



Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Lewes Town Council held on Monday 13 March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Lewes Town Hall.

Present:

Councillor Baah
Councillor Bird (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Burrows
Councillor Catlin
Councillor Clarke
Councillor Earl
Councillor Handy
Councillor Herbert
Councillor Lamb
Councillor Makepeace
Councillor Maples
Councillor Milner
Councillor Sains (Mayor)
Councillor Waring
Councillor Wood

In attendance

Chief Executive Officer of the East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC),
Town Clerk

115. Filming of council meetings and mobile phones

115.1. The procedures were noted.

116. Apologies for absence

116.1. There were apologies from councillor Mayhew who was unwell and councillor Vernon due to work commitments. Councillor O'Keeffe was not present.

117. Members' declarations of interests

117.1. There were none.

118. Question time

118.1. There were none.

119. Exempt business

119.1. The Mayor proposed and it was resolved that:

The public and accredited representatives of the press be excluded from the Meeting under Section 100 Local Government Act 1972 due to the confidential nature of the business to be conducted.

This item is a confidential report for Members of the Council only in accordance with Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

120. Exempt reports

120.1. Report of the Personnel Sub Panel

120.2. The Chair of the Personnel Panel explained that the Personnel Panel met on 4 October 2022 and appointed a sub panel consisting of councillors Wood, Maples and Makepeace to deal with some employee related matters. The CEO of ESALC clerked the subsequent Personnel Sub Panel meetings and consequently was in attendance for this part of the Council meeting.

120.3. Council received an oral report from the Chair and Vice Chair of the Personnel Panel regarding a report received by the Personnel Sub Panel from the independent investigator into an informal grievance brought to the Council.

120.4. The findings of the Personnel Sub Panel were reported by the Chair of the Personnel Panel. The Sub Panel found that: residual communication and cultural issues impacted on the ways of working of staff and members; employees understanding of job descriptions, contracts and terms and conditions were often unclear; behaviour of some town councillors was out of keeping with the Nolan Principles; there was evidence of historic poor financial management and inappropriate procedures. The recommendations were discussed.

120.5. It was resolved that:

- 1 Council note the Panel had received the Report of the independent investigator regarding an informal grievance brought to the Council.
- 2 Council notes the investigation did not uphold any aspect of the grievance and the Panel accepted the findings.
- 3 A Human Resources professional be invited to review job descriptions and competencies of each post holder, with the Council arranging appropriate training where required.
- 4 A Councillor and Officer protocol be implemented.
- 5 An independent audit of the Council's financial arrangements, both current and historic, be commissioned to ensure a clean handover to the incoming Council and new Town Clerk.

120.6. Staffing matters

120.7. The Town Clerk apprised members of the Council with the current situation with regards to staffing.

120.8. The Town Clerk explained that in terms of recruiting an interim Town Clerk only one potential candidate had been sourced from a sector specific organisation and discussions were ongoing. However, the hourly costs were higher than originally projected. Council was asked to comment upon a proposed model of providing a part time interim Town Clerk with support from a variety of resources to cover the key strands of work that had been outlined. Council had already delegated authority to

councillors Wood and Maples to work with the CEO of ESALC, the locum RFO and Town Clerk to recruit an interim Town Clerk.

120.9. It was noted that a tender process would be started for the recruitment of the permanent Town Clerk to go live when the new administration starts.

120.10. With regards to the venue staffing, it was suggested that vacancies were covered on a temporary basis within the existing budget to give the new administration and Town Clerk the scope to consider and implement a structure that meets the needs of the service. The fixed term contracts could be offered for up to six months and range from part time up to 37 hours per week to broaden the range of potential applicants.

120.11. The Town Clerk confirmed that no policy had been found with regards to zero hours-based contracts. The Town Clerk explained that those staff appointed to casual venue assistants were on equal terms and conditions which included paying the Living Wage Foundation as per Council's policy. Council was asked to consider a suggestion of offering minimum base hours as well as honouring zero based hours.

120.12. It was resolved that:

- 1 In future the Council would not appoint staff to zero hours-based contract but could operate a bank of staff that have a minimum base number of hours within the staffing complement that is budgeted for.
- 2 The current zero hours-based contracts are honoured if the current staff appointed to these contracts would prefer this option.
- 3 The equivalent of three full time venue assistants be recruited to on a fixed term contract for up to six months across all venues.
- 4 Delegated authority be given to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Personnel Panel as part of securing interim cover to include oversight of the community centres, which ultimately will be co-ordinated by the interim Town Clerk.
- 5 Extend the fixed term contract of the Civic Officer for up to six months from 1 April 2023.

120.13. It was resolved that thanks be recorded in the minutes to those that have undertaken a significant amount of work into all the matters discussed tonight.

The meeting closed at 8:53pm

Signed..... Date.....