

1878. THE ASSISTANT CLERK HAS COMPLETED HER THREE MONTH PROBATIONARY PERIOD, AND HAS UNDERTAKEN AN APPRAISAL. THE CLERK AND ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT HAVE ALSO UNDERTAKEN THEIR APPRAISALS

The Chairman advised that he has had sight of the appraisal document and has signed it off. There are no issues arising from the appraisal and Members felt that the Assistant Clerk was doing very well in her position.

Recommended that Sharon Martin be offered a permanent position as Assistant Clerk.

For note, the Clerk and Administration Assistant have also undertaken their appraisals. The Chairman has had sight of the documents, there are no issues arising from them, and has signed them off.

1879. TO APPROVE THE ADDITION OF THE ASSISTANT CLERK TO THE COUNCIL'S CHEQUE SIGNATORIES

Recommended that the Assistant Clerk be added to the list of Council cheque signatories and be recognised by the bank as being able to authorise transactions on all Council bank accounts.

1880. TO CONSIDER THE ADDITION OF THE ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT TO THE COUNCIL'S CHEQUE SIGNATORIES

This item was requested by Councillor Mrs Cooper. The Administration Assistant would only sign Imprest account cheques where there is an emergency and neither the Clerk nor Assistant Clerk is available. A discussion ensued over how often this situation might arise and it was felt that it is only in rare unavoidable circumstances. It was therefore:

Recommended that the Administration Assistant is not added to the list of Council cheque signatories.

A further discussion ensued regarding the Imprest account and the Clerk explained that she felt that both she and the auditors would feel more comfortable if there was more than just the Clerk/Assistant Clerk signing the cheques. The Clerk recommended that a second signatory should be one of the four Councillor signatories as this would be a counter check, and would be easier to obtain than two Councillor signatories, and would ensure complete financial transparency.

Recommended that a bank mandate form be completed to allow either the Clerk or Assistant Clerk, plus one of the four other Councillor signatories to sign the Imprest account cheques.

1881. TO CONSIDER GIVING APPROVAL FOR THE ASSISTANT CLERK TO HAVE HER PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY PHOTOGRAPHER PETER TRULOCK AND DISPLAYED ON THE STAFF/COUNCILLOR PICTURE NOTICE BOARD IN THE OFFICE FOYER AT A COST OF £80.00

Peter Trulock originally took the Councillor and other staff photographs and it was:

Recommended that the Assistant Clerk has her photograph taken by Peter Trulock at a cost of £80.00, and that it be displayed on the staff/Councillor picture notice board.

1882. TO CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF A NEW SET OF OFFICE POSTAL SCALES IN THE SUM OF £29.99 PLUS VAT

The old set of postal scales is not accurate, which is vital with the new postal charging scheme.

Recommended that a new set of office postal scales in the sum of £29.99 plus vat be purchased, funds to come from the office equipment budget.

1883. TO CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF A DESK AND STORAGE FURNITURE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT TO A MAXIMUM OF £350 PLUS VAT

When the Simpson Centre building was purchased there was no Administration Assistant and therefore no need for a new desk, however since she has joined she is using an old reception bench. This is not suitable ergonomically, and does not have adequate storage space. The Buildings Management Committee is prepared to fund the necessary alterations to the reception window and removal of the old bench counter, ready for a new desk and storage furniture.

Recommended that a desk and storage furniture for the Administration Assistant be purchased to a maximum of £350 plus vat, funds to come from the office equipment budget.

1884. TO CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF A LOCKABLE FILING CABINET FOR CONFIDENTIAL PAPERS IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE TO A MAXIMUM OF £100 PLUS VAT

This Committee has previously approved the purchase of two cabinets for the archives room, however after a document clear out and removal of one of the old cabinets, it is found not necessary at present. Members were reminded that ideally any cabinet for the storage of confidential and important documents should be fire proof, however they are very expensive and this Committee would need to consider putting money aside in the future for this purpose.

Recommended that a lockable filing cabinet for confidential papers in the Clerk's office be purchased to a maximum of £100 plus vat, funds to come from the office equipment budget.

1885. TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE ACTION TAKEN BY THE CLERK IN BOOKING HERSELF ON A CEMETERY MANAGEMENT COURSE AT A COST OF £85

Spaces are limited and it was booked in order to avoid missing a chance of a space. The course covers cemeteries law, administration, health and safety, planning new cemeteries, green burials, etc. The course takes place on Wednesday 21st May in Coventry (mileage costs are estimated at around £75). The Assistant Clerk will provide cover in the office and for the two evening meetings.

The Clerk had previously spoken to the Chairman of the Cemetery Management Committee about the course. She was thanked for finding such a useful course and booking herself on it in time to obtain a space.

Recommended that the executive action taken by the Clerk in booking herself on a cemetery management course at a cost of £85 (plus mileage expenses) be approved.

1886. TO CARRY OUT AN INSURANCE POLICY REVIEW

We have recently received this year's insurance policy renewal form, and the Clerk has looked through the documents to see if anything needs removing or adding to the policy before requesting authorisation for payment.

We may need to increase the number of street lamps, currently recorded on the policy as 187. With regard to playground equipment, we need to amend the Straight Grinding Rail at the skate park to a Curved End Grinding Rail. The cost of the new grind rail is £495 and therefore the sum insured will need to be increased from £150 to £495, and added to the assets file.

Last year's premium was £12,585.39, this year they are increasing it to £13,131.99, but may change if any amendments are made. We have budgeted £15,800 for insurances for 2008/2009.

Recommended that Councillor Mrs Cooper assists the Clerk in updating the list of street lamps, and any other necessary amendments should be made to ensure the insurance cover is adequate.

1887. TO CONSIDER INVITING A REPRESENTATIVE OF PENINSULA BUSINESS SERVICES LTD TO CARRY OUT A FREE CONSULTATION EXERCISE ON POSSIBLE HUMAN RESOURCES SUPPORT THEY MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE

If, following their consultation, we decide to use them, Peninsula Business Services Ltd's charges are based on payroll figures and the level of service required – they can advise more should we wish to go any further on the matter.

Members gave the matter due consideration and it was felt that as we already subscribe and have access to necessary advice from the Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (BATPC) Members agreed that it was not necessary to invite Peninsula Business Services in to carry out their consultation exercise.

A Member advised that she had gone through the documents in archives and in the office and has made a list of documents we already have pertaining to human resources, health and safety, and various other policy documents. They have been sorted into the relevant Committee headings and at some point in the future they will be passed to those Committees to go through and establish what policies, guidance and regulation documents they have and what they need to obtain. Since the list was put together, the Clerk has managed to obtain further documents which will be added to the list.

This list will be passed to BATPC for advice on what we still need to obtain.

With regard to human resources, the Clerk advised that she has found an Employment Law course taking place in Welwyn Garden City at a cost of £30 and Members felt that it would be very useful for her to attend the course which takes place in June.

Recommended that

- i) We do not take up the offer from Peninsula Business Services Ltd of a consultation exercise on human resource services.
- ii) Once updated, the list of documents we already hold pertaining to human resources, health and safety, etc be passed to the appropriate Committee for updating and adopting.

- iii) The Clerk be authorised to spend £30 on attending the Employment Law course taking place in Welwyn Garden City, funds to come from staff training budget.

1888. TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE SUGGESTED RE-ARRANGED STANDING ORDERS

Members were asked to only consider the order in which the Standing Orders have been re-arranged at this meeting, to ensure that they follow a sensible, understandable sequence, before concentrating on getting the content correct at a separate meeting. Members were previously asked that if they have any suggestions for content amendments or clarification on items, that they forward to the Clerk in readiness for the next meeting of this Committee. Members were provided with a copy of the suggested re-arranged Standing Orders for consideration, and it was felt that they follow a logical order.

Recommended that the suggested re-arranged Standing Orders be accepted, with the content being considered at a future meeting of this Committee.

The Clerk was thanked for her work on the matter.

1889. TO REVIEW THE TERMS OF REFERENCES FOR COMMITTEES

The point of this exercise was to confirm how much 'power' Committees are given. Reviewing the Terms of Reference will be a lengthy process as each Committee will need to independently go through their Terms at another time, before being brought back to this Committee for approval.

Advice has been sought from BATPC who advise that we need to look at the spirit of best value and challenge ourselves about our decisions, and what the role of our Committees is. Are the Committees information gathering groups, or should they be empowered to get on and do things as management/executive committees?

If they have their own budgets then it means that they should have power to spend within their budget, without going to full Council for approval.

Each Committee should have delegated powers which are in place to take the load off full Council and to avoid having to keep going back for approval, the process of which may take months. There may be times when the committee might wish to make recommendations to full Council for matters which are outside their delegated powers.

They also advise that the wording in our current Terms of Reference show that our Committees are set up to manage, undertake, be responsible for, monitor, conduct or control something, they are therefore management/executive committees. The sentence saying that each Committee passes recommendations for consideration by full Council is to be used when there is no relevant delegated power given in the Terms, and does not override the Terms listed. The current Terms also show that committees have the power to spend funds within pre-budgeted figures.

Members gave the matter due consideration, and after a lengthy discussion, including reference to the history of the Terms of Reference dating back from 1998 it was:

Recommended that it is confirmed that Committees have the power to take action within their Terms of Reference and spend within their budgets, by a resolution, without having to go to full Council for approval.

It was further:

Recommended that

- i) The Clerk is to produce a basic start sheet for each Committee prior to their review of their Terms of Reference, giving a sentence explaining the delegated powers conferred on the Committee. Also putting in the uniformed sentences regarding keeping minutes, spending funds within pre-budgeted figures, instructing the Clerk to obtain information. The sentence regarding passing recommendations should be re-worded to read 'where there is no relevant delegated power given, this Committee may pass recommendations to Council for approval'.
- ii) Each Committee is to carry out a review of their Terms of Reference, and in order to keep uniformity between Committees, a list should be drawn up of delegated powers to be taken under a resolution, in order of importance.

1890. ANY ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

There were no items for information.

There being no further relevant business the meeting was declared closed at 8.40pm

CHAIRMAN

DATED