

NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL - PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on 14th JANUARY 2025 at The Cabin, Northstowe.

Members: 4 - Cllr Bros Sabría (Chair); Cllr Delip (Vice-Chair); Cllr Castelino; Cllr Susarla.
Quorum: 3 Members.
Present: 3: Cllr Castelino; Cllr Delip; Cllr Susarla.
Town Clerk; Assets and Estates Manager
Members of the Public: 1
Apologies: Cllr Bros Sabría
Absent: N/A.

The meeting was started at 19:01; in the absence of the Chair, Cllr. Delip took the Chair.

27/24-25 APOLOGIES (Standing Item)

To record apologies for absence received prior to the meeting.

Apologies had been received, and accepted, from: Cllr Bros Sabría.

28/24-25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Standing Item)

a) *Councillors to declare any pecuniary or personal interest in any items on the agenda.*

b) *Councillors to declare any prejudicial interest in any items on the agenda and to inform the Chair if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation.*

No interests were declared.

29/24-25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Standing Item)

To allow members of the public and Councillors declaring a prejudicial interest to address the meeting in relation to business to be transacted at this meeting (for up to 15 minutes in total; maximum 3 minutes per person).

No members of the public wished to speak.

30/24-25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETINGS (Standing Item)

1) *To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 10th September 2024 as a true record of the meeting (draft minutes attached).*

It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Susarla and **RESOLVED**, with 2 voting for and 1 abstaining, **to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 10th September 2024 as a true record of the meeting.**

31/24-25 WORKNEST HR CONSULTANCY - UPDATE

Further to Personnel Committee 10th Sep. 2024, item 23/24-25 and Full Council 24th Sep. 2024, item 107/24-25:

1) *To receive an update on progress on HR Consultancy work & systems implementation.*

The Committee received an update from the Clerk on what progress has been made and what is still to be done, highlighting that most of the training sessions, attended by both the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, had been done with some more outstanding, but that due to other work commitments having taken priority further work on setting up the online systems in full and input into a draft HR Handbook are yet to be finalised. Noted.

32/24-25 PRIORITISATION COMMITTEE WORK STREAMS - UPDATE

Further to Personnel Committee 10th September 2024, item 16/24-25:

1) *To receive and consider a report with an updated prioritisation of work streams for decision-making by the Personnel Committee (report attached).*

NB: Related Council-wide policy development prioritisation needs which include relevant items in this report was presented to the Finance and Governance Committee meeting in November 2024.

Councillors recommended that, for a future update, further details are to be added which staff member is to lead on items and how much time input is expected to have each item implemented.

With regards to the staffing plan, and in particular regarding the Community Engagement Officer position included in the proposals, and following the discussion at the September 2024 Committee meeting on this subject, it was observed that this position now also has more specific roles listed related to the management of aspects of the Unity Centre were that to be managed by the Town Council; a Councillor also suggested that further comparison works with similar facilities could help further specify this position's job specifics and the related management of the Unity Centre.

33/24-25 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Item deferred from Personnel Committee meeting on 10th September 2024:

1) *To receive and consider a newly drafted Training and Development Policy, for staff and Members (attached).*

- 2) To consider whether further input is needed from WorkNest into the draft Training and Development Policy, and – following WorkNest’s input, where relevant – to recommend the draft Training and Development Policy to the Finance and Governance Committee and to Full Council thereafter, for adoption by the Council.

Following a discussion the **Clerk was tasked** to update the document to also include recovery costs for paid-for-training that had not been attended. **The Clerk was tasked** to have this draft policy to be reviewed also by WorkNest, and then to work with them to bring an updated version back to the Committee for further consideration.

34/24-25 PERFORMANCE REVIEW – PAPERWORK

Item deferred from Personnel Committee meeting on 10th September 2024:

- 1) To consider existing Annual Review Paperwork and whether further input into these is needed from WorkNest (x2 forms i.e. existing template forms as currently being used for End-of-Probation Reviews and Annual Performance Reviews attached).

The **Clerk was tasked** to have these templates to be reviewed for further input by WorkNest.

- 2) To receive and consider a Template to be used as Annual Training and Development Plan, to accompany the Annual Performance Review Form, and to consider whether further input into this is needed from WorkNest (attached).

The **Clerk was tasked** to have this template to be reviewed for further input by WorkNest.

- 3) To change the annual performance review period for all staff from the current Oct. – Sep. to a Sep. – Aug. period instead. Reasons for proposal: Make good use of relatively quieter August month to wrap up paperwork and prepare for or hold annual review meetings; ensure all Annual Review Paperwork can be in place for Personnel Committee in Sep or Oct; ensure that changes proposed to Job Descriptions; Hours of work or other work conditions and recommendations for performance-related staff wage increases can all be considered in time before the annual budget is being considered by the Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Castelino and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to change the annual performance review period for all staff from the current Oct. – Sep. to a Sep. – Aug. period instead.**

35/24-25 RECRUITMENT PROTOCOLS

Item deferred from Personnel Committee meeting on 10th September 2024:

Further to recommendations made to the Personnel Committee at Full Council 23rd July '24, item 90/24-25:

- 1) To receive latest guidance documents, template policies and protocols from NALC and SLCC regarding staff recruitment (x9 documents shared with Cllrs.).

It was recommended that Councillors involved in recruitment are to be reminded of these documents, when relevant.

The **Clerk was tasked** to ask WorkNest for their understanding on these documents.

- 2) To consider opportunities for improvements to the Town Council's existing policies, protocols and policies around HR and staff recruitment (i.e. the Town Council's Standing Orders, Staff Recruitment Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy) and consider others that are yet to be produced.

The **Clerk was tasked** to ask WorkNest for their input into these matters.

To resolve to move into a closed session and exclude the public and press, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, due to the sensitive and/or commercial nature of business to be discussed under items 36/24-25 to 38/24-25.

It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Castelino and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to move into a closed session and exclude the public and press, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, due to the sensitive and/or commercial nature of business to be discussed under items 26/24-25 to 38/24-25.**

36/24-25 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & REVIEW (Standing Item)

Item deferred from Personnel Committee meeting on 10th September 2024:

- 1) To - retrospectively - decide for the Chair of the Personnel Committee to conduct a review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Proper Officer/Town Clerk (as per Standing Order 19c).

This was **agreed**.

- 2) To receive a report on the Annual Performance Review meeting held on 8th October 2024 between the Chair of the Personnel Committee and the Town Clerk, and to approve the report and its recommendations (document and associated documentation shared with Cllrs.).

A Councillor raised that they believed that the write-up for the 2023-24 year showed that the Town Clerk may have too many tasks to deal with and that some of the workload may need to be passed onto other staff. **The Clerk was tasked** to ensure that this was to be reflected in future performance tracking data with a reduction of priorities to be listed for the Town Clerk.

- 3) To receive a progress update from the Clerk on progress made against Objectives and Priorities set out in the agreed annual performance framework for the Town Clerk for the period Oct. '24 – Aug. '25 (document shared with Cllrs.).

The Clerk answered questions raised by Members. It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Castelino and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve the Annual Performance Review report for the Town Clerk for 2023-24 and its recommendations.**

The Clerk was tasked to ensure the Committee's recommendation for a spinal point wage increase, in line with the report's recommendations, was to be presented as such to Full Council.

4) *To receive a report on the Annual Performance Review meeting held on 23rd September 2024 between the Town Clerk and the Deputy Clerk, and to approve the report and its recommendations (document shared with Cllrs.).*

Noted. It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Castelino and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve the Annual Performance Review report for the Deputy Clerk for 2023-24 and its recommendations.**

5) *Update on training and development plans, and progress made against those plans (training and development plans for Clerk and Deputy Clerk shared with Cllrs.).*

Noted. The **Clerk was tasked** for him, in his role as RFO, to also research and consider opportunities for training related to developing an investment plan.

6) *To receive an update from the Clerk on performance management, probationary period and annual review procedures related to all other members of staff (performance data capture sheets shared with Cllrs.).*

The Clerk provided a verbal update and Councillors asked questions. It was recommended that, considering administrative issues raised for one of the staff members in their probation period to ensure that appropriate training (e.g. an Excel course) was to be included in their post-probation training plan to be developed with them.

7) *Where relevant, to discuss any issues highlighted under any of the previous sub-items, and to consider potential solutions.*

No other items were raised.

37/24-25 UPDATES TO JOB DESCRIPTIONS

1) *To receive an updated Job Description for the Deputy Clerk, and to recommend to Full Council for approval (shared with Cllrs.). NB: proposed changes as a result of Market Manager now in place.*

It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Castelino and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to recommend the updated Job Description for the Deputy Clerk for approval by Full Council.**

2) *To receive an updated Job Description for the Town Clerk, and to recommend to Full Council for approval (shared with Cllrs.). NB: proposed changes as a result of Assets & Estates Manager now in place.*

It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Castelino and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to recommend the updated Job Description for the Town Clerk for approval by Full Council.**

3) *To consider a proposal from the Town Clerk for a change in work hours, and recommend to Full Council for implementation (report shared with Cllrs.).*

It was discussed that the Council needs to give this request for a reduction to a four-day working week careful consideration, but, to understand the impact on Council business better, that there needs to be additional evidence brought to the next Committee meeting in May first to show how a shift of work load to other members of staff as proposed in outline in the paperwork under item 39/24-25(1) can be achieved and how tasks are moved to other members of staff. **The Clerk was tasked** to bring this proposal back to the next Committee meeting in May, and for him to consider, in the meantime, highlighting this request to all Town Councillors as well.

38/24-25 LEGAL SITUATION

Item deferred from the Personnel Committee meeting held on 10th September 2024:

1) *To receive information from the Clerk about a current legal situation.*

The Clerk provided an update on the legal situation that has affected him carrying out his role as Town Clerk.

To resolve to end the closed session.

It was proposed by Cllr Castelino, seconded by Cllr Delip and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to end the closed session.**

39/24-25 5-YEAR STAFFING STRUCTURE PLAN - UPDATE

Further to Personnel Committee 10th September 2024, item 17/24-25 (and Personnel Committee 5th March 2024, item 35/23-24; Full Council 26th March 2024, item 263/23-24):

1) *To receive and consider renewed 5-year staffing plan proposals (updated proposals and motion paper attached; additional detailed 25-26 spreadsheet staffing details shared with Cllrs.).*

Noted. A Councillor observed that a careful balance may need to be struck between bringing on board new staff and bringing in sufficient income as a Town Council.

2) *To recommend to the Finance and Governance Committee that the updated staffing proposals are to be considered as part of the 25-26 Council budget proposals.*

The Committee **agreed** that there was insufficient time left in the meeting to discuss these updated staffing proposals in sufficient detail and that, therefore, the committee could not make a decision whether or not to recommend these to either the Finance and Governance Committee or Full Council for consideration as part of the 25-26 budget proposals.

3) *To decide to recommend to Full Council that the updated five-year staffing plan is adopted by Full Council.*

It was proposed by Cllr Delip, seconded by Cllr Susarla and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, to **DEFER this to the next Committee meeting**.

40/24-25 DATES OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETINGS (Standing Item)

- a) *Full Council: Tue 28th January 2024, 7-9 pm; The Cabin, Northstowe.*
[Final versions of motions & papers to be received by 18/01 at the latest].
- b) *Personnel Committee: Tue 13th May 2025, 7-9 pm; The Cabin, Northstowe.*
[Final versions of motions & papers to be received by 02/05 at the latest].
For all NTC meetings, see www.northstowetowncouncil.gov.uk
- Noted.

The Chair closed the meeting at 21:24 pm.

Signed.....

Chair of the Personnel Committee

Date.....