



# 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, 7th November, 2023 commencing at 7.30 pm**

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

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

## Min Ref

- EMPC23-2451 **Councillors' apologies for absence**  
There were no apologies for absence or absences without apologies.
- EMPC23-2452 **Councillors' declarations of interest in matters on the agenda**  
There were no declarations of interests made by councillors.
- EMPC23-2453 **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 an accurate record.
- EMPC23-2454 **Public Speaking**  
There were no representations from members of the public.
- EMPC23-2455 **Oral report on health and safety matters affecting employees and council activities**  
The clerk reported that scheduled health and safety visits from WorkNest (the town council's H&S consultants) had been rescheduled for 2 and 3 January 2024.  
  
The town council had undertaken work using a hired tractor and flail and appropriate risk assessments and method statements had been added to the council's suite of documents. Since beginning landscaping delivery in September 2023 there had been no reported accidents or near misses from the landscaping team. A chainsaw specific first aid kit had been obtained to be taken on site whenever chainsaw work was undertaken; this included haemostatic dressings and tourniquets.  
  
Since the date of the last meeting two employees had been involved in minor accidents at work (one injury to hand at outdoor event, one slip in the office at Sycamore House) and appropriate action had been taken. A further report would be provided at the next meeting of the committee following the WorkNest visits.  
  
It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.
- EMPC23-2456 **Progress with lone working arrangements for all employees**  
The clerk noted that two members of staff been consulted about provision of work phones in view of their lone working at town council buildings. Both employees had expressed the view that they preferred to use their own personal mobiles for keeping in touch and check in and did not want a further phone. During discussion it was noted that these staff could also make phone calls via their council laptops whilst away from their usual workplaces.

It was RESOLVED that the wishes of the employees be respected and that WorkNest



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be consulted for a review of lone working arrangements.

The clerk further reported that the tracking of landscape equipment for the twin purposes of security of equipment and personal safety of staff had also been considered again but it was felt that the expense of tracking vehicles and equipment did not justify the benefits at the present time.

### EMPC23-2457 **Introduction of an employee uniform policy for the council**

The clerk introduced a draft uniform policy which had been prepared since recruitment of the landscaping team because there were now more employees and expenditure on uniform would be likely to increase. Also issues had arisen during recent months and during 360-degree appraisal feedback about appropriate dress for managers and office based staff. It was intended that the uniform policy would be non-contractual and could be amended by the council at any time.

Discussion followed during which the clerk read out an extract from the current employment handbook (also non contractual) on the council's dress code for non uniform wearers.

It was RESOLVED that the uniform policy be adopted with two additions as follows.

- i A paragraph be included to stress the importance of dressing for the work to be conducted during the day, thus managers with planned meetings with members of the public or third parties would be expected to be dressed appropriately.
- ii The section of the policy on conduct expected whilst wearing uniform and representing the council would include examples of activities which should not be undertaken whilst wearing branded uniform. The examples would include smoking outside in a public place, going to the pub, entering betting or amusement arcades.

The clerk was asked to amend the policy and circulate to members for confirmation of approval by email.

### EMPC23-2458 **Introduction of a menopause policy for employees**

The clerk introduced a draft menopause policy for consideration noting that in recent years there had been a more open approach to gender-specific health issues and more employers were implementing menopause policies to support employees. Therefore a draft policy had been prepared and members were invited to consider whether they wished to adopt a specific policy on this issue.

Debate followed and members expressed the view that introducing a menopause policy would help raise awareness and understanding of menopausal symptoms and would make it clear to employees that this was an issue which could be talked about at work.

It was RESOLVED that the draft policy should be introduced following consultation with the staff team and consideration of their feedback.

### EMPC23-2459 **Introduction of a cycle to work employee benefit scheme**

The clerk noted that members of staff had expressed interest in the government's cycle to work scheme and had asked whether the TC would make a scheme available. The government's guidance on qualifying tax schemes had been provided with the agenda and members discussed the tax and NI implications and the administration



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involved in a salary sacrifice scheme. It was noted that if cycles to the value of over £1,000 were purchased the council would potentially need a consumer credit licence.

It was agreed that the council was minded to introduce a salary sacrifice cycle to work scheme because this was beneficial for employees and employer and aligned with the council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions. The clerk was asked to undertake research and consult employees about which scheme would work best locally.

### EMPC23-2460 **Exclusion of the public for the following items of business**

It was RESOLVED that that members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest. This was because discussion might include disclosure of confidential personal information about members of staff.

### EMPC23-2461 **Confidential summary report on the outcome of all employee appraisals and discussion of this and any proposed changes to the current system of performance review**

The clerk introduced a confidential report (reference: 2023 Annual Review Outcomes for Committee (7.11.2022)) summarizing the outcome of the employee performance appraisals which had been undertaken during October 2023. The clerk also gave feedback on issues concerning the use of the current competency framework and system of review.

Following discussion it was RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the clerk be tasked with revising the performance review system to place less emphasis on numerical scoring of competencies and more frequent formal objective setting and review. This draft would be considered at the next meeting of the committee.

### EMPC23-2462 **Financial management report showing expenditure against budget for the year to date on employment matters and recommendations for the 2024-25 budget**

It was RESOLVED that the financial management report showing expenditure against budget on staff costs to 31 October 2023 be noted. The JNC 2023-2024 pay settlement for local government pay had finally been settled and, in line with the town council's contractual obligations, arrangements had been made to provide backpay to 1 April 2023 for those staff not currently remunerated on the new scale.

Confidential discussion followed on the 2024-2025 budget for staff costs and the clerk tabled confidential documents showing current rates of pay per individual staff member (with the new pay settlement in place) with provision for anticipated contractual increments in April 2024. The clerk noted that it was difficult to estimate the likely pay scales for 2024-2025 but that in addition a 5% increase had been allowed overall in the draft salary budget to account for inflation/pay award.

The clerk was instructed to amend the proposed budget further to allow for changes in pay for three members of staff who were not entitled to contractual increments on the basis of their current pay bandings. It was RESOLVED that these three members of staff would have changes made to their current contracts. It was further RESOLVED that the draft budget be amended to reflect these changes.

At the clerk's request members also considered the 2024-2025 events budget which had been recommended at the last meeting of the Community Committee which included an additional number of events. The clerk noted that it was not possible to provide existing staff with time off in lieu for all weekend hours spent working on



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community events and maintain productivity on other aspects of the council's work during the week. It was also not reasonable to expect full time staff to undertake additional weekend work on a regular basis without proper time off. Use of council vehicles and equipment already interfered with landscaping work and other aspects day to day business to some degree. It would be preferable to provide overtime for events on an occasional basis (for those staff eligible for overtime), employ agency staff or develop a pool of casual workers/volunteers to support events.

**It was RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the town council should allocate a staffing budget for each community event to accommodate these needs.**

The meeting closed at 9.32 pm

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