



**Minutes of a Virtual¹ Staffing Committee Meeting held on Friday 29th January 2021
at 1.30pm via Zoom Video Conference**

Commenced: 1.30pm - Concluded: 3.20pm

Councillors Present: Cllr Becky Cornell [Chair], Jane Brentor and Dave Mace

Absent Councillors: None

Locum Clerk: Safia Kauser [Minute Taker]

Members of the Public: Two members of the public

43.20 **Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence.

All members of the Staffing committee were present.

44.20 **Declarations of Interest:**

a. To receive **Declarations of Interest** in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers.

No declarations of interest were received.

b. To consider any **Dispensation Requests** received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

The Locum Clerk informed members that no dispensation requests had been received.

45.20 **Minutes**
To resolve to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2020.

Councillor Mace proposed a minor amendment to the draft minutes at item 41.20.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the draft minutes of the Staffing committee meeting held on the 2nd December 2020 are approved as a true and accurate record of proceedings subject to the amendment at item 41.20, '4th December' to be removed and replaced 'by Monday 7th December at the latest'.

¹ In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

46.20	<p><u>Matters Arising</u> To consider Matters Arising from the minutes and agree how to progress any outstanding actions.</p> <p>The Chair informed members that all matters arising from the last meeting had been completed, in particular, the members training and attendance at the Practitioners Conference. The volunteer’s policy had been deferred.</p>
47.20	<p><u>EXEMPT MATTERS – EMPLOYMENT & STAFFING</u> The Chair to propose the following resolution – ‘That under the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they be instructed to withdraw in view of the confidential nature of the business on staffing about to be transacted’.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>1) That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted on personal employee matters, it is advisable in the public interest, that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting.</p> <p><i>The two members of the public left the meeting.</i></p>
48.20	<p><u>Clerk’s Return to Work Plan</u> To consider and agree on a plan to support the Clerk to return safely back to work following a period of sick leave.</p> <p>A virtual zoom meeting had been set-up for Tuesday morning at 11.00am for a return-to-work meeting for the Clerk with the Chair and Cllr Brentor. Members discussed several options to support the Clerks return to work which had already been communicated to the Clerk.</p> <p><i>Confidential notes retained on file.</i></p> <p>RECOMMENDED:</p> <p>1) That the Staffing Committee recommends that full council approves overtime for the Admin Officer for up to 10 hours per week in the event that the option 1 of the work plan is agreed.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>1) That the Chair of the Staffing Committee and Councillor Brentor take part in the return-to-work interview via Zoom and for the form to be completed and a shared plan to be created and implemented.</p>
49.20	<p><u>Business Continuity impacts on Staff</u> To consider business continuity risks identified during the Clerk’s current period of sick leave, how these will potentially affect staff and what actions should be taken to reduce risk</p> <p>A draft risk assessment document prepared by the Locum Clerk was considered by the committee. There were several areas highlighted in yellow that required clarification and the additional control measures were discussed in detail.</p> <p><u>Risk identified - Sickness and Resignation</u> It was confirmed that a Sickness Absence Policy was already in place. Consideration was given to having an exit interview form which could be obtained from South West Councils. Any equipment provided to the employee should be returned to the council and formally documented and signed by both parties. The Admin Officers diary had been cleared to allow</p>

urgent priority tasks to be carried out. Diarised meetings were unable to happen due to insufficient staffing hours. The Locum Clerk suggested that during this short-term period, a weekly list of priority tasks could be shared between the employee and the Chair of the Staffing committee and the employee could be requested to keep a log of tasks completed which would help the Staffing Committee assess the workloads and identify areas where additional support is required.

Action: Locum Clerk to send draft internet and email policy.

Risk identified - Inadequate training

Training for the Admin Officer was discussed and members agreed that prior to any training, the council needed to consider the training needs with the post holder who may have completed the ILCA and to agree a training plan subject to the postholders contract being made permanent. The temporary contract was due to expire at the end of March. It was noted that appraisals had not been carried out with both postholders.

Risk Identified - Incomplete Financial Records

Councillor Mace requested general advice from the Locum Clerk regarding financial information which should be received by the Council and internal control measures that should be considered. The Locum Clerk informed members that internal audit should not be solely relied upon to review the adequacy of the internal controls and part of the council's risk management arrangements should include the appointment of a working group to carry out internal control checks. In addition to this, members should be receiving a full monthly schedule of receipts and payments, and budget monitoring reports should be provided at least on a quarterly basis or as required in accordance with the Financial Regulations. The budget monitoring statement should inform members of the progress of the expenditure against the agreed budget and this could be used as a preventative tool to ensure the council does not overspend and remains within budget. The Omega Accounts system was installed on the Clerks laptop and consideration of having an additional software license to enable members with view access only to the accounts was discussed. It was agreed that another member of the council needed to have knowledge of operating the finance system.

Action: Locum Clerk to email members an example copy of an internal controls policy.

Loss of Data

The records of the parish council were currently stored at the Clerks home address. The Locum Clerk suggested that there should be a central point in the village for example the village hall that could store historical council records in a locked cabinet and current records could remain with the Clerk therefore reducing the risk for the loss of data. Computerised records should be backed up in addition to having remote access on Microsoft one-drive and the passwords list should be updated at all times. It was confirmed that the council did have a retention policy but moving the records to a central point was a big task in itself. A member suggested the memorial hall as a venue for storage but it was commented by another member that space within the hall is limited and it is unknown at this point how much storage is required.

Risk identified – payroll inaccurate

The controls surrounding this risk had been identified and addressed. The risk rating was green in the register.

Tribunal Claims

This area was showing red on the risk register. The current contracts in place were based on the NALC template and the grievance and disciplinary procedures had been reviewed and updated. The employee handbook was incomplete and members were aware this was a high

priority and consideration was given to an alternative option, for example, external professional support to draft the employee handbook. Members discussed the insurance for legal expenses and it was unclear if South West Councils had insurance cover for any tribunal claims including compensation awards, in the event that the Council acted upon their advice. However, the council did have this cover under the general council insurance which would mitigate some of this risk. It was agreed to speak to South West Councils to confirm the insurance cover.

Overall members felt that given the current circumstances, they could not address all risks presented to the council in the absence of the Clerk/RFO but the majority of the risks identified were within the risk appetite to manage, which included the introduction of additional controls to reduce the risk.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That the Staffing Committee recommends to full Council that the Admin Officer post that is due to expire at the end of March 2021 is made permanent subject to consultation with the Parish Clerk as the Admin Officer's line manager.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Staffing Committee convenes another meeting in February to review the risk register for the absence of the Clerk/RFO and considers how it can manage the risks within the capacity of the members of the committee and which actions are to be recommended to be considered by full council. The Staffing Committee recognises the need to provide additional support to the Clerk/RFO to implement some of the actions identified within the risk register.

50.20

Pension back payments

To receive an update on progress made to implement options a and g from p11 of the Pensions Report of August 2020 as agreed in part A of resolution 245.20 of Ordinary Parish Council meeting 14th December 2020 and to agree on actions to progress the resolution.

A verbal update was provided by the Chair on the actions to be progressed following the full council meeting held on Monday. Councillor Brentor provided members with a verbal update on the NEST pension.

Confidential notes retained on file.

RESOLVED:

- 1) The Chair to notify LGPS regarding payment of back dated pension contributions following the full council resolution from Monday 25th January 2021. Once confirmation is received from LGPS, the Chair is to notify the employee.
- 2) That the progress update on the NEST pension provided by Cllr Brentor is noted and that advice is clarified from the pension's regulator.
- 3) The Chair to write to the employee to inform them that there is an increase in the pay as a result of their recent qualification which is due to be implemented once a copy of the certificates has been submitted.

51.20

Report received from South West Councils

To consider the report from South West Councils provided in response to part B of resolution 245.20 of Ordinary Parish Council meeting 14th December 2020 and to agree on actions to be taken and any communication to Parish Council.

Councillor Brentor provided a verbal summary of the issues regarding matters that had been referred to South West Councils for advice and assessment and how to progress matters.

	<p>Members recognised the stress of waiting for an outcome for the parties involved and agreed to expediate matters with South West Councils.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That a meeting is arranged with South West Councils early next week and any cost implications are reviewed against the budget delegated to the Staffing Committee prior to confirming the meeting. 2) That the Chair of Staffing drafts a letter to be sent to the Clerk/RFO providing them with an interim update on the report from South West Councils.
<p>52.20</p>	<p><u>Next Meeting</u> To resolve to agree on the date of the next meeting.</p> <p>????</p> <p>There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 3.20pm.</p>