

CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY
9 NOVEMBER 2021, AT THE MORGAN CENTRE, WELLINGTON ROAD, CROWTHORNE
AT 10.30AM

Present: Cllr B McKenzie Boyle – in the Chair
Cllr Mrs G Robertson
Cllr S Sever
Cllr B Wade
Mrs M Saville - Clerk
Mrs J Robertson – Assistant Clerk
0 member of the public

Apologies: Cllr Mrs T McKenzie-Boyle
Cllr C Thompson

MINUTE 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
There were none.

MINUTE 2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 4 May 2021 as circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

MINUTE 3 MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON 4 MAY 2021

1 Min 2 – General staffing update and work allocation

The Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Finance Officer are working at full capacity (including considerable overtime hours) as workloads are substantial, particularly following the departure of the Projects and Events officer in the early part of September. All admin staff raised concerns about workloads and work/life balance during their appraisals.

Workloads will be monitored as the Clerk and Finance Officer are again working extremely long days and this is not sustainable in the longer term. The appointment of a new Projects and Events Officer (discussed under minute 5) may assist in alleviating officer workloads along with reallocating some work to caretaking staff such as booking of annual servicing and maintenance/repair type follow up work.

CPC had also experienced difficulties with excessive workloads for grounds and cleaning staff earlier in the summer when the Morgan Centre Cleaner moved home and left his role. It proved difficult to recruit into the vacancy and the Morgan Centre and Parish Hall caretakers took on the additional workload in addition to opening, closing and cleaning the Morgan Centre which was being hired as a Covid testing centre necessitating enhanced cleaning regimes. The pre-school has now been given its own keys for the Parish Hall to alleviate locking/unlocking requirements Monday to Friday at that site. Recently a new cleaner for the Morgan Centre public toilets has been recruited successfully. These changes have helped to alleviate some of the workload pressures on the grounds/caretaking staff.

2 Min 3 – Management of Officer Workloads

As reported above, the administration and finance team officers continue to be extremely pressured with their workloads. It is hoped that the recruitment of a new Projects and Events Officer and clarification of Council’s priority projects, once the Three Year Strategy survey is known, will enable officer workloads to be managed in line with their contracted hours.

The Clerk reported that staff have tried to stick to their contracted hours of work, but it has proved impossible for them to stay on top of their workloads by doing so. The suggestion of an office junior to alleviate routine tasks was mooted.

Cllrs were requested once again at the CPC meeting in November to respond to communications promptly without chasing as this puts a considerable strain on staff time and work tracking e.g. planning applications, finance matters and agenda approvals.

3 Min 4 – Training update

Regular training updates are reported to CPC via the monthly Clerk’s report to CPC and via the appraisal feedback forms.

Staff have undertaken a variety of training this year including health and safety, first aid, fire safety, cyber awareness, GDPR; and targeted training for COSHH, lone working etc in the case of new cleaning staff.

Staff and Cllrs have had the opportunity to attend various NALC training courses on diverse topics such as High Street recovery, reopening community buildings post Covid, levelling up etc. In common with most meetings and presentations over the past 18 months much of the training has been delivered online.

The Clerk continues to encourage staff and Cllrs to participate in training which is relevant to roles/projects CPC is currently working on.

4 Min 5 – Staffing matters – budget requirement

The outcome of national pay negotiations for the 2021/22 year are still ongoing between the national employers and NJC. CPC will be required to backdate any pay awards settlement the negotiating bodies reach.

MINUTE 4 CLERK’S REPORT

None

MINUTE 5 TO REVIEW THE UPDATED PROJECT AND EVENTS OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTION, PERSON SPECIFICATION AND SALARY AND RESOLVE TO RECRUIT INTO THIS VACANCY

CPC resolved to recruit a Part Time Fixed Term Projects and Events Officer in August 2019. Since then, the post has been filled by two successive officers. The most recent post holder left CPC in August 2021 due to the restructuring of her post with Wokingham Town Council leading to a promotion there, and personal health reasons. The Project and Events Officer workload has been undertaken by the Clerk in addition to her existing workload since Ms Pentek left in August the additional workload is also impacting on the Finance Officer e.g. costing projects.

The Staffing Committee resolved at its meeting in May 2021, after Ms Pentek indicated she would be tendering her notice, to readvertise the post and benchmark it against similar roles to ensure that the remuneration package remains competitive.

The Projects and Events Officer's role has proved to be an invaluable way to support the administration function of the Council officers and for the delivery of high quality CPC events and projects.

CPC is part way through the delivery of critical projects and events such as the proposed regeneration of the sports surface into a MUGA and the analysis of the data from the Three Year Strategy consultation in order to identify key projects (such as solar panel arrays, EV charging and wildlife and biodiversity projects) and strategies for the Parish Council in the next 3 years – all of which will require considerable officer input to plan, cost, deliver and manage.

The Community Hub project also continues to take up officer time despite it being unknown if CPC will have a day to day role in managing the facilities.

In recent months CPC has also taken a more outward facing approach to community and trade projects such as the recovery of High Streets and Welcome Back Fund, Christmas late night shopping etc. all of which require considerable officer input. The workloads of other CPC officers is such that they do not have capacity to progress these projects effectively without the support of a designated Projects and Events Officer.

CPC has been through two unsuccessful rounds of advertising to try and recruit into the vacancy but has been unsuccessful at recruiting an officer who meets all the requirements of the role.

It is clear from reviewing the benchmarked role advertised by BFC recently that their HR department conducted a role evaluation and recommended the role is remunerated at scale points 15-24 whereas CPC advertised its previous projects and events vacancy at scale points 9-12. It is therefore recommended that when the role is readvertised that it is at the higher scale point range in line with the role evaluation undertaken by BFC for a similar post recently.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr B McKenzie-Boyle, seconded by Cllr Sever and unanimously RESOLVED to recruit a new Part Time Fixed Term Projects and Events Officer for 15 hours per week for a fixed one year period from the date of appointment at scale point 15-24 (pro rata). The scale point offered to be determined by the level of experience and skills of the applicant.

MINUTE 6 INFORMATION ITEMS

None

MINUTE 7 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

Meeting closed: 10.55am

Signed

Dated

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, it was resolved that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press and public were excluded from the meeting whilst the following confidential items were considered:

MINUTE 8 STAFFING MATTERS – BUDGET REQUIREMENTS FOR 2022/23

To review staff salaries and determine pay rises where appropriate. The current recommendations for salary increases, excluding the National Cost of Living increase percentage, which should be added to the recommendations when agreed with the unions, were circulated to members. It was noted that several staff were at the top of their pay scale.

Taking all the information presented into account, particularly the fact that 3 out of 6 staff (50%) are at the top of their pay scales, with a fourth reaching the top of her pay scale with the recommended increase, one member of staff having taken on a supervisory role over and above his job specification, and further that it has not been possible to fill an agreed vacancy, largely because the salary isn't in line with the expectation of suitable candidates, the recommendations were made for the agreement of the Staffing Committee, in order to ensure that every member of staff is paid in line with market rates, and has the opportunity to grow and develop within the agreed role.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr B McKenzie-Boyle, seconded by Cllr Mrs Robertson and unanimously RESOLVED to review and adjust where necessary all staff job specifications and salaries by implementing the following recommendations:

- a) That the Staffing Committee accepts the National Cost of Living index rise when agreed with the unions.
- b) That the Staffing Committee accepts additionally the recommendations in the confidential report circulated to the Staffing Committee for salary increases pro tem.
- c) That the Staffing Committee benchmark the staff salary scales and actual salaries paid across the Borough to inform final recommendations.
- d) That the Staffing Committee conduct a review of the Job Specifications of all staff and the salary scales applied, and determines adjustments to Job Specifications and Salaries as appropriate.
- e) That this review be determined by the Staffing Committee reported at the Council meeting in January 2022.

Meeting closed: 11.00am

Signed

Dated