

Minutes of a meeting of the Property and Personnel Committee held in The New Millennium Chamber, Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on Monday 2 October 2023 at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ – Chair
Councillor Northeast
Councillor Butcher
Councillor Tilbrook
Councillor Worne

2023 to 2024

1. Evacuation Procedures

The procedures were noted.

2. Filming of Council Meetings, Use of Social Media and Mobile Phones

The procedures were noted.

3. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillor O'Neill who was away.

4. Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda.

Councillor Northeast declared a personal interest as Chair of the North Littlehampton Steering Group and Chair of the Keystone Management Committee.

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ declared a personal interest as a member of the Littlehampton Harbour Board.

5. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2023, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

6. Public Forum

There were no members of the public present, and no representations were made.

7. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

There were none.

8. Officers Reports

8.1. Absence Monitoring

Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which provided them the staff absence records for the full years 2017 to 2018 to 2022 to 2023 and quarter 1 for 2023 to 2024.

It was resolved that:

The report be noted.

8.2. Staffing Update

Members received a report, previously circulated, which provided an update on staffing and the current staff structure. The significant number of changes to the staffing establishment over the last year were noted.

Members discussed the staff structure of the Town Council. Recognising that some committee Members were new to the committee it was suggested that an informal meeting be arranged with committee members and other councillors to discuss the staff structure, roles, and job descriptions.

Regarding the apprenticeship roles, Members wanted to know what qualification the apprenticeship provided and who oversees and accredits the qualification. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the apprenticeship provider was SIGTA, and the qualification provided was a Level Three Business Administration qualification. Confirmation of who accredited the qualifications would be circulated.

It was resolved that:

1. The Urgent Actions regarding the additional apprenticeship posts in the Democratic Services and Administration teams be noted.
2. An informal meeting be arranged to discuss the Town Council's staff structure.
3. The report be otherwise noted.

8.3. Equipment, Facilities, and Property Update

Members received a report, previously circulated, which provided an update on the assets, existing and proposed, under the remit of the Property and Personnel Committee. It was noted that an update regarding the Manor House was the subject of a separate report to be discussed later in the meeting.

- 8.3.1. The Town Clerk gave members an update on the status of the Holly Drive allotments.

Members mentioned that residents near the site were tired of seeing the overgrown site and wondered if anything could be done to alleviate this frustration whilst waiting for the planning permission to be approved. The Town Clerk explained that the developers for the project were responsible for all work done on the site, including the preparation work. Officers agreed to ask the developers if any work could be done on the site prior to obtaining planning permission. Members will raise the concern with County Council.

- 8.3.2. Members received an update on the K2 Community Centre project.

Good progress had been made with the K2 development. Various trades were working on the electrical installations and internal finishes. There was a delay with the plasterers, the impact this had on the schedule was unknown, but the progress on the site was otherwise good.

Members were pleased to hear that progress had been made. There were questions regarding the boundary of the site and whether a boundary fence was to be installed. Councillor Northeast suggested that the recently installed fence from the Keystone centre be repurposed for the K2 boundary. The Town Clerk explained that Arun District Council owned the site and Littlehampton Town Council are leasing only the footprint of the building from them, therefore boundary matters are the responsibility of Arun District Council who were not installing any boundary fencing.

- 8.3.3. Members received an update on the North Littlehampton Community Centre project.

The Town Clerk informed Members that progress had been made with BAQUS to take on a feasibility study and engagement activity for the proposed Community Centre. The Council needs to consider whether Section 106 funding can deliver the project and if it is not able to, the Council needs to consider what other options it can pursue.

Recommendations from the Community Centre's Sub-Committee on the way forward will be considered at Full Council on 23 November 2023.

- 8.3.4. Members were updated on the street furniture that was being stored at the Amenity Team's Unit. Arun District Council confirmed that they were happy to take the benches that were in good condition and repurpose them for the Garden of Reflection project in Wick. Members sought clarification about previously agreed provision of a bench for Wick, the miniature railway, and The Body Shop roundabout. Members highlighted that any remaining furniture in good condition could be installed on the New Fitzalan Road subject to relevant permissions being obtained, as it was a long stretch of road with no street furniture, which posed issues for the elderly and those with mobility issues.

Members agreed that the remaining street furniture that is beyond repair should be disposed of.

- 8.3.5. Members were given an update from the Responsible Financial Officer on the rent review for the Amenity Team Unit, 6F at the Lineside Industrial Estate. The unit was leased for a period of ten years with a five-year rent review, this review has been confirmed for the remaining five-year term at a price of £32,850 per annum which was an increase of £6,222 on the previously agreed annual fee. Members agreed that although it was a significant increase in price, the Amenity Team unit was essential for many of the Town Council's responsibilities and the space that it provided was ideal. Members also considered that rent prices were constantly increasing, and the rent had been fixed for the last five years.

It was resolved that:

1. The progress with the planning application to deliver the Allotments at Holly Drive be noted.
2. The Urgent Action to commission consultants to undertake the feasibility work for the North Littlehampton Community Centre Project be noted.
3. The progress with the projects to deliver the new community facilities in Wick and North Littlehampton and the financial implications be noted.
4. Subject to The Garden of Reflection or a suitable alternative community project proceeding, any remaining street furniture that is beyond repair and cannot be reused be destroyed.
5. The Unit 6F rent review and financial implications be noted.

8.4. Amenity Team Equipment Update

Members received a report, previously circulated, regarding an update on the Amenity Team's equipment.

The towed cutting deck that was used to cut grass at various locations, but mainly Rosemead Park, needed repair. Officers have been advised it would not be cost effective to repair the cutting deck and opted instead to request the purchase of a new Ride on Mower. Members asked if an electric Ride on Mower had been considered, the Responsible Financial Officer agreed that an electric Ride on Mower would be ideal compared to the petrol option, but the price difference was prohibitive, with the petrol mower costing in the region of £5,000 and the electric mower estimated at circa £28,000.

It was resolved that:

The purchase of a new Ride on Mower and the relevant expenditure from earmarked reserves be approved.

8.5. Manor House Building Survey

Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which set out the building survey undertaken of the Manor House. The purpose of this survey was to establish the condition of the Manor House, to identify areas that required immediate attention and enable a long-term preventative maintenance programme to be planned and budgeted for.

8.5.1 Members were informed that there were several areas that required immediate attention and further investigation. Members were also reminded that because the Manor House was a grade two listed building, all work needed to be approved by the Conservation Officer at Arun District Council. Members discussed the state of the windows in the Manor House, which were the focus of the repairs, specifically the matter of double glazing. Members agreed that given our commitment to the principles of best environmental practice, energy efficient window designs should be pursued, noting the Conservation Officers input and agreement would be required. There were also queries around the presence of asbestos and Members wished to know what had been done in terms of asbestos removal. Officers agreed to circulate the last asbestos report to Members.

8.5.2 Members had concerns about the state of the Manor House and believed that regular maintenance would prove beneficial and would deter the need for such significant repair bills in future years. Members did take into consideration that the Amenity Team does take on regular maintenance work for the Manor House and other Town Council properties, it was agreed that alternative solutions to regular maintenance could be considered as part of the Committee's budget setting. Members also discussed whether the cost of these repairs could be funded not purely through Town Council revenue but by a loan or perhaps a combination of the two.

It was resolved that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The asbestos management report be circulated to Members.
3. The report findings be considered as part of the forthcoming budget cycle process.

8.6. Town Council Business Plan 2023 to 2027

The Committee had before it a report, previously circulated, which contained feedback from the business planning workshops to identify priorities for inclusion in the Town Council's proposed Business Plan for 2023 to 2027. Alongside this Councillor Butcher tabled a revision to the Values set out in the Strategy, copy attached to the Minutes, which he proposed replace the current draft. Members agreed that these were useful amendments but decided to remove the word 'valuable' from one of the points as it could be perceived differently and was not necessary.

Members discussed an item on the Action Plan relating to rewilding an area of land that was developed by Persimmons. They were concerned with the overwhelming number of weeds on the site as they detracted from the aesthetic of what a wildflower area should look like. Officers agreed to contact Persimmons about the site.

Members also wished to include in the Action Plan a goal to develop a policy memorial benches in Littlehampton. They agreed this would be a positive and beneficial policy to include however the logistics of implementing this policy would need to be discussed thoroughly before anything is done. It was agreed the timescale for this policy would be beyond 2025.

Recognising the significant quantity of work currently being undertaken, Members also asked that the timescales for the policy review in the Action Plan be revised by officers before the Business Plan went to the Policy and Finance Committee.

It was resolved that:

1. Members comments and amendments to the emerging Strategic Plan be taken into consideration before submission to the Policy and Finance Committee.
2. The comments and amendments to the Action Plan be taken into consideration in readiness for submission to the Policy and Finance Committee.
3. The report be otherwise noted.

9. Finance

9.1. Committee Budget Monitor

Members received a report, previously circulated, which highlighted the significant variances from budget in Income and Expenditure relating to the Property and Personnel Committee.

Members thanked the Responsible Financial Officer for the new formatting of this report, it made the report much more accessible and comprehensive. In an effort to further improve the format of this report, Members recommended that the Income table within the report include a 'Year To Date' budget column as this would provide useful context to the figures given in the report. The Responsible Financial Officer agreed that this would be useful and would include a 'Year To Date' budget column in future Committee Budget Monitor reports, this would be included across Committees where applicable.

It was also highlighted that the Cost Centre report in the appendix listed K2 as the Keystone Centre, this was noted and would be amended for future reports.

It was resolved that:

1. Future Committee Budget Monitor reports would include a 'Year To Date' budget column in the Income table, included across committees where applicable.
2. The accounting system be updated to amend the naming error for K2.
3. The report be otherwise noted.

10. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7:32pm.

Chair

Appendix A - Our Values

Our Values incorporate all the Nolan Principles in public life and more. They set out how we operate and how we interact

- Leadership and empowerment
- Integrity, honesty and accountability
- Efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money
- Openness, listening and communicating
- Selflessness, objectivity, and positivity
- Productive partnerships
- Continuous improvement