

STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2024 AT 7.00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, VALERIAN WAY, STOTFOLD.

Committee Members present:

S Buck (Chair), S Hayes (Vice Chair), Mrs J Hyde, J Smith, B Saunders, J Talbot.

Also present:

Cllr Hayes (Virtually)

E Payne, Town Clerk

102/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Cooper and Cllr Hayes (attending virtually). It was **RESOLVED** to:

Accept apologies.

103/24 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA

Cllr Smith declared an interest in item 108/24.2 as he is consultant to CloudyIT, the supplier of the Decisions software. He was present for the discussion but took no part in the vote.

104/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

There were no members of the public present.

105/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Members received the minutes of the Establishment Committee meeting held on 20 December 2024. Members queried the resolution for the release of the Mossman EMR. It's use is specified in the minutes but not the resolution. There were no amendments proposed.

A further query was raised regarding the Staff Handbook and the specified relationships in the Bereavement Policy. It was explained that the Town Clerk has discretion to apply it.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes are a true record of the meeting.

106/24 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDANCE RECEIVED AND MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION.

106/24.1 Code of Conduct Training

The Clerk is waiting for confirmation that the Code of Conduct training has been undertaken by all new councillors.

106/24.2 Register of Interest
Cllrs Matthew & Bendell have yet to complete their registers of interest with CBC.

106/24.3 Councillor Vacancy
The vacancy has been advertised and the Clerk has spoken with a resident who is interested in being co-opted. An application has not yet been received.

106/24.4 Learning Nest
Worknest are in the process of setting this up.

106/24.5 CCLA Investments
The bank mandate for the CCLA account has been signed this evening and will be processed.

It was RESOLVED that the Confidential Report, Staff Resources, is considered at this point of the meeting due to its implications on the Budget.

107/24. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Members resolved to exclude the Press and Public for the consideration of the following items under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

107/24.1 Staff Resources

Members received a confidential report regarding a reorganisation of the staff structure, which has been hastened in the light of the resignation of the Assistant Clerk. Members noted that this role has been split into two roles; Democratic Services Manager and Cemetery Officer, which was part of the proposed new structure, and is currently being advertised. Members considered the investment in staff to being able to deliver the Town Council's services is warranted.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that:

The new staff structure is implemented.

108/24. REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

108/24.1 Decisions Software

Cllr Smith declared a personal, pecuniary interest in this item as they are a consultant to the supplier. He was asked to stay for the discussion, as he could explain how the software works, for the benefit of those councillors who had not attended the demonstration. They took no part in the vote.

Members received a report following a demonstration of the Decisions Software by CloudyIT. Members were advised of the benefits to the staff in preparing and distributing agendas, as well as the ability for all councillors to access up to date information on how items were progressing. Members were advised that the quotation included all software implementation; training for staff; and training for councillors.

Members were keen that Officers had the time to implement the decisions of the council, and this software would reduce some of the administration relating to meetings. There is a significant time saving in setting the agenda and compiling the minutes. There was also an interface for the direct publishing of agendas to the website. Whilst this may not be functional in the first instance, as the Town Council's website may not be able to interface with the software, any new website would be fully integrated.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

Purchase Decision Software at an implementation cost of £3,383.38 in year 1 and an ongoing cost of £1,295 annually.

108/24.2 BUDGET 2024-25

Members received a report with a proposed budget for 2024-25. Members asked when the budget statement would be released and the Clerk will take advice from CBC when they will be issuing Council tax statements, so that it can be released before the Annual Town Meeting on 7 March 2024.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that:

a) The budget as outlined in the report is adopted.

b) The precept is set at £913,482.

108/24.3 Dispensations Policy

Members received a report with a proposed policy to handle the granting of dispensations. Members noted that Councillors do not have to apply for dispensation, it is entirely at their own discretion, provided that they have declared an interest in an item. The legislation says dispensation requests are decided by the Town Clerk or the Council. This policy requires requests to be agreed by Council/Committee that it relates to. Dispensations allowed meetings to proceed if they were in danger of being inquorate. Members asked the Clerk to clarify the agenda item when the dispensation is requested.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the:

Dispensations Policy is adopted.

108/24.4 Training and Development Policy

Members received a proposed policy for the handling of councillor and staff training.

Members discussed the needs of Councillors for training including IT; GDPR and finance which allows the Councillors to undertake their role effectively. Members asked if Finance training could be organised for all Councillors by an external contractor through BATPC.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that:

The Training and Development Policy is adopted.

108/24.5 First Aiders and Fire Wardens

Members received a report on the current provision of first aiders and fire wardens within the organisation. Members felt that it was an important skill to have and that all staff should be trained in First Aid at Work. This would negate the need to pay an inducement to individuals to undertake these roles.

The frequency of fire alarm practices was then considered, with some organisations undertaking this quarterly, rather than the annual practice that is currently recommended. This would help ensure that new members of staff were familiar with the process. Fire warden training should also be applied to all staff, including Town Rangers, who are the ones who are testing the fire alarm, as well as the key holders. This would also be extended to the library café tenant.

Members considered the provision of free defibrillator training to the public after a post in the Stotfold News about the locations of defibrillators. The Clerk was asked to check if a defibrillator kit should be included in the cabinets (scissors, razor etc).

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Note the first aid risk assessment attached to the report.**
- b) Organise First Aid At Work Training for all staff.**
- c) There is no need to remunerate staff as they will be trained.**
- d) First aid and fire alarm training to be offered to the staff in the new Library Café.**
- e) Organise a public training session for the defibrillators with First Aid for All at a cost of £150.00.**

108/24.6 Annual Town Meeting

Members received a report with an update on the organisation of the Annual Town Meeting. The format for the event will be works of the Town Council in the previous year and the projects in the year ahead. Cllr Hyde will present a report on all Stotfold charities.

Committee Chairmen are going to be asked to present a short report on their Committee's activities. The Clerk advised that the Police Commissioner would be attending. There is no invited speaker at the moment.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

Note the report and the discussion of the meeting regarding the format for the event.

108/24.7 LGPS Pension

Members received a report asking for the committee to ratify the Clerk's admittance to the LGPS.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

Admit Emma Payne to the Bedfordshire Local Government Pension Scheme.

108/24.8 Outsourcing Payroll

Members received a report to evaluate the feasibility and advantages/disadvantages of outsourcing payroll. Members considered that this would be an efficient use of Officer resources.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

Investigate outsourcing payroll at a future meeting.

108/24.9 Flexible Working Policy

Members received a report with a proposal to introduce a flexible working scheme for staff. Members noted that the previous use of TOIL was not well managed and had been abused by some staff and they wanted any mention of TOIL removed from the policy.

In a competitive recruitment market, it was attractive for future employees to know that they have a work-life balance and having a flexible working environment helps with this. The Town Clerk would have their flexible working agreed by the Chair/Vice Chairman, along with their holiday requests and training.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council to:

Adopt the Flexible Working Policy.

108/24.10 Policy Review

Members received two updated policies for review. Members were advised that the Code of Conduct policy will be considered at a future meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the following policies are re-adopted:

- a) ***Councillor IT Device Usage Policy.***
- b) ***Councillor Mileage Claim Policy.***

108/24.15 Bank Reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation for November 2024. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Bank Reconciliations for November 2024 inclusive were signed by the RFO and Cllr Buck.

108/24.16 Work Programme

Members received the Work Programme for this committee, and it was **RESOLVED** to:

Note the work programme.

109/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27 March 2024

The meeting closed at 2005.

MINUTES APPROVED (date): _____

SIGNED BY CHAIR: _____