apprenticeships that they set up start at this level. Reasons given were that the individual would otherwise have to attend college or university to gain a similar qualification. This would be unpaid and of course they would not get the experience of 'hands on' working. In addition, many apprentices tend to be local and therefore save on travel costs (removing travel to colleges and universities). Therefore, they have no shortage of individuals wishing to apply for these apprenticeships. The Town Clerks intent would be to train up this individual over the two year apprenticeship period. He would look to ensure that members of staff who would, in the longer term, be close to retirement be involved in the training of the individuals (with an eye on succession). This may then lead to future employment of the apprentice.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Armes and seconded by Councillor J C Moorman that the council enter into a two year apprenticeship agreement that would cover both Financial and Business Management qualifications for the individual. Also that these calculations be fed into the overall four year budget strategy.

A vote was taken: For 6 votes, Against 0 votes, Abstentions 0 votes.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the Council enter into a two year apprenticeship agreement that would cover both Financial and Business Management qualifications for the individual. Also that these calculations be fed into the overall four year budget strategy.**

584/15

#### REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

The Town Clerk presented the draft Training Policy stating that he had added significantly to the previous policy in terms of the 'Types of Training Provision' and also the 'Roles and Responsibilities'. The latter clearly showing that, not only could the council expect individuals to attend training, but also that the individuals themselves could personally request further development training.

It was proposed by Councillor M P Brindle and seconded by Councillor R F W Brame that the revised Training Policy be recommended to Full Council for adoption. A vote was taken: For 6 votes, Against 0 votes with nil Abstentions.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the revised Training Policy be accepted by Full Council for adoption.**

585/15

#### ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

a. Staff Handbook. The Town Clerk commented that the intention had been to go through the Staff Handbook at this meeting. However, this had been missed from the agenda. He was aware that, since distributing this document, at least two councillors had reviewed this and had subsequently asked questions for which they had received answers. However, he was aware that it was a large task to review such a lengthy document and he therefore suggested that it may be worth committee members carrying out a further review to pick up anything they may have missed the first time. This would then be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

586/15

#### PRESS RELEASES

There were no press releases presented.

Chairman

Appendix:

1. Local Government Association Pensions Bill – Briefing Note.
2. Training Policy.

**ACTION POINTS**

<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>	<b>BY WHEN</b>
Compliments, comments and complaints to be passed on as appropriate.	Town Clerk	5 Jan 15
Prepare an overview of the implications of the Accredited Living Wage on the Pay Structure and Payroll.	Town Clerk	5 Jan 15
Ensure that the Annual Inspection Report for the Guildhall was passed to the Chairman.	Town Clerk via Deputy Town Clerk	ASAP
Ensure that the e-mail from the Redcastle Action Group is correctly dealt with by the Amenities Ctte.	Town Clerk	ASAP
Employers NI contribution increase to be placed in the 4 year strategy	Town Clerk	ASAP
Ensure Committees Secretary is aware of change to timings of this committee and amend website accordingly	Town Clerk	ASAP
Book additional meeting for Out-Sourced Contracts Task and Finish Group.	Town Clerk	5 Jan 15
Monitor Committee Secretary's TOIL and action as appropriate	Town Clerk	5 Jan 15
Compile further information on the Norfolk Training Services Apprenticeship Scheme pending approval from Full Council	Town Clerk	24 Nov 15
Ensure the Staff Handbook review is on the next Personnel Committee Agenda	Town Clerk	5 Jan 15