

DEREHAM TOWN COUNCIL

18th June 2024

At a meeting of the **Personnel** Committee held on Tuesday 18th June 2024 at Dereham Memorial Hall.

Present Councillors K Cogman (Chairman), Z Flint, H King and L Monument.

Also present: Town Clerk Tony Needham and Deputy Town Clerk Jillian Barron.

1. **To receive apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Green.

2. **Declaration of Interest.**

Councillor Z Flint declared a personal interest in item 7 as she is friends with a member of staff, and Councillor H King declared a personal interest in item 6 as he is a member of the Royal British Legion.

3. **To elect a Chairman.**

Councillor H King proposed Councillor K Cogman. There were no other nominations, it was agreed that Councillor K Cogman be Chairman of the Personnel Committee 2024/25.

4. **To elect a Vice Chairman.**

Councillor L Monument proposed Councillor H King. There were no other nominations, it was agreed that Councillor H King be Vice Chairman of the Personnel Committee 2024/25.

5. **Exclusion of press and public**

Proposed by Councillor K Cogman, seconded by Councillor Z Flint it was agreed to pass a resolution to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting on the grounds that the Business to be transacted is confidential and publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest.

6. **To consider amendments to staff hand book and employment policies and procedures.**

The committee made the following recommendations:

(a) Amendments in support of the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

General Employment Policy

Insert a paragraph to say the following: The Council is committed to the Armed Forces Covenant and has put policies in place intended to support the principle that people should not be disadvantaged in any way due to such service. The Council has tried to incorporate such policies

as seem necessary at the time of writing. The Council does however recognise that there may be specific circumstances that cannot be anticipated. The Council encourages members of staff to bring forward additional ideas for discussion so that policies can continue to evolve to reduce inequalities.

Reference to Armed Forces includes Reservists:

The Council will follow the guidance within the Ministry of Defence's [Armed Forces Handbook](#) for employers of reservists when making policies and decisions relating to reservists.

Holidays and Leave

Insert the following: Where an employee has a partner in the Armed Forces and leave is requested to coincide with their partner's return from deployment or similar, the Council will approve such leave, provided at least 4 weeks-notice is given.

Where an employee is also a Reservist, and is due to be deployed for an extended period, the Council will ensure that all leave accrued can be taken prior to Deployment.

Special Leave

Insert the following: The Council recognizes that having a partner in the Armed Forces (particularly when deployed for extended periods in hostile environments) can impose unique stresses on family life. The Council will be as supportive as is possible in such circumstances and will consider authorizing Special Leave in exceptional circumstances.

Time off for Public Duties

Reserve forces, special constables, retained firefighters: Time off will be allowed to attend up to 10 essential training days annually. Where payment is given for such training, the Council will make the difference up to full pay. If the Employee is required to attend more than 10 days training this will be considered favourably. Where a reservist is deployed for extended periods, discussions will be had with that employee to identify the best way to keep in touch while on deployment and the best way to return to work following deployment.

Flexible Working

The Committee discussed the draft amendments to the flexible working policy. draft below.

Draft amendment.

Applications for flexible working can be a temporary measure or a permanent change in the employees terms and conditions of employment. The Council will follow the ACAS code of practice when considering flexible working requests.

Home working. The Council is a small organization which needs to maintain sufficient staffing presence in the office during certain hours. Staff work closely together. Home working is therefore highly likely to adversely impact on the quality of work, the Council's ability to customer demand and individual performance.

The Council will however be considerate towards temporary requests for home working where this relates to a sudden illness of a family member requiring home monitoring for a short period i.e. not providing a high level of care but mainly monitoring and providing meals.

Flexible working:

The Council is supportive of employees returning to work after childbirth or adoption. Flexible working and changes to working hours (including reduced hours) will be considered favourably for parental duties, where this is to facilitate child drop off and pick up responsibilities, provided there will only be limited impact on the efficiency of the Council.

The Council recognizes that employees with childcare responsibilities, who have a partner serving in the Armed Forces, can face additional stresses, particularly when their partner is deployed. In such circumstances the Council will consider requests for temporary flexible working favourably, provided there will be no significant impact on the Council service.

The Committee recommended that: because further refinements to the flexible working policy needed to be made and that these could be delegated to the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Personnel Committee.

(b) Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination

Under Harassment; amend to read, Harassment, including sexual harassment

Add an additional paragraph to read

It is recognized that particularly with regards to sexual harassment, that it can be difficult to discuss any unwelcome behaviours. Where members of staff have experienced unwelcome behaviours, they are urged to discuss these with somebody they feel comfortable with either inside the organization or outside the organization. It is important that these matters are raised and resolved at the earliest opportunity with either the Clerk or Deputy Clerk. In such matters, if the employee wishes it, they can be supported by either a work colleague, union representative or somebody else the employee feels comfortable with.

7. **Update on staffing issues.**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update and the following recommendations were made:

The committee recommended that the pay for the post of cleaner at Barwell Court Toilets should be doubled due to difficulties in attracting cleaners to a post which needs to be carried out early in the morning and is for only one hour per day.

The committee recommended that the job description and person specification for the Memorial Hall Technician be revised and the post be graded the same as the Caretaker post.

8. **To consider methods to free up staff capacity improved efficiency.**
The Town Clerk gave a brief over view on a few minor areas where staff time could be saved and the following recommendations were made:

The committee recommended that the Council adopt phone clocking in system. The choice of specific system would be delegated to the Clerk, it was felt that a simple system with a cost of less than £500 a year would probably be more appropriate.

The committee recommended that allotment management software and tablet be purchased. The annual cost would be around £1,800 per year and would enable staff to work more efficiently and be more effective when inspecting allotments.

The committee recommended having a set date for Civic Sunday and the bowls match. Dates to be confirmed. This would enable staff to work more efficiently because it will remove the need to 'negotiate' with other Town Councils to avoid civic Sundays clashing.

9. **Staff retirement planning.**
The committee discussed the future retirement of the Deputy Town Clerk, it was suggested that a starting point for recruitment would be to gather job descriptions from other Town Councils to see how the work load is spread between other Town Clerks and Deputy Town Clerks, these could be compared with Town Council's existing arrangements.

Chairman