

SECTION 1A - To be filled in by submitter of the Motion:

Report from	Town Clerk
On behalf of	N/A
Date	5 th September 2024
For Meeting of Council/Committee	Personnel Committee
Date of meeting	10 th September 2024
Agenda item no.	17/24-25
Confidentiality	N/A
TITLE OF MOTION	5-YEAR STAFFING STRUCTURE PLAN - UPDATE
MOTION(S)	<p><i>Further to Personnel Committee 5th March 2024, item 35/23-24 and Full Council 26th March 2024, item 263/23-24:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To receive an updated five-year staffing plan (updated staffing plan proposal and report <u>attached</u>). 2) To consider the updated staffing plan proposals in light of the Council's short- and medium-term ambitions and staffing and budget needs. NB: in this also to consider business workforce planning (see The <u>Business Workforce Dialogue</u>, Institute for Employment Studies; <u>shared with Cllrs.</u>).
Background	<p>At the 5th September 2023 Personnel Committee meeting an updated version of the <u>adopted (April 2023) 5-year staffing plan</u> was presented, discussed, and - with some minor amendments – approved, to be recommended to Full Council; see <u>minutes, item 16/23-24</u>. This plan was, thereafter, presented to Full Council at its meeting held on 26th September 2023 (see here for the <u>plan, as presented</u>); at that Full Council meeting a decision on the plan was, however, deferred until such time as both the pilot market evaluation and the sports pavilion working group paper were finalised - see: <u>Full Council meeting 26th September 2023, minutes - item 132/23-24</u>.</p> <p>An updated version was presented to the <u>Personnel Committee meeting held on 5th March 2024 (item 35/23-24)</u>. This was thereafter presented to Full Council, to provide an update to all Councillors of the current situation and in order that the changes made and the personnel needs as discussed by the Personnel Committee could be discussed further. At the 26th March 2024 Full Council meeting that <u>updated 5-year staffing plan version</u> was presented and discussed; see <u>minutes, item 263/23-24</u>.</p> <p>Since then, we have seen the first Market Manager (who started on 1st March 2024) hand in their notice with re-recruitment soon after taken place with a new Market Manager having started in their position on 15th August.</p> <p>The Assets Transfer Working Group have also presented, at the <u>July 2024 Full Council meeting</u>, a proposal for the recruitment of an Assets & Estates Manager, which is ongoing at the time of writing.</p> <p>In particular in light of the latter and the potential options for asset transfer to the Town Council, and therefore further staffing needs associated with those assets, it is deemed important that this 5-year staffing plan is kept up-to-date. The timing, in September, at the start of the annual budget preparations period, is also a good moment to take stock and look forward, so that the Personnel Committee can provide recommendations to the Finance & Governance Committee and Full Council in terms of future staffing needs, especially for the coming financial year.</p>

Issues/items for consideration by the Council

The Personnel Committee is requested to consider the updated forward-looking staffing plans as presented in the attached document, and to discuss this and provide feedback to the clerk/RFO so that he can take this forward through the Finance & Governance Committee and Full Council as part of the '25-'26 budget development procedures for and other business planning.

Key proposals to be considered are the new roles being proposed for '25-'26 and '26-'27 (see associated presentation/pdf for relevant details).

For '25-'26 one further position is being proposed, a '**Community Engagement Officer**'. The **purpose** of this role would be to: address the need to engage more with the growing community; the role is to **focus** on:

1. Responding to residents' enquiries;
2. Engagement with other tiers of local authorities, developers, community groups, partnerships and partners to ensure cross-partner development and promotion of reporting systems to tackle issues and opportunities across Northstowe;
3. Lead on delivery and promotion of Town Council-led and supported services, activities and events;
4. Support Clerk and Deputy Clerk with office management and admin tasks.

The key **impact** of this role is to take away above time-consuming tasks from both the Clerk and Deputy-Clerk, so that they can dedicate their time on work that is either insufficiently carried out due to low staffing capacity or is growing in demand – see the **below table** for an overview of these work streams.

NB: This position had previously been included in the Sep. '23 draft 5-year plan, recommended thereafter by Personnel Committee in Dec '23 (from Dec '23 Personnel Committee minutes, item 28/23-24: '*The proposed Engagement Officer position was considered by some Councillors as an important position to take off further pressure on existing staff, and to be considered as the next priority for staff expansion after the recruitment of a Market Manager.*' This position was since considered by the Finance and Governance Committee, Dec. '23 – see minutes item 60/23-24, with further relevant comments made: '*[...] the committee considered the Engagement Officer position to be of a lower priority than the Assets and Facilities Development Manager position listed in the proposed budget. It was also considered by some that the next Council position to be recruited for should be a Full-Time position as it is more difficult to obtain part-time people these days and such roles may potentially also come with lower levels of commitment from staff. It was considered that a January 2025 start date for the Assets and Facilities Development Manager would be too late, as developing business plans for potential asset transfers to the Town Council would take some time and starting late in the financial year might risk missing key opportunities down the line. It was mentioned that a new staff member may also be able to carry out at least some of the engagement-related tasks envisaged for the Engagement Officer, and that a possible job title as Business Development Officer could be considered.*'

The approved Job Description for the newly developed Assets & Estates Manager (which is the 'Assets and Facilities Development Manager' referred to above) does not include the above key job purposes; moreover, considering tight deadlines for the work that that new person will engage with from day one it is very unlikely that the new Assets & Estates Manager would be able to be drawn in much in any other Council work.

	<p>This Community Engagement Officer position is therefore considered still needed, in light of the backlog in work that has grown due to relatively low staff capacity to date and the growth in certain areas of work; in particular for:</p>	
<p>Planning for Town Council Vision and long-term strategic ambitions and associated business planning</p>		<p>This has been given relatively low priority with other work typically taken priority. Important that Clerk can free up time elsewhere to dedicate much more time to this work.</p>
<p>Development and updates of a range of policies and protocols;</p> <p>Development of HR Handbook and HR-related policies and protocols.</p>		<p>These have been tackled piece-meal whenever there has been a short 'lull' in other Council work, with other work typically haven taken priority. A substantial backlog of updates and needs for new policies has formed as a result, which has been commented on by the internal auditor in the last two visits as well. Important that Clerk can free up time elsewhere to focus more on these works, with Deputy Clerk brought more into this as well.</p>
<p>Ongoing demands, changes and multiple agencies, developers and consultancies that demand attention from the clerk , directly or via the numerous partnerships linked to the developments of the new town.</p>		<p>Clerk is dependent on Councillors taking on much of this work; yet, making sure that this actually happens, making sure that all papers are in place and stored on Council's systems and to ensure Clerk remains up-to-date with all developments means that more time needs to be given to this than is usually possible. In addition, in light of the need for the Clerk to be able to dedicate more time to strategic work, it could be argued that he would need to attend more external partnership meetings than he is generally able to at the moment.</p>
<p>Steady growth in queries from residents and steady increase in complexity of land management and maintenance, meaning time needed to help solve issues raised by residents not necessarily dealt with by other authorities, agencies , landowners or management companies otherwise responsible for areas and assets within Northstowe.</p> <p>Keeping reporting systems, FAQs and other useful information up-to-date online.</p>		<p>This is often given lower priority by Deputy Clerk and Clerk than wished for – much more work could potentially be done on this front.</p> <p>This is to be seen in light of a possible slow increase of vocal residents coming to the Town Council in person, by phone, email or social media to ask for help with issues they experience within the town.</p>
<p>Steady growth in finance-related tasks.</p>		<p>Over the last 12 months or so, financial work has started to take up more of the Clerk/RFO's time and this has seen a constant growth that is most likely to continue apace. This is important work and the RFO needs to have sufficient time to dedicate to this.</p>

	Growth in line management and performance management tasks as well as organising logistics with growth in staffing team.	Gradual growth in this work, largely coming to the Town Clerk as line manager for all other members of staff.
	Council's promotional work can be improved on.	This is often given lower priority by Deputy Clerk and Clerk than wished for – much more work could potentially be done on this front.
Recommendations	For the Town Council; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To receive an updated five-year staffing plan (updated staffing plan proposal and report <u>attached</u>). ➤ See attached document. 2) To consider the updated staffing plan proposals in light of the Council's short- and medium-term ambitions and staffing and budget needs. NB: in this also to consider business workforce planning (see The <u>Business Workforce Dialogue</u>, Institute for Employment Studies; <u>shared with Cllrs.</u>). ➤ Changes proposed to be discussed; ➤ Provide input into plans for Council's work in particular for the '25-'26 financial year. 	
Appendices	N/A	
Documents:	See updated 5-year staffing plan document (attached).	

SECTION 1B - To be filled in by submitter of the Motion:

Input needed from Clerk?	N/A
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PLEASE NOTE: Agenda item requests: in order to be considered for inclusion on the agenda, motions with all associated papers *must* be received by the Clerk in a final format at least 7 clear daysⁱ before the meeting at which you would like your item to be considered – if any input is required from the Clerk please provide sufficient additional time for the Clerk to schedule in for any feedback and/or additional research that may be required.

SECTION 2 - To be filled in by the Clerk:

Meets/links with Council objectives:	Staffing needs to be fulfilled	
Staffing Implications: ⁱⁱ	YES – as per proposals	←
Volunteer need implications:	N/A	
Equalities & Human Rights ⁱⁱⁱ	There are no equalities and human rights issues Details, where relevant: N/A	
Crime and Disorder ^{iv}	Crime and disorder have been considered Details, where relevant: N/A	
Biodiversity ^v	There are no (negative) bio-diversity implications Details, where relevant: N/A	
Sustainability	Is in line with the Council's Plastic-Free Pledge: N/A	
Financial ^{vi}	There are no financial implications at this stage: N/A	
	There will be financial implications; Details: YES: Specifics of staffing costs to be based on approved budgets; future implementation and expenditure are dependent on Council decision-making.	←
	There is provision within the budget. Budget heading & details: N/A	
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure; Details: N/A	
	Decisions may have potential for income generation; Details:	←

	YES: More staffing and thus more capacity overall, would give added capacity and therefore also has the potential to explore additional funding opportunities.	
Other Resource implications (besides finance):	Details: YES: Associated costs for office space & office equipment; IT and other equipment; additional HR and line-management needs to be organised.	←
Health and Safety implications ^{vii}	Details: N/A	
Legal	Power under which the spend can be actioned: ^{viii} Local Government Act 1972, s. 112: Power to appoint staff. General Power of Competence.	√
	GDPR - Data Privacy Impact Assessment: ^{ix} Details, where relevant: N/A	
	Other considerations: N/A	
Risk Management	Material risks ^x exist and these are considered and being assessed: Details: YES: Delays in recruitment of staff, or decisions not to recruit certain posts, are likely to have a direct impact on the capacity of existing staff to carry out their statutory and other duties to the quality expected.	←
Other Considerations:	N/A	

ⁱ Northstowe Town Council's [Standing Order 9 b,d](#).

ⁱⁱ The Council has a legal duty to ensure it looks after employees' health and wellbeing (the Health and Safety at Work etc act 1974).

ⁱⁱⁱ The key legislation regarding unlawful discrimination is the Equality Act 2010, which amongst other requires the Council to monitor for compliance with the Equality Duty.

^{iv} The Council has a legal duty to act with due regards to crime and disorder in the area (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, s17).

^v The Council has a legal duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, s40).

^{vi} It is the RFO's duty to manage financial risks on behalf of the Council, as described in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, reg 4.

^{vii} See also Town Council's [Health and Safety Policy](#).

^{viii} See here for an [Overview of relevant discretionary powers](#) beyond the General Power of Competence.

^{ix} See also the Town Council's [Data Protection Policy](#).

^x See Town Council's [Risk Management Plan](#).