

CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY
27 OCTOBER 2020, VIRTUALLY ON MS TEAMS AT 10.00AM

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

Apologies: All members were present

MINUTE 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
There were none.

MINUTE 2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 26 November 2019 as circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record. The lengthy time between meetings was noted to be due to the intervening and ongoing Covid 19 pandemic.

MINUTE 3 MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2019

1 Min 3.1 – Litter picking
Litter splitter bins have been installed by BFC throughout the village, at the Morgan Centre entrance and in the parking pays on Lower Broadmoor Road.

2 Min 3.2 – Work experience
The Year 12 work experience placements for 2 Edgbarrow students were a great success. Both pupils who took part in the scheme contributed positively to the work of Council. The placements ended in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic but both pupils had already fulfilled their work experience hours requirement for the year. CPC continues to support 2 Duke of Edinburgh volunteers at present.

3 Min 3.3 – Appointment of Bucklers Park Consultant
Cllr B McKenzie-Boyle will present an update to full Council following a meeting with L&G/CALA homes representatives on 19 October 2020.

4 Min 3.4 – Appointment of a Part Time Fixed Term Projects and Events Officer
The initial officer appointed into this role left CPC's employment in December 2019 due to the expansion of another role she was contracted to fulfil with another employer. As a result, CPC appointed Mrs Pentek into the vacancy. The void period between one officer leaving and the incumbent's appointment was due to the Covid 19 pandemic. It was noted that Mrs Pentek's 3 month mid term probation review with the Clerk and Cllr B McKenzie-Boyle was due.

CLERK'S REPORT

1 General staffing update:

- Finance and Administration: The workload of the administration and finance staff has increased exponentially as CPC offices were closed in March 2020 due to the global Covid 19 pandemic based on requirements from central government.

CPC's admin. team has redeployed to work from home since March. Despite being implemented with very little notice, CPC's officers have continued to provide an uninterrupted service to Council and the local community. A different style of working has evolved which has led to increased demands on officer time and workloads with most work being carried out online and meetings now being 'virtual' in line with NALC and central government advice.

The pandemic has brought with it issues impacting CPC's estate, such as anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and arson. Repair works, insurance claims, police reports etc have all led to an increase in workload for CPC staff as has the planning and implementation of enhanced security measures.

Work on new projects such as the market, to generate an income from CPC's outdoor estate whilst CPC's indoor facilities were closed and then reopened in a limited capacity, has been necessary to try and limit the financial impact on the council. This project is now bearing fruit but has taken a considerable amount of time from officers to reach this point.

Numerous budget reviews have been required, and substantially increased the workload of CPC's Finance Officer, in order to try and identify budget savings and areas for viring funds to try and balance the budget and mitigate loss of hirer income from indoor facilities due to the pandemic.

The closure and subsequent reopening of CPC's indoor facilities in a Covid secure way has also led to an increase in workload for the Clerk and Projects Officer in reading daily updates from central government, devising Covid risk assessments for facilities and activities and ensuring compliance.

The Assistant Clerk's workload has increased too with the requirement to check all market traders paperwork, liaise with facility hirers concerning ongoing changes caused by Covid etc.

CPC's caretaking/grounds staff, despite an initial reduction in their workload caused by the lockdown closure of CPC's indoor facilities, have had to adapt to a new way of working and increased cleaning and Covid security requirements since various facilities have been allowed to reopen.

The most recent indication from central government is that admin staff will continue to be required to work from home for the next 6 months. Accordingly, CPC's admin. staff have had the opportunity to request any equipment they need to enable them to continue working from home. In the main this has been implemented. The Clerk has requested blinds for light screening purposes, and these will be facilitated in due course.

The appointment of a Projects and Events Officer enabled CPC to hold a community Christmas lights switch on and carols event in 2019. Currently

the Projects and Events Officer is working on CIL projects including the MUGA tender for the regeneration of the basketball court at the Morgan Recreation Ground.

Admin and Finance staff meetings at covered outdoor venues are planned to enable regular training and briefings on Covid security compliance for CPC's facilities, services and staff, project progression, workload reviews and to promote staff wellbeing during the ongoing pandemic.

- **Training:** A training plan is in place for staff. Current workloads of existing administration staff and the impact of the Covid pandemic have made it difficult for staff to commit time to training this year. First aid training was booked for all staff in March but was postponed due to the inability to deliver the training safely during the pandemic. This will be rescheduled when it is safe to do so. PPE equipment is available for any member of staff who is required to provide first aid. However if a situation arose where time was of the essence in order to preserve life, and PPE equipment was not readily to hand, first aid would need to be administered without losing time obtaining the PPE equipment sited in a different location. This is reflected in CPC's Covid risk assessment

It was noted that First Aid certificates do not go out of date and require just refresher courses to remain current. The Clerk was asked to enquire with the First Aid course provider if there were any additional requirements with regards to the current Covid pandemic that may have a bearing on any potential insurance claim.

Action: Clerk

All staff require fire safety training, and this is being arranged via an online service.

- **Appraisals:** All staff appraisals have been undertaken in accordance with CPC HR policies and recommendations for pay reviews and variations to contracts for 2021-21 will be brought to the Staffing Committee meeting on 11 November 2020 as a confidential item.
- **Annual leave:** CPC staff have been encouraged to continue to take annual leave during the pandemic but this has been difficult in some cases. Where, as a result of the effects of Covid-19, it has not been reasonably practicable for leave to be taken in the normal way i.e. the individual has had to continue working and could not take paid holiday or the individual has been unwell and therefore unable to take annual leave, the government has introduced a new law allowing employees and workers to carry over up to 4 weeks' paid holiday into their next 2 holiday leave years. This law applies for any holiday the employee or worker does not take because of coronavirus.
- **HALC Autumn 2020 HR newsletter:** this was circulated to members.

MINUTE 5

TO AGREE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FOR MANAGEMENT OF OFFICER WORKLOADS

The following recommendations were presented to the Staffing Committee with a view to presenting them to full Council in order to manage ongoing officer workloads:

- a) CPC members seek the input and agreement from its officers before committing them to additional work or obligations to ensure they have the capacity to undertake the additional work requested.
- b) Members undertake the pre-emptory work, preparation of agendas, reports

MINUTE 5 (cont)

etc, preparation of meeting notes and responsibility for the preparation of any output/reports for the inclusion in subsequent CPC agenda packs etc. for working groups and stakeholder groups. And, if any input/attendance is required from CPC's officers for such meetings, they are given sufficient time and notice to prepare their input and that the Cllr making the request ensures the timing does not adversely impact on the officer's existing workload and commitments.

- c) Officers undertake any online reporting requests for matters they are concerned about which can be reported by them, or on behalf of residents reporting matters to them, where responsibility for remediating the issues rest with BFC and not CPC (in accordance with the request from the Clerk to all Cllrs on 21 October 2020).
- d) That Cllrs consider running the 3 Year strategy plan survey with the assistance of CPC's projects officer, in order that outstanding projects and objectives can be agreed and ranked in priority order with proposed timelines set, to enable officers to focus on the critical projects agreed by CPC.
- e) Cllrs are mindful that the project that they may be 'leading' on may be one of several the officers are working on.

Background

During the Covid pandemic, CPC's administration and finance team have had to work a considerable number of additional hours (in excess of their contractual hours), since March 2020, to ensure that all of CPC's functions, legal obligations and deadlines could be fulfilled (e.g. audit deadlines, end of year, risk assessments, government Covid security compliance and submission of emergency funding applications). Had the work not been completed CPC would have been in breach of Covid legislation and the end of year financial deadlines and audit would not have been completed on time. Additional work and projects have also taken place which were unplanned in order to mitigate the impact on CPC's financial position during lockdown, such as the launch of a market to generate an income from the letting of outdoor space and the preparation of several applications for grant funding.

The additional workload requirements have had a particularly detrimental effect on the Finance Officer and Clerk, both of whom have had to work many hours in excess of their contracted hours to ensure CPC remained compliant and met legal deadlines.

CPC's Staffing Committee had specifically asked for a Staffing Committee agenda item to consider how to assist officers in managing their expanded workloads during the ongoing pandemic and the ideas listed above were some ways that may help.

CPC's officers are aware that the list is not exhaustive and welcomed input from members on other ways to help manage work loads and work flow.

Members felt that the above recommendations were too prescriptive and agreed to reflect on Cllr Sever's suggested wording. Cllr Sever agreed to circulate his proposed recommendation after the meeting for members to reflect and agree on.

Cllr B McKenzie-Boyle recommended that what is needed is a set of principles rather than prescriptive rules. This was seconded by Cllr Price and unanimously agreed. Members agreed to look at Cllr Sever's wording and amend if required before putting to Council at the November meeting.

Suggested wording supplied post meeting:

In the light of the present and ongoing Covid pandemic, members of the Council should be mindful of the current additional workload being experienced by the Officers when seeking help and assistance with existing and proposed future projects.

To that end, it would be helpful if officers published a list of current existing projects and the impact of future known projects on their workload to guide any Councillor requests.

MINUTE 6

TO AGREE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FOR REGULAR OFFSITE OUTDOOR MEETINGS FOR CPC FINANCE AND ADMIN STAFF

The Staffing Committee considered the recommendations from the appraisal panel to support the reasonable cost of staff refreshments at regular offsite meetings, for CPC finance and admin. officers, to enable work related discussions about project progress, budgets, responsibilities, workload/work flow reviews etc. to take place in an outdoor covered venue during the Covid pandemic.

Background

CPC's appraisal panel has recently undertaken the annual staff appraisals whereby all finance and admin. officers expressed a desire to convene and attend regular face to face team meetings in order to discuss project progress, budgets, responsibilities, reviews of workload and work flow etc. All officers have been working from home for the last 7 months and, based on the latest indications from government, will continue to be required to work from home until at least March 2021. The appraisal panel indicated that they were supportive of such proposals.

Protracted home working, where staff are isolated at home, is also having a detrimental impact on staff wellbeing and morale.

Some officers have vulnerable family members so are choosing not to meet face to face in indoor venues such as CPC's halls or offices and would prefer to meet offsite at a covered outdoor venue such as a café or restaurant, where virus transmission risk is lower. Advice from CPC's internal auditor (Claire Connell) was taken on 20/21 October 2020 concerning whether it would be permissible for CPC to reimburse the cost of refreshments at offsite CPC officer meetings.

Following some discussion and based on the advice from CPC's internal auditor and the recommendations of the Appraisal Panel, members unanimously agreed to recommend to Council the reimbursement of reasonable refreshment costs for offsite staff training, planning and review meetings during the ongoing Covid pandemic.

It was further stressed that all Officers must claim for any expenses incurred whilst attending to Council business, i.e. mileage.

MINUTE 7

INFORMATION ITEMS

None

MINUTE 8

ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

Meeting closed: 10.43am

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 9 STAFFING MATTERS – TO AGREE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FOR PAYMENT OF OVERTIME AND TIME OFF IN LIEU (TOIL) FOR STAFF HOURS WORKED IN EXCESS OF CONTRACTUAL HOURS DURING THE PANDEMIC AND ONGOING

The Staffing Committee considered to recommend to Council that CPC, in accordance with staff contracts of employment, agrees to pay the overtime pay accrued by administration and finance staff during the Covid 19 pandemic, and ongoing; and that those staff wishing to take the hours accrued as Time Off in Lieu (or a combination of overtime and TOIL) be allowed to do so.

Background

CPC's Clerk, Finance Officer and Assistant Clerk are all employed under standard NJC contracts which provide:

1. ADDITIONAL HOURS

13.1 Any requirement for you to work additional or overtime hours must be agreed in advance of being worked, with the council. Subject to obtaining approval, you will be reimbursed at the appropriate NJC rate for these hours or you may take time off in lieu at a time to be agreed between you and the Council.

During the Covid pandemic, CPC's administration and finance team have all been required to work from home in accordance with government requirements. The Clerk and Finance Officer have both had to work a considerable number of additional hours (in excess of their contractual hours) during the lockdown period, since March 2020, to ensure that all of CPC's functions, legal obligations and deadlines could be fulfilled (e.g. audit deadlines, end of year, risk assessments, government Covid security compliance and submission of emergency funding applications). Had the work not been completed CPC would have been in breach of Covid legislation and the end of year financial deadlines and audit would not have been completed on time. Although it was not always possible to seek prior approval for the hours worked, as much of it has been carried out on a reactive or emergency basis, CPC's Chairman, Vice Chairman and Finance Champion have been aware of the hours admin and finance staff have had to work to ensure CPC remained compliant.

CPC has been awarded a grant of £10,000 via a government scheme to help the parish council meet the additional costs of Covid. CPC's Finance Officer and Finance Champion have regularly reviewed CPC's financial position since March and the additional cost of overtime hours until July 2020 has been built into the revised forecasts. Further overtime hours have been worked since then. The Clerk would like to claim overtime pay in accordance with the table in the agenda pack for the OT hours worked from March to July 2020 (50 hours) and has booked or taken TOIL time for the additional hours worked from July until November 2020.

Of the Finance Officer's current balance of TOIL (51.25) she has indicated that she would aim to either take an extended Christmas break or time off in late January. For any additional hours worked from November, at the moment, her

thoughts are that it is more realistic that they would be paid overtime.

The Clerk and Finance Officer would like to continue to have the flexibility to work the additional hours required to enable them to fulfil all elements of their respective roles and either take this as OT pay or TOIL. Alternative options such as the recruitment of short term admin. staff or a temp. have been considered but it would be difficult to train short term staff to carry out the various elements of the Finance Officer and Clerks' roles when all staff are working from home.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr B McKenzie-Boyle, seconded by Cllr Wade and unanimously RESOLVED to recommend to Council that all OT hours accrued to date are paid or taken as TOIL, as requested by the staff member making the claim. Staff should ensure they present such claims monthly in future to enable CPC to monitor workload pressures and salary forecasts and budget planning.

Meeting closed: 10.48am

Signed

Dated