

Finance and Staffing Committee

Meeting held 8:00pm

Thursday 18th February 2016

Catshill Village Hall, Golden Cross Lane, Catshill

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| Members present | Cllrs – P Baker (Chairman), J Bate, B McEldowney, M Shephard, O Sweeting |
| In attendance | Clerk - Rebekah Powell, Cllr M Knight |
| 1. Apologies for absence | None |
| 2. Declarations of Interest | None |
| 3. Dispensations | None submitted |
| 4. Public Questions | No members of the public were present. |
| 5. Exclusion of public from meeting | There was no requirement to exclude the public. |
| 6. Minutes of previous meeting | The minutes of the meeting held 08/12/15 were approved as an accurate record and duly signed. |
| 14. To note completion of job advert and Person Specification for Assistant Clerk, consider the job description prior to advertising the role and schedule dates for application, short listing and interview. | <p>With the agreement of the Committee, this item was brought forward to this point in the Agenda to allow input from Cllr M Knight who had been requested to stay in order to add his views as Chairman of the Planning Committee, to which the advertised role will have great impact.</p> <p>Members considered the job description and it decided it more than covered the need for the role. In consideration of the Person Spec it was suggested that the 'Willingness to work evenings when council or committees meet' and 'Willingness to work flexible hours' be altered to read 'There is a requirement to...' rather than willingness. It was also suggested that the Person Specification should read that a 'desirable' quality included previous experience of Local Planning procedure being desirable but not essential. It was agreed that the Clerk should make the suggested alterations to the Person Specification.</p> <p>Members considered the Advert and decided the wording should be altered from 'attendance at the Parish Council Office at Catshill Village Hall when required' be changed to 'at times to be agreed'. It was also suggested that a line be added to state that appropriate training would be provided where necessary.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Clerk make the relevant alterations to the Advert. Members discussed the salary scale of National Living Wage at £7.20 per hour as suggested in the Advert, including other ways of providing an incremental scale.</p> <p>It was agreed that Cllr P Baker would assist the Clerk by conducting research into the Local Government Salary scale and whether the tool used for calculating the Clerk's wage was transferrable to the Assistant Clerk role.</p> |

It was agreed to use the local papers for the advert (Bromsgrove Standard and/or Advertiser) the CALC notifications, Parish Notice Boards, the Council website and the Village Hall Website. It was suggested to use the Newsletter if this was to go out before the dates agreed.

It was agreed that the Interview Panel consist of the Clerk, the Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Planning Committee in order to keep the panel small.

It was agreed that the application closing date be 18th March, with shortlisting by an informal meeting of the Finance and Staffing Committee on Thursday 24th March and Interviews to be held on 5th April, times to be confirmed. It was suggested that the Clerk aim for the Advert to be published by 2nd March 2016.

Cllr M Knight left the meeting following this item.

7. **Clerk's report to include:**

7.1 Outcome of Internal Accounts Scrutiny performed by Cllr M Shephard 16/02/16.

Unfortunately due to Cllr Shephard's illness this did not happen and therefore will be rescheduled. However, it was noted that as Cllr M Shephard was now to be a signatory for the bank account he could no longer conduct this scrutiny and this had now been allocated to Cllr S Boxall-Southall as per the last Full Parish Council meeting (minute no. 15/12-8.2). It was also noted that the Clerk was aware that there was to be a separate Internal Audit of the Risk Management area of the Council but was unsure whether this could be conducted by Cllr M Shephard for the same reason.

It was agreed that the Clerk would seek clarification on this and that Cllr J Bate may be a suitable candidate if Cllr M Shephard were unable to conduct this audit also.

7.2 Outcome regarding request for further information as to an external body that could be approached regarding complaints, other than those that are referred to the Standards Committee, if all other avenues have been exhausted and the complainant is still not satisfied with reference to the Complaints Policy. (As per minute no.15/12-8.5)

The Clerk detailed information gained relating to this as follows. If someone complaining about the council, what it has done or not done, then Worcestershire CALC's Complaints procedure would be followed. If the complaint is about a member and a transgression of the Code of Conduct, then that is referred to the Standards Committee directly (Claire Felton at Bromsgrove DC). If it's a council member complaining about another council member, then that must go directly to the Standards Committee as the parish council does not have a mechanism for dealing with these complaints (Localism Act 2011, ch7). Otherwise, the complaint, if valid, must be seen to be handled transparently, so will need to be referred to in a meeting and minuted, even if the council discussed it in the absence of the public. If it is a complaint against a member of staff then only a portion of members can deal with it just in case it then turns into a grievance and the employee seeks a second opinion, which is when the remaining members consider the matter. The Clerk also noted other documents where research had been carried out informing Members that for Criminal Acts the Council would contact the Police. This seems to suggest there is no specific route for the request made. Members agreed that the Clerk had offered good advice and that they would

deal with an incident of this nature when it happened rather than trying to create a policy now.

It was agreed to take no action at present and to review this if circumstances necessitate it.

7.3 Following agreement at Full Parish Council (28/01/16) to note the appointment of Cllr Boxall-Southall as the member of the Council to verify bank reconciliations at least once a quarter as per Financial Regulations Policy 2.2 (as per minute no.15/12-8.2)

Members noted the new appointment.

7.4 Contact made with David Hunter regarding Lengthsman Scheme for 2016/17. To include review of current contract and appointment ahead of contract renewal in March and with consideration to email received regarding interest in the role.

The Clerk informed the Committee that David Hunter had confirmed that the Lengthsman Scheme would continue in 2016/17 but as yet did not know individual budget allocations. Members discussed the email received from Mr Mark Walker expressing interest in the role of Lengthsman and discussed the implications.

It was agreed that the Clerk should contact Mr Walker and ask for more information and that this item be then passed to the Environment and Highways Committee for consideration.

It was agreed that the Clerk should find out how long the current Lengthsman had been in post.

7.5 To note completion of the VAT Return and the expectation of £1016.47 refund in due course.

Members noted the amount that would be received as a refund.

8. **Review of policies to include:**

8.1 Lone Worker Policy

Members discussed the policy. It was noted by the Clerk that the Risk Assessment mentioned in 6.2 had not been completed since her commencement in the role.

It was agreed that the Clerk should check with the member of staff (Litter Picker) whether she wished to be included in the scheme of the Lone Worker Protection via a mobile device, at her upcoming appraisal.

It was agreed to endorse this policy as it stands.

8.2 Disciplinary and Grievance

Members had been supplied with the Disciplinary Policy for consideration. The Grievance Policy was deferred as it was established this was a separate document which Cllr P Baker would be able to send the Clerk.

It was noted that point 8.7 of the Disciplinary Policy refers to a 'Personnel Committee' and should read 'Finance and Staffing Committee'.

It was agreed to endorse this policy subject to this alteration.

8.3 Insurance Policy

Members discussed the policy, in particular item number 5.1.10 which refers to 'Motor Loss of Excess and No Claims Discount'. Members discussed whether this should be borne by the person and questioned if this was something covered in the Council's insurance at present.

It was agreed to defer the review of this policy until the next meeting and

that the Clerk should investigate this issue with the current Insurers.

8.4 Risk Assessment and Management

Members discussed the policy. The Clerk noted that Risk Management was an area that needed some attention within the Council and had annotated both the appendix to the policy and the Risk Review Document. It was noted that the exercise was to review the actual policy.

It was agreed to endorse the policy as it stands and that the Clerk should bring the Risk Review Log to the next meeting once it had been updated.

8.5 Draft update of Internet and Email Acceptable Use Policy to include the use of Social Media a per minute 15/12-9 provided by Cllr P Baker

Cllr Baker had provided a draft of this policy which now included Social Media reference. Members discussed the policy and the need for some amendments to wording and links throughout it.

It was agreed that Cllr P Baker would action these amendments

9. **Review of Investment Account**

The Clerk had provided a report prior to the meeting via email and in hard copy at the meeting (see attached document) which members considered and discussed.

It was agreed to refer the Investment Policy to the next Full Parish Council for review, with a mind to change the details of the policy from withdrawing the Interest gained to allow it to remain for re-investment in the account.

It was agreed to re-invest the amount with the Co-operative bank Fixed Rate Deposit Account and to monitor the company for reliability.
10. **To consider the application for a grant received from Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch (request letter circulated in hard copy)**

Members noted the valuable work undertaken by the Citizens Advice and the benefits gained by the Parish. The Clerk noted that there is no delegated authority within this Committee to approve grants but the Agenda Item was to request a recommendation to put to Full Council. The Clerk noted that the grants budget at present was already over spent so the suggestion was that the grant, if agreed, be deferred until after April. (s 142 of Local Government Act 1972). The Clerk reported that the previous grant allocation had been £500. Members discussed the current situation with CAB.

It was agreed the Clerk request an Annual Report as per the letter received for consideration by Full Council.

It was agreed to recommend a deferred payment if the grant was agreed.
11. **To agree the appointment of Mrs Diane Malley as Independent Internal Auditor and review letter of appointment**

It was agreed to proceed with the appointment of Mrs Diane Malley as Independent Internal Auditor.

It was noted that in the next Financial Year it may be prudent to send out to tender for this role as part of effective risk management of the Council in regards to its audit procedure.
12. **To agree the delegation of authority to the Clerk in relation to the appointment of contractors to carry out the structural survey of the War**

The current situation in regards to the War Memorial was discussed. It was noted that the survey was due in December 2014 but that an assumption had been made that the scheduled clean of the Memorial in 2015 would include a structural survey. The Clerk was to investigate as to whether this had happened by contacting S Bright and Sons.

It was agreed to delegate authority to the Clerk in relation to the appointment of contractors to carry out the structural survey of the War Memorial, if needed.

Memorial, if needed.

13. **To note correspondence with G Force Fireworks and agree a budget for this year's display as per the requested list of packages** The Clerk had unfortunately not received any response to the request for packages but noted that the Council had been pleased with the 2015 display. £3,500 had been allocated within the budget set for Events for the coming year which was to include the firework display. **It was agreed** to spend the same allocation as the previous year on the display at £2,500 and therefore a deposit of £300 was also agreed.
14. **To note completion of job advert and Person Specification for Assistant Clerk, consider the job description prior to advertising the role and schedule dates for application, short listing and interview** With the agreement of the Council this item had been considered at the beginning of the meeting.
15. **Confidential Business** **It was resolved** to close the meeting to the public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1(2), due to the confidential nature of the business transacted.
16. **To consider staff appraisal, salaries and pension.** The Clerk noted that her appraisal had a positive outcome so confirmation was now required to continue with the incremental payrise as per point 9.2 of her contract to LC2 Scale Point 27. Members also noted the pension requirements as detailed by Clerk that would affect both the Clerk and the new appointment of Assistant Clerk. Following the 2013 Valuation the new employer contribution rates payable by town and parish councils are; 2014/15 22.7% 2015/16 23.6% 2016/17 24.5% **It was agreed** to approve the incremental rise in the Clerk's wages from 1st April 2016.
17. **To consider items for next meeting of this committee** Review of the updated Risk Review Log
Review of Insurance Policy following investigation by the Clerk
Update of response from other member of staff regarding Lone Worker System

This meeting ended at 22:13 hrs

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Chairman, Finance Committee
Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council