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**Minutes of meeting**

**MEETING:** Human Resources Committee

**DATE & TIME**: Wednesday 03 March 2021 at 7:00pm

**PLACE:** Zoom

**Councillors**

**Present:**

Cllr Luke Wakeling (Chairman)

Cllr Graham Winter

Cllr Ryan Hope

Cllr Tia Roos

Cllr Alex Fuhrman

Cllr Michael Frost

Cllr Tony Ferrari

Cllr Howard Legg

Cllr David Gray

**Officers**

Jane Biscombe (Town Clerk)

Tara Williams (Parks and Open Spaces Manager)

There were no members of the press or public present.

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| HR0105 | **Welcome by the Chair**  Cllr Wakeling welcomed everyone to the meeting. |
| HR0106 | **Apologies for Absence**  There were no apologies. Cllr David Gray had been invited to attend and was present. |
| HR0107 | **Declarations of Interest**  None |
| HR0108 | **Minutes of the last meeting**  Proposer: Cllr Alex Fuhrmann Seconder: Cllr Michael Frost  The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 were agreed and will be signed as a true and accurate record at the earliest opportunity. |
| HR0109 | **Councillors Questions**  **Cllr Ryan Hope asked:**  Can you please advise how many members of staff have additional holiday allowances in the next two years due to covid disruption allowing up to 2 weeks carry over?  **Response from Jane Biscombe, Town Clerk.**  The short answer to this is none, but two staff will have additional carry over.  The government passed emergency legislation to ensure employers have the flexibility they need to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and to protect workers from losing their statutory holiday entitlement (The Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020).  The legislation says that workers may be able to carry over untaken leave into the next 2 years if they cannot take it because their work is affected by coronavirus. So, it is the work that has to be affected by coronavirus, not the ability to take leave e.g. the existence of travel restrictions.  Workers are entitled to the additional considerations if: they’re classed as critical workers; in local government this only includes:  * + those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response   + or delivering essential public services, such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arm’s length bodies * they need to provide cover for their co-workers and have no other opportunity to take holiday in their leave year * there will be staff shortages if too many workers take their leave before the end of the leave year once the coronavirus outbreak is over   If a worker can take leave, the standard rules for carrying over leave still apply.  As Councillors are aware, this Committee approved an amendment to the Council’s leave policy in July 2020 for carry forward into 2021/22. The Council’s policy states that 5 days can be carried over to the next year, however for 21/22 this has increased to 8 days for that one year only. No workers for WTC carry out essential healthcare work and all were supported by their managers to take leave as agreed by this Committee.  Two Members of staff have requested permission to carry over more than 8 days leave. One member of staff has been unable to take planned leave to get to the 8 days due to long-term sickness. When the member of staff returns to work a plan will be put in place, but they will be carrying over 22 days of leave.  The second member of staff has been permitted to carry over 10 days leave on the understanding that those two extra days leave will be taken in the first week of April. I understand this has now been reduced to 9 days, so only 1 additional day.  **Cllr Luke Wakeling asked:**  This committee signed up to the Cycle to Work scheme in Sept 2019. How many officers/staff have signed up to the scheme to get a VAT free cycle or accessories & helped reduce the council's carbon footprint?  **Response from Jane Biscombe, Town Clerk**  One member of staff has so far taken up the bike scheme.    The scheme itself is not as attractive as it was when it first came out. In the main this is because the employee still has to pay the VAT and WTC as an organisation cannot reclaim the VAT as was the case originally. This followed a challenge from HMRC and the scheme was changed. Also the bike is not the property of the staff member until the scheme ends and there is an end of agreement payment which is when the bike ownership passes over.    Prior to lockdown there were two members of staff who regularly cycled to work and they already had the required equipment. The Council has provided additional secure storage and ensured shower and changing facilities are available.  As plans are made to return to the office to work, additional steps will be taken to promote the scheme and cycling to work in general.  **Cllr Howard Legg asked**  Are Councillors included in the cycle scheme.  **Response from Jane Biscombe, Town Clerk**  Yes, but we would need to be able to set up a payment plan as we are not able to garnish Councillors wages in the same way that staff wages can be garnished. |
| HR0110 | **Public Comments and Questions**  There were no public in attendance. |
| HR0111 | **Employing Under 18’s**  The Council is proud to be a Real Living Wages employer, but this only applies to those over the age of 18 and the Council would like to offer employment opportunities for those aged 16 and 17. However, a pay scale needs to be agreed.  Apprentices are paid a higher rate at WTC than is recommended by the Government. After 6 months they move onto the RLW of £9.50. Apprenticeship rates will be looked at by a short-term working group. Councillors discussed whether catering apprenticeships could be offered, this is difficult for the Town Council as much of the work is seasonal or casual.  Councillors requested that the report was brought back to a future meeting with comparative pay rates from other local establishments, however the recruitment process needs to start soon if we are to have the cafes fully staffed.  **Proposal:** That 16 year olds receive the rate of £4.55, and 17 year olds receive the rate of £6.15  Proposer: Cllr Howard Legg Seconder: Cllr Graham Winter  The vote was defeated by the chair using his casting vote.  **Proposal:** Rates as above as an interim measure pending a report to the June HR Committee, bearing in mind that anyone recruited to these rates will be entitled to that rate if Councillors agree a lower rate.  Proposer: Cllr Howard Legg Seconder: Cllr Tony Ferrari  Agreed by a majority  **Proposal:** Cllrs Wakeling, Barrow and Hope were nominated to a task and finish group to discuss apprenticeship pay rates.  Proposer: Cllr Ryan Hope Seconder: Cllr Tony Ferrari  Agreed unanimously |
| HR0112 | 1. **Parks and Open Spaces staffing**   The report was introduced by Tara Williams, Parks and Open Spaces Manager.  The Parks and Open Space service covers many wide functions including management and maintenance of 80 hectares of parks and open space, 18 play areas, 350 allotments, events and activities, waste management, nursery, 4 open cemeteries and 5 closed ones, tree management, consultations, supporting the friends groups, income generation.  The team are also becoming involved in additional work, such as the Tumbledown project and undertaking work for other service areas.  In 1988 there were 48 members of staff covering parks and open spaces operations in Weymouth, today there are only 16. As a consequence of this significant reduction, all staff have been upskilled, achieving a range of qualifications and certificates of competence. By doing this, flexibility of approach and work patterns are increased across the whole service so maintaining critical mass to ensure that the service runs efficiently and effectively at all times. This becomes especially important at pinch points within the year when staff are ill or on leave. The ability to change jobs to cover staff shortfalls is a key strategy within the service and it has been highly successful.  Currently there are 3 members of staff who are off work due to shielding etc and there is 1 vacant post. The staff in these posts carry out important frontline roles, including grass cutting and grave digging duties and, whilst the Parks team has, in the main, continued to deliver the usual levels of service throughout the lockdown period, the strain on the Council’s employees health and well-being is reaching a significant cause for concern, especially as the full grass cutting season is about to start.  A particular pressure was placed upon the team by, regrettably, having to carry out double the amount of burials during this period. Additionally, this has highlighted that for the purposes of ensuring service continuity, that more members of staff need to be trained to carry out this work.  Litter and recycling bins located in the majority of the Council’s parks and open spaces have been filling up more rapidly due to the sites being heavily used, legitimately, for people to take daily exercise and remain local to their homes. Added to this upsurge, is takeaways being consumed during lockdown. This effect has been such that, as the weather warms up, it will be necessary to start weekend collections far earlier than normal. However, this may not be possible due to capacity issues if additional staff resources are not provided.  The role required will cover grass cutting, litter bin emptying and grave digging duties. It will also include assisting with waste management duties at weekends and during bank holiday periods.  A parks strategy is being produced that will set the scene for parks and open spaces over the next 4 years and this will offer an opportunity to review the staffing arrangements in the longer term in line with evolving service development needs and corporate priorities.  Succession planning also needs to be taken into account, as there are a number of long serving members of staff who are likely to retire over the next 3-5 years.  Councillors suggest that the recruitment of two seasonal grass cutters would be more appropriate to ensure the Council has the capacity to meet need. Members noted that it is essential to recruit staff to ensure that services were maintained, and income generation maximised. The budget exists to cover these posts, and this is being brought before the Committee as previously Councillors had requested that no additional staff were recruited to the Parks Team, pending the review in the summer.  There are two members of staff who are shielding, and it is not known when they will return, however, they are required in additional to the seasonal cover.  **Proposal**: To recruit 2 seasonal members of staff.  Proposer: Cllr Tia Roos Seconder: Cllr Howard Legg  Agreed unanimously  **Proposal:**   1. approve two seasonal appointments to the grass cutting team 2. recommend to the Services Committee to review parks and open spaces services & the team required - perhaps to make future recommendations back to HR for changes to staffing structure.   Proposer: Cllr Howard Legg Seconder: Cllr Ryan Hope  Agreed unanimously |
| HR0113 | **Paternity Policy**  Councillors discussed the draft policy and also the use of the term “sex” instead of “gender” however, these are two different concepts, and the policy is correct in including reference to the term “sex”  **Proposal** to recommend the policy to Full Council for adoption:  Proposer: Cllr Ryan Hope Seconder: Cllr Alex Fuhrmann  Agreed unanimously |
| HR0114 | **Social Media Policy**  Councillors thanked members of the Governance Working Group for addressing Councillor concerns in the redraft. It is strongly advised that Councillors use their official email addresses at all time, although Councillors noted that it is illegal to use official Councillor email addresses for political matters. Any email account used for Council work is subject to interrogation for legal requests such as FOI or Subject Access requests and so using one account is preferable to delineate between Council and personal matters.  **Proposal:** To add “and as such Councillor email addresses should not be used for party political Communications” to the end of paragraph 5. There was no seconder so the proposal fell.  Councillors requested that Policies do not advise, but instead confine themselves to requirements.  **Proposal**: To delete the first paragraph in section 4.  Proposer: Cllr Ryan Hope Seconder: Cllr Tony Ferrari  Agreed by a majority  Councillors discussed the sharing of individual Councillor’s social media from the Town Council accounts. This could be seen to be supporting a particular Councillor over others. However, the Council would benefit from sharing good news stories if they are non-political in nature.  **Proposal**: That the Council’s official social media accounts should not share posts form individual councillor’s pages.  Proposer: Cllr Ryan Hope Seconder: Cllr Tony Ferrari  Defeated by a majority  **Proposal**: to recommend the policy as amended above to Full Council for adoption:  Proposer: Cllr Howard Legg Seconder: Cllr Alex Fuhrman  Agreed by a majority |
| HR0115 | 1. **Information items**   Members noted the items |
| HR0116 | **Exclusion of the Public and Press**  Proposer: Cllr Michael Frost Seconder: Cllr Tony Ferrari  The Committee agreed unanimously to exclude the press and public. |
| HR0117 | 1. **Staff update** 2. The Town Clerk updated Councillors on recent staffing matters.   There are policies and support mechanisms in place to protect against bullying. Training is being considered when it can be held to support staff in dealing with conflict and some of the abuse they face from the public. The Council will look to put out positive publicity to support staff and reduce abuse.  There are open channels for staff to raise issues eg the health and safety Group, regular staff meetings and on open approach from management.  Although bullying by Councillors is not a major issue for the Council at this time, it is a problem that is being looked at nationally as not all Councils benefit from the positive officer/Member relations that the Council has at this time.  The Council has struggled to recruit to some post and Councillors suggested a simpler process for some roles and more diverse publicity channels. Consideration will also be given to job shares and flexible working. |
| HR0118 | 1. **Town Clerk Role Appraisal**   Councillors discussed the evaluation of the Town Clerks role and agreed appropriate actions to take forward. |

The meeting ended at 21:00 pm.