



## Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Policy Committee of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council held at Meeting Room, Sycamore House, Drayton Road, Bletchley on Tuesday, 5th September, 2023 commencing at 7.30 pm**

**Present:** Cllrs G Bedford, K Ely, E Hume and E Kelly-Wilson

**Absent:**

**Apologies:** U Osumili

**In attendance:** Delia Shephard (Town Clerk)

### Min Ref

- EMPC23-2440 **Councillors' apologies for absence**  
It was RESOLVED that apologies for absence from Cllr Osumili be noted.
- EMPC23-2441 **Councillors' declarations of interest in matters on the agenda**  
There were no declarations of interests made by councillors.
- EMPC23-2442 **Minutes of the previous meeting**  
It was RESOLVED that the draft minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 15 June be approved as a correct record.
- EMPC23-2443 **Public Speaking**  
There were no representations from members of the public.
- EMPC23-2444 **Report on health and safety matters affecting employees and council activities**  
The clerk gave an oral report noting that outstanding action points from the last full council health and safety audit had now been completed with the introduction of a new fire door and fire-retardant boarding to the stairs at Sycamore House (as previously approved). The annual inspection visits by the town council's "competent person" were now due and scheduled to take place during September 2023. These would result in a new health and safety action plan. Since the last meeting the employee team had been increased with the introduction of the landscaping service and the depot at Barton Road would be included in the review. Risk assessments and method statements had been prepared and were being used for all landscaping activities and all staff had been provided with appropriate PPE, equipment and facilities for work.
- All council staff including landscaping operatives had recently undertaken first aid training (refresher training for several employees) and first aid equipment had been kept up to date.
- EMPC23-2445 **Employee performance appraisals**  
It was noted that performance appraisals of all employees were due to be conducted prior to Christmas and members had had the opportunity to review relevant the current policy documents to consider any potential changes. The clerk advised that the LCAS accreditation panel which had recently considered the town council's successful application for quality status had highlighted the town council's key competency framework for employees as being an excellent example.

It was RESOLVED that no changes to the policies and documents be recommended.



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**EMPC23-2446 Review of employee contracts and handbook and consideration of need for any additional HR policies**

The council's employment law advisor WorkNest had proposed a review of current model employment contracts and the non contractual employee handbook to ensure compatibility with current legislation. It was RESOLVED to note that the review would take place; committee members were invited to submit any comments on the existing documents and it was agreed that inclusion of a menopause policy should be considered.

**EMPC23-2447 Statement from UNISON regarding JNC pay negotiations between employers and unions in relation to the 2023/24 pay scales**

A statement from Unison had been circulated before the meeting which signaled the union's decision not to recommend industrial action to its member on local government pay. Unison had also stated that it was in the process of talking to GMB and Unite so that the pay dispute for 2023/24 could be resolved as quickly as possible. Therefore it seemed likely that the employers full and final pay offer of a flat rate increase of £1,925 pa for all SCP from 2 to 43 and 3.88% for all SCP above would be accepted. Members expressed their dismay that the dispute was still unresolved and it was RESOLVED to note the position.

**EMPC23-2448 Review of management report showing expenditure against budget for the year to date on employment matters and preliminary consideration of issues affecting the 2024-25 staff budget**

A report of expenditure on staff (Cost centre 501) was discussed and it was agreed that staff costs in 2024-25 were likely to increase further due to the anticipated annual pay awards. Members also commented that the employee structure might still need further amendment in view of current workloads.

It was RESOLVED to scrutinise the staffing budget in detail at the meeting due to be held on 7 November 2023 with particular emphasis on the non payroll lines in the budget.

**EMPC23-2449 Exclusion of Public and Press**

It was RESOLVED that members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted which would include discussion of individual employees and individual terms and conditions of employment.

**EMPC23-2450 Confidential clerk's report concerning the employee team including day to day management, implementation of previously agreed contractual and personnel changes and to consider future planning and employment policy matters**

The clerk asked that it be minuted that her report for the committee contained one omission ie that an Employee Assistance programme had been introduced as instructed by the committee at a cost of £8.90 per year per employee using a scheme brokered by BMKALC with the provider TP Health trading as Optima. This scheme had provided by far the best value provision of an external 24/7 telephone support service for employees as requested by the committee. It was RESOLVED that the use of clerk's delegated powers to accept this quote and implement the scheme be ratified.

Members discussed the clerk's confidential report (Confidential Employment Report prepared for Employment Policy Committee Meeting on 5 September 2023) in detail covering the following topics.



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## **i Employee structure**

Following decisions made at the last meeting of the Employment Policy Committee it was RESOLVED to note that changes to the proposed new employee structure had been implemented and one person had left the council's employment. Members also noted the consultation pack which had been used to discuss the changes with the employees directly affected (this had been included in the meeting pack) and which reflected the decisions made at the last meeting of the committee. The changes were considered necessary to facilitate more efficient distribution of tasks across the workforce and to reflect the council's current business priorities.

Members also noted that the job description and title of the full time Town Ranger would be changed by agreement with the employee to that of Environment and Premises Caretaker as soon as practicable. The job title of the Landscape and Environment Officer had already been changed to that of Landscape and Environment Supervisor by agreement with the employee.

## **ii Recruitment**

It was RESOLVED to note that recruitment to all vacant posts within the town council's approved staff structure had been completed and to note the details contained in the confidential report.

## **iii Lone working**

It was RESOLVED to note that the town council's lone working contract with Lone Worker Solutions ended on 3 July 2023 and had not been renewed and that all council staff had work mobile phones but for two employees to always keep in contact with line managers.

It was RESOLVED that a work mobile phone should also be provided for these two members of staff as they also engaged in lone working at council premises and in the community. It was planned to discuss lone worker safety as part of the annual WorkNest Health and Safety visit and to consider if any further measures were necessary.

## **iv Deputy Town Clerk**

It was noted that the increase of one SCP and change to the job title of the Support Services Manager approved at the last meeting of the council had been implemented.

## **v Environment and Premises Manager**

It was RESOLVED to approve new core hours for this member of staff as laid out in the report on a trial basis and on the understanding that the working day should generally start at Sycamore House rather than Barton Road depot.

## **vi Annual leave entitlement**

The report had confirmed that the annual leave entitlement which had been offered by the town council to employees since 2003 was more generous than the contractual provision included within the local government "Green Book". It was RESOLVED to note and consolidate the existing annual leave conditions and to note that if any future national pay awards included additional days of leave these need not necessarily be implemented to remain compliant with the Green Book.

It was RESOLVED to instruct the clerk to explore the cost of a subscription to the Green Book (rather than relying on seeking information/updates from SLCC, NALC or WorkNest as at present). It was further agreed to make explicit the connection between the town council's terms and conditions of employment and the terms and conditions of the Green Book in the forthcoming review of the handbook and contracts.



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### **vii Workload and related issues**

The clerk's report included information on the priorities and work plan for the forthcoming period including information about relocation of some staff within Sycamore House to improve reception of visitors and provide a confidential workspace for finance matters. The report also drew attention to the issue of "problem" bookings at Newton Leys which was still having an impact on staff and was due to be addressed by the NLP Bookings working group. The report also anticipated some challenging issues with the introduction of organised football at Newton Leys.

Members discussed councillor vacancies, attendance and engagement and the impact this had on the effectiveness of the officer team.

It was RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting closed at 9.02 pm

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