

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL
**Minutes of the meeting of the
Personnel Working Group held on Zoom at 2pm on
5th July 2021 and continued from 2pm on 12th July 2021**

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 of 19th March 2021, previously circulated were noted and will be approved by the Committee at the next opportunity.

5. 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.

6. Presentation from the Clerk on staffing matters

The Working Group received a detailed presentation from the Clerk consisting of a review of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic since March 2020, the current impact on staff and issues regarding workload, particularly relating to the volume of project work.

Of particular concern were increasing demands on staff arising from the new direction and urgency required to deliver projects to support recovery from Covid-19, continued pressure from other areas of local government to pass on additional work and projects, and sickness absence relating to Covid-19.

The Clerk reported that even without these additional demands the Council was already overcommitted to project work, and that the current workload was having an unsustainable negative effect on staff health and wellbeing.

At 4pm the meeting was suspended and it was **agreed** to resume the next week.

The meeting resumed at 2pm on 12th July 2021

7. Review of staffing requirements for financial administration, project management and community engagement/communications

It was reported that there had been no suitable applications for the vacant Financial Administrator post, first advertised in May 2021. It was **agreed** to recommend to the Clerk that the Administration Officer should be offered additional working hours to cover some of the financial administration work on a trial basis for 3 months; and that the balance of the work should be covered by a locum with some input from the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. This temporary arrangement would allow additional time to review potential future roles and job specifications, including potentially separating out the RFO role.

Action: The Clerk was requested to review the Council's processes and structures regarding the management and integration of projects, including the introduction of systems for approving and prioritising proposals with reference to the Council's strategy, but with a focus on resilience and sustainability.

The Clerk had identified concerns about a lack of capacity for project administration, communications and community engagement. It was **agreed** that a parallel review should consider staffing requirements for these areas, with a focus on the skills required. It was noted that consideration needed to be given to the structure of the Stroud Town CAN and how the Council could best support its future development.

Action: The Clerk was requested to implement recommendations in the report presented under item 6 which included ensuring that councillors are aware of the current demands on staff and how to contact the office. Methods for diverting or reducing workload were also noted, for example passing on simple enquiries on to the right authority and if necessary, passing on more complex problems to relevant ward/division councillors for resolution. A need was also identified to review how much resource should be committed to infrastructure projects, where the required support, expertise and funding from SDC and GCC is not forthcoming.

Action: It was further recommended that the Clerk seek out potential interim staff to help reduce workload pressure.

Action: The Clerk was asked to arrange additional meetings over the Summer with a view to presenting any substantial proposals to the Council meeting in September.

The meeting closed at 5pm.

Chair

Date