

Draft Minutes



Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 15th January 2019 in Rhuddlan Library.

PRESENT – Cllrs. A. Smith (Chairman), A. Roberts, G. Rowlands, and M. Kermode (Personnel Adviser and Clerk for the Committee); together with the Town Clerk.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None

URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIRPERSON – None.

MINUTES – The minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2018 had previously been considered and approved by the Town Council.

MATTERS ARISING – None.

PART 2 BUSINESS – It was proposed, duly seconded and unanimously agreed that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because of the confidential nature of the matters being transacted.

STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee received a report that considered progress and potential developments in connection with the main issues identified at the Town Clerk's Annual Appraisal. The report reminded members of the Town Council's resolutions in December:

- To provide Minute Clerk support to the Town Clerk, thus allowing her to focus her time on the implementation and support aspects of her role; subject to costings being submitted at a future meeting.
- To review the operation of the Council's website in six months' time, with a focus on the Town Clerk's role of updating and editing the information on the website.
- To upgrade the photocopier, so as to meet the increased demands for hard-copy materials required for public information purposes.
- To provide external professional support for the use of the Rialtas accounting software at the 2018-19 year-end, at a cost of £540 plus travelling.
- To support the Town Clerk in respect of her continued training and development by authorising the Mayor and Chairman of Personnel Committee to approve such additional hours of work that might be necessary from time to time.
- To address the fact that the Town Clerk had not been able to take her full leave entitlement in 2017-18 because of the pressures of work; by making a payment in respect of the 52 hours of leave that had not been taken.

The report provided an update on the main actions on the matters mentioned above and further information was provided by the Town Clerk, as follows:

- **Website** - The operation and maintenance of the website will be reviewed later in the year.

Draft Minutes

- Photocopier – Discussions have taken place with a local supplier regarding purchase/hiring and ongoing maintenance of a more cost-effective photocopier but no final decision has been made regarding the model to be used.
- Rialtas Support – Arrangements have been made with Rialtas to support the closing down and end of year accounts process. The Committee noted comments by the Auditor General Wales expressing concerns at the high levels of financial balances being carried by Town/Community Councils; which was estimated at £38.4 million. Councils were asked to review their balances when setting their budgets because they can be used to reduce any increases in their precepts.
- Support for Training and Professional Development – The Town Clerk is currently working on a Portfolio to submit to CILCA by May 2019. She reported that this has required an extra 6 hours of work during the past month. This was approved for payment by the Chairman and the Mayor in accordance with their delegated powers.
- 2017-18 Leave Entitlement – The Town Clerk's commitment to complete the work generated by the Council meant that she had not taken 52 hours of her annual leave. A payment in respect of the 52 hours of untaken leave will be paid to the Town Clerk in the January salary.

The report then considered the provision of Minute Clerk support to the Town Clerk.

Councillors were reminded that the prime role of the Town Clerk is to be the Council's Proper Officer/Financial Officer and to provide professional advice, guidance and support to the Council and to the Mayor in respect of the Council's decisions, operations and finances.

One of the Town Clerk's other roles is taking notes at Council meetings and using them to create the formal minutes/records of the meetings. It is important that there is a proper balance between these two roles because there may be cases when the taking of notes may create a distraction from the Proper Officer/Financial Officer role during a meeting.

Over the past two years the Town Council has been more active and this has generated additional work for the Town Clerk. This can be seen in examples such as the commissioning and funding of the Green Gym, Blodeuo activities and the provision of additional lighting at the Castle. The Council also receives more bids for funding from outside organisations which generates work in terms of analysing and responding to these. The operation and day to day maintenance of the website also generates additional workload, this usually needs some 5 hours per month. A review of the cheques being processed by the Town Clerk over the past three years showed that there has been a massive increase from 81 to 189. Each cheque has a background workload in terms of decisions and actions taken by the Council.

Other Town/Community Councils in North Wales are facing a similar challenge regarding the need to provide support for their Town Clerks:

- Bay of Colwyn Town Council currently employ a full time Town Clerk, a one part time Assistant Town Clerk and a part time Administration Assistant and they are currently securing additional administration support time in connection with the taking of minutes. The Assistant Town Clerk and Administrative Assistant will soon be given

Draft Minutes

additional hours to attend meetings to take minutes. This will free up to one day a week for the Town Clerk to concentrate on other more important aspects of her role.

- Abergele Town Council did consider appointing a Minute Clerk a few years ago but ended up employing a full time Deputy to assist the full time Town Clerk.
- Denbigh Town Council has recently appointed a Civic Assistant who will play a vital role in the running of town council events and functions as well as assisting the Town Clerk with the day to day running of the office. The Civic Assistant will attend meetings of the Town Council and assist with minutes.

Three options for providing support were considered:

- Option 1 – To have a Minute Clerk on a self-employed basis costing £75 per month.
- Option 2 – To employ a part-time Minute Clerk for 8 hours per month at a cost of £1,500 per annum (i.e. £125 per month).
- Option 3 – To employ a Clerical Assistant/Minute Clerk for 5 hours per week (similar to Denbigh Town Council's approach) at a cost of £3,600 per annum (i.e. £300 per month).

Option 1 was rejected because of HMRC and Employment Tribunal decisions which clarify self-employed versus employed status.

Option 2 was felt to provide a basic level of support.

Option 3 (5 hours per week) had the benefits that this would provide the Town Council with officer cover and continuity whenever the Town Clerk is on annual leave or absent for other reasons

The Committee agreed that the employment of a Clerical Assistant/Minute Clerk for 5 hours per week is the best long term solution in terms of providing the necessary support to the Town Clerk. However, it was recognised that this may be a big step for the Council for 2019-20 but it was clear that some form of support is necessary.

If no support is provided the Town Clerk will need to prioritise her work and focus on statutory and financial matters. This means that other matters and actions will be delayed as will her capacity to give ad-hoc support to members' enquiries. This will be counter-productive in terms of the more active role that the Council has had over the past few years.

It was therefore **resolved** to recommend to the Town Council that a Minute Clerk for 8 hours per month be employed for a 12 month period and that the issue of a Clerical Assistant/Minute Clerk be reconsidered as part of the 2020-2021 budget/precept process.