



## **WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL**

### **STAFFING COMMITTEE**

**10 JUNE 2019 – 7.30 pm**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Wallwork, Chairman; Councillors Balsevics, Human, Mrs Pehlivanova and Tibbs.

**Apologies:** Councillor Patrick.

**Public Participation:** None requested.

The minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 31 July 2018 were confirmed and signed.

#### **S1/19 Election of Chairman**

On the proposal of Councillor Tibbs, seconded by Councillor Human, it was decided that Councillor Mrs Wallwork be elected as Chairman of the Staffing Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

#### **S2/19 Election of Vice-Chairman**

On the proposal of Councillor Human, seconded by Councillor Mrs Wallwork, it was decided that Councillor Wing be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Staffing Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

#### **S3/19 Town Council staffing**

Members considered, in the light of the resignation of the holder of the current post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council), a proposal for a revised staffing structure for the Town Council. The Clerk had produced a written report, which had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting, to assist members' deliberations in this matter.

The Clerk reminded members that Wisbech Town Council currently possesses, as part of its staffing structure, a full-time (37 hours per week; salary scale SO1/SO2) post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) and that the holder of that post had resigned this employment and ceased working for Wisbech Town Council on 31 May 2019.

The Clerk commented that any time that a post becomes vacant, it provides the employer with the opportunity to consider whether the most appropriate course of action in that circumstance is to simply recruit on a like-for-like basis or to examine whether:

- all of the functions and services delivered by the current post are still required
- even if all of the functions and services that are delivered by the current post are still required, is a single post the best arrangement
- some of the functions and services delivered by the post holder could be ceased
- there is capacity within the remainder of the council's staffing resource to accommodate some of the functions and services that are delivered by the current post; even if not within current working hours but by providing additional hours to existing part-time roles



- there are options, if appropriate, for contracting-out some or all of the functions and services delivered by the current post
- the vacancy provides the opportunity to create re-designed jobs, to deliver new/different functions for the council.

Members were informed by the Clerk that he had met with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the previous (pre-elections) Staffing Committee and more recently with the Chairman elect of the new Staffing Committee to discuss the council's needs in terms of the services and functions which had been delivered by the holder of the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council).

The conclusions reached as a result of those discussions are that:

- given how the role of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) had evolved over time around the skills and abilities of the post holder, it had almost become a unique position and, consequently, it would not be realistic to try to recruit a like-for-like replacement;
- the council could use the current situation to take the opportunity to develop and expand the roles of existing staff and then "back fill" any "gaps" in service delivery; the filling of any "gaps" could be by way of creation of a new post or posts or undertaking commissioning of certain pieces of work, or a combination of both;
- the senior management aspects of the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) could be removed from that role and be undertaken in future by the Clerk to the Council (if the weekly working hours of that post were increased and the responsibilities of that post were reviewed);
- the administrative, financial and operational duties of the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) could be covered, in the main, by other existing members of staff (with an increase in working hours and an evaluation of the increased responsibilities);
- the new staffing structure could become "flatter", with the Clerk becoming the line manager of all staff; currently, he is the line manager of the Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council), who, in turn, is the manager of the other staff.

Under the type of arrangement described above, there would be no longer be a formal deputising role for the Clerk in any job; such a role is no longer deemed necessary. The Clerk had included within his written report a list of the specific duties within the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) that would be "picked up", as necessary, by him under the type of arrangement described above. A Locum Clerk could be engaged (as a contractor) for any occasions where, say, the Clerk would be unable to support a meeting of the council or its committees because of, for example, a pre-arranged holiday commitment.

Given the foregoing, the Clerk had developed a revised staffing structure for Wisbech Town Council, for this committee's consideration.

At this stage, the Clerk is not proposing any additional specific new job(s) but to re-design existing jobs (with appropriate salary grading and working hours) and to keep the situation under review for 3 months (so he can see if there would be any "gaps" in service delivery). The proposed new staffing structure would reduce the salaries budget and allow for the creation of a "commissioning" budget to fund specific pieces of work, research etc.

Under the Clerk's proposal, the council's Assets Supervisor would take-on, from the Administrator and Civics Officer, the administrative tasks associated with the council's allotments and market operations and provide support to the Clerk in any projects or schemes for improvement to the council's assets. This role, prior to minute S3/18, had been one of Assets Manager (30 hours per week; NJC salary scale 5). At that minute, it was re-designed to a post of Assets Supervisor (20



hours per week; NJC salary scale 3). Part of the rationale for reducing the working hours and salary grading of the re-designed post was because of transferring the “management” aspects of the Assets Manager post to the council’s Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council). The change now proposed achieves the “middle ground” between the role of current Assets Supervisor and former Assets Manager.

The Administrator and Civics Officer would take on, from the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council), all of the day-to-day financial management of the Council and day-to-day running of the office. This officer had previously taken-on temporarily some of the roles and responsibilities of the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council); this occurred for a period of in excess of one year in the financial year 2017/18 at a time when the Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) had been allowed by the council to work part-time and remotely, so that she could provide care for her father who was suffering poor health (minutes S3/16 and S3/17 refer). The Administrator had been paid during that time at NJC salary scale 5 to reflect the additional responsibilities that she had taken-on.

The Clerk reminded members that at minute S3/17 this committee had commented that it had been very pleased with how well the holder of the post of Administrator had “risen to the challenge” under that temporary staffing arrangement and were keen that she be offered opportunities for further development. The proposed new staffing structure accords with members’ wish to be able to offer this officer an enhanced role within the council.

Members were informed by the Clerk that the introduction, with effect from April 2019, of a new accounting software system (necessary because of the introduction of Making Tax Digital) is expected to result in savings in officer time. In addition, he reminded members that the total number of hours within the council’s staffing structure had been increased by 5 per week, to support the operation and management of Wisbech Castle (minute S6/17 refers); however, almost all of that work has, to date, been undertaken by volunteers (with the exception of arranging the installation of telecoms and attempting to reach agreement with the Valuation Office as to the appropriate rating for the building). This indicates that there is some further officer capacity within the current staffing structure.

Under the revised staffing structure proposal, the weekly working hours of the Clerk would increase from 25 to 32; the hours worked by the current post of Administrator (which would become Administrative Services and Civics Officer) would remain 35 and those of the post of Assets Supervisor (which would become Operations and Assets Officer) would increase from 20 to 30; a total increase of 17 hours across those jobs. The weekly working hours of the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) were 37.

The two following items which appear in the job description of the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) are not included in any of the re-designed roles and the Council will need to decide how they wish them to be delivered in future:

- Responsible for maintenance and development of the Council’s on-line presence; including website (in liaison with the provider), and social media accounts.
- Manage the Council’s e-mail and on-line accounts.

The Leader of the Council is keen that the Clerk to the Council takes a lead on managing the council’s projects and becomes the line manager of all council staff.

The deletion of the post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) would remove the “professional” support to the Clerk (and, hence, to the Council). Consequently, it would be a requirement that the holder of the post proposed post of Administrative Services and Civics Officer



undertakes the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA) qualification. The Clerk would provide mentoring support to that officer in this regard.

Members are mindful of the fact that because of the reduction in number of staff that would be working in the office under the proposed arrangements articulated above, plus the other work/life commitments of those members of staff, there could be occasions when it is not possible to provide a staff presence in the office; however, all efforts would be made by the Clerk to keep such occasions to an absolute minimum.

The Clerk informed members that the re-designed posts had been the subject of a job evaluation exercise, undertaken in the manner explained to members at minute S4/17, and he provided details, within his written report, of the outcome of that exercise. Members were able to see how the increase in the levels of responsibility of the re-designed posts had resulted in both of them achieving higher points scores and, consequently, higher salary scales (that being one additional grade in each case).

Members were informed by the Clerk that the council's staff had been consulted on the proposal and had indicated that they would be happy to perform the re-designed roles.

The Clerk is currently paid within the national scale for a LC3 council and, having been in post for almost 5 years, is at the top of his scale; the Leader of the Council is asking members to consider awarding additional increments to that officer to reflect "removal" of the management support to that role, taking the lead on the delivery of council projects, the increase in the council's budget since the current post holder was appointed (in 2014 (minute 35/14 (2) refers)), the increase in the number of council committees since 2014 and the acquisition of additional community assets etc, together with the fact that the Clerk has worked a significant number of unpaid hours since taking-up the role in July 2014.

The Clerk had set out in his report to the committee the costs of the revised staffing structure, compared to those of the current one. It is clear that not only would there be savings in salaries costs but also in Employer's pensions and National Insurance contributions.

Appended to the Clerk's written report to the committee were the job descriptions and person specifications for the re-designed posts, which had been used for the purpose of job evaluation.

The Clerk responded to members' questions.

Members are strongly of the opinion that the council possesses members of staff who are very efficient and effective and deliver a high quality service for both the council and the people of Wisbech. Members are in no doubt that taking this opportunity to enhance and develop the roles of existing staff is the most appropriate course of action for the council and, consequently, support fully the new staffing structure proposed by the Clerk.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Tibbs, seconded by Councillor Human, that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the current post of Operations Manager (and Deputy Clerk to the Council) (37 hours per week; NJC Salary scale SO1/SO2) be deleted from the Council's staffing structure;
- (3) the current post of Administrator and Civics Officer (35 hours per week; NJC salary scale 4) be re-designed to a post of Administrative Services and Civics Officer (35 hours per week; NJC salary scale 5) based upon the job description appended to the Clerk's report;



- (4) the current post of Assets Supervisor (20 hours per week; NJC salary scale 3) be re-designed to a post of Operations and Assets Officer (30 hours per week; NJC salary scale 4) based upon the job description appended to the Clerk's report;
- (5) the weekly working hours of the Clerk (and Responsible Financial Officer) be increased from 25 to 32 and that he be awarded two additional salary increments in recognition of the changed situation applying to that post since being created in its current form (in 2014);
- (6) the financial savings identified as a result of the revised staffing structure be made available for use in the event of needing to "buy-in", on an occasional basis, resource (such as Locum cover, specific research, project management assistance) and/or the creation of an additional part-time post (or posts);
- (7) where it proves necessary to incur expenditure on buying-in ad-hoc additional resource (see (6) above), decisions on such spending be delegated to the Clerk in liaison with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee;
- (8) the situation be kept under review for a period of three months, for the Clerk to assess whether the new staffing arrangement provides to be efficient and effective in terms of the necessary service delivery; the Clerk would report back to this committee at the conclusion of the review period.

(Members resolved to exclude the public for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

**Meeting finished at 8.05 pm.**

Signed.....

Dated.....