

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL
**Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Working Group
held on Zoom at 2pm on 5th January 2022**

Present

Councillors Liz Child, Kevin Cranston and Rob Green (Chair)

Absent

None

In attendance

Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Kate Montgomery (Deputy Clerk)

1. Apologies

None received.

2. Declarations of interest or requests for dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations.

3. Questions from the public

There were no questions.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Committee Working Group of 9th September 2021, previously circulated were noted and will be approved by the Committee at the next opportunity.

5. Report on additional staff resources

A report proposing two new posts: a Communications and Engagement Officer and an additional Administration Assistant had been circulated. This followed on from a report previously presented at the meeting on 5th July 2021.

The report identified a significant mismatch between the level of staff available and the Council's aspirations to deliver and support projects; the detrimental impact of understaffing on team morale and wellbeing; imminent opportunities to secure government funding to deliver major infrastructure projects; continued pressure from other areas of local government to pass on additional work and projects; a new direction and urgency required to deliver projects to support recovery from Covid-19; and the need to consider replacement of the Nature Recovery & Climate Action Officer post as the 12 months pilot had ended.

In addition, the Finance and Policy WG had considered a draft Communications Strategy at their meeting on 13th December 2020 and requested that the Clerk report to the Personnel Committee on how much the introduction of a Communications Officer would help to relieve workload pressures on other staff and what the budget implications would be.

The Clerk's report addressing the above issues and a draft job description for a Communications and Engagement Officer were discussed at length. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk responded to questions about the need for the post, how it would relate to support and funding for the Stroud Town CAN (Community Action Network), and the impact on the existing Communications Contract.

The Working Group were uncertain about the need for the role, the responsibilities and what level it would operate at. As a result the Working Group did not agree a budget recommendation.

The Working Group did, however, **agree** to recommend to Council that a project group should be established to lead on the Communications Strategy: refining the content and Action Plan, and working through the finer details of a new role and how it would relate to the existing Communications Contract and the Stroud Town CAN (Community Action Network).

Action: The Clerk was asked to develop some budget options for consideration at the Council meeting on 17th January.

With regard to the proposal to create an extra Administration post, doubts were raised about the justification for the additional post. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk reported that there is a significant gap in administration resources, particularly relating to project work, resulting in senior staff having to manage basic administrative tasks, which is both demoralizing and a poor use of public funds.

Action: The Clerk was asked to circulate a draft Job Description for the post and provide a justification of the need for the additional resource, for consideration at the Council meeting on 17th January.

6. Revisions to the Staff Handbook

The Working Group reviewed some further amendments to the draft Handbook and subject to one amendment recommended the draft for consultation with Council staff, with a view to the updated version being approved by Full Council at the earliest opportunity.

7. Updated contract templates

The Council's HR advisors had provided new templates for employment contracts, which were recommended for approval in principle subject to a few queries and minor amendments.

Action: The Clerk was asked to refer the Working Group's queries to the Council's HR advisors and report back.

8. Exclusion of press and public

It was **resolved** in view of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting.

9. Reports from annual staff reviews

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk reported on staff objectives and training needs identified in annual staff reviews. There were no recommendations for salary scale movements or changes to job descriptions.

Action: The Working Group requested that information on staff objectives be circulated to all councillors, subject to the agreement of staff members and with any personal or sensitive information removed.

10. Request for flexible working

The Working Group noted that an application had been received at short notice, which meant that there had been no time to discuss the request with the applicant prior to the meeting.

Action: The Clerk was asked to meet with the applicant and report back.

11. Staff and training budgets for 2022-23

A staff budget based on existing staff posts had been circulated. It was noted that national pay settlements for neither 2021-22 nor 2022-23 had yet been agreed. The Working Group **recommended** that the draft budget based on the current employers’ offer of 1.75% for 2021-22 and options for either 1%, 2% or 3% increases for 2022-23 be presented to Council on 17th January 2022, alongside options for the new posts discussed under item 5.

The Clerk confirmed that based on the outcome of staff reviews no changes to the draft training budgets presented to the Environment, and Finance and Policy Working Groups would be required.

The meeting closed at 4.45pm.

Chair

Date