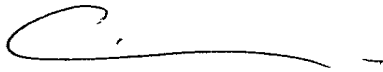


## STAFFING COMMITTEE

Dear Member

10<sup>th</sup> March 2022

A meeting of the Staffing Committee will be held on **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022** at 7pm and your attendance is requested.



Mr C. Wilkins  
Town Clerk

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The Council has decided that, for health and safety reasons, until the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022 its meetings will mostly continue to take place in a virtual environment using Zoom technology only. For legal reasons, these meetings will lack the power to make decisions directly and will, instead, take the form of consultations between councillors and staff at which councillors will seek to agree their collective preference as to how staff should exercise the decision-making powers delegated to them. This meeting will be held via Zoom and the joining details are set out below.

The Council remains committed to transparency in its decision-making processes and members of the press or public who would like to participate or simply observe the meeting are welcome to join the meeting using the same joining details.

Here are the details needed to join the meeting:-

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86509432952?pwd=V2lqc0ZSKzJzNDILVWoyY1VxbzVSUT09>

Meeting ID: 865 0943 2952 Passcode: 174247

Everyone is encouraged to join in good time ready for a start of the meeting proper at 7.00pm. In the event of difficulty joining please contact Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk on (01425) 484720 or by sending an email to [chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk)

## AGENDA

- 1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**  
There will be an opportunity for public participation for a period of up to 15 minutes at the start of the meeting
- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- 5. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT UPDATE**  
To receive a verbal update from officers
- 6. ANNUAL REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT POLICIES**  
To consider the Town Clerk's report regarding the annual review of employment policies (*Report A*)
- 7. POSSIBLE STAFF RETENTION MEASURES**  
To consider the Town Clerk's report (*Report B*)

**8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider exclusion of the press and public from the meeting, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1(2), to transact business for which publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature

**9. TOWN CLERK'S PAY AWARD**

To consider the Chairman's report (*Confidential Report C*) – to be provided by Cllr Haywood

If you would like further information on any of the agenda items, please contact Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk on (01425) 484720 or email [chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk).

Committee Members

Cllr Tony Ring – Town Mayor  
Cllr Jeremy Heron – Chairman of Policy and Finance Committee  
Cllr John Haywood  
Cllr Gloria O'Reilly  
Cllr Glenys Turner

Officers

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk  
Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

Copied by e-mail to other Members for information

## STAFFING COMMITTEE

16<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### Report on employment policies

#### 1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1 This report is intended to support the annual review of employment-related policies by members; a task delegated to this committee and last undertaken in March 2021.

#### 2. Background information

- 2.1 The Council has adopted many policies relating to employment matters. These are brought together in a handbook for staff. The handbook was reviewed and updated by Worknest (formerly Ellis Whittam) under the contract for the provision of specialist support on employment law and human resources matters. Hard copies are available at each of the Council's workplaces and each employee is sent a copy by email. A copy will be emailed to each councillor with this report.
- 2.2 The documentation is so lengthy that a line-by-line review by members would be impracticable and unnecessary given that this is what the Council is paying Worknest to do and the policies have changed little over the last year.
- 2.3 Although no changes have been made yet, officers are considering the following:
  - 2.3.1 Reviewing the section of the handbook covering computer use and the possible need for a more thorough "Information Security Policy" to protect Council data and systems; and
  - 2.3.2 How best to address changes in working practices and expectations brought about by the pandemic, especially as regards working from home and other forms of remote or distributed working.
- 2.4 Members are invited to raise questions about or make suggestions regarding the existing policies, the two areas under review mentioned above and any other areas where it may be felt that further policies might be useful.

#### 3. Issues for decision and any recommendations

**Members are invited to note this report but also to raise queries or offer guidance if desired.**

For further information, contact:

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk  
Direct Dial: 01425 484720  
Email: [chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk)

Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk  
Direct Dial: 01425 484721  
Email: [jo.hurd@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:jo.hurd@ringwood.gov.uk)

## STAFFING COMMITTEE

16<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### Report on possible staff retention measures

#### 1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider whether the Council should take measures to promote staff morale and reduce the risk of existing staff leaving.

#### 2. Background information

- 2.1 There are several reasons why such measures aimed at staff retention may be timely:
  - 2.1.1 As the labour market tightens, it becomes more important to take a proactive approach to retaining existing staff (recruiting suitable replacements may prove increasingly difficult, time-consuming and expensive) and the measures considered below can boost morale by demonstrating interest, concern and a practical commitment to fair remuneration;
  - 2.1.2 Some relate to issues raised by members of staff at their annual reviews conducted in recent weeks; and
  - 2.1.3 All existing employment contracts incorporate the “Green Book” terms by reference and these include provision for re-grading in circumstances which apply to the Council now (e.g. that no comprehensive review has been undertaken for a considerable time, that many posts have undergone significant changes since the last review and that some posts have a scale of pay-points whilst others have only a single pay-point and no rationale for the difference appears other than that the latter arose through a TUPE transfer many years ago).
- 2.2 There are various measures that might be taken but the following have been mentioned specifically:
  - 2.2.1 Adopting a Leave for Public Duties Policy which builds on the relevant statutory entitlement and includes provision for payment;
  - 2.2.2 Seeking accreditation as a Living Wage Employer
  - 2.2.3 Undertaking a general re-grading of posts
- 2.3 By virtue of the Employment Rights Act 1996, all employees are entitled to request reasonable time off for specified public duties (this includes things like being a school governor but not helping-out at social or hobby clubs). The employer decides what is reasonable, save in respect for jury service, for which time off cannot be refused. Employers may choose to pay the employees during such leave but are not obliged to do so. Whilst it might be considered appropriate to delegate to officers decisions about reasonable time-off for such purposes, the policy on whether all or any of it should be paid is properly a matter for members.
- 2.4 Accreditation as a Living Wage Employer would require the Council to commit to paying the “Real Living Wage” (as distinct from the National Living Wage – the legal minimum which all employers are required to pay). It also covers the use of contractors as an anti-avoidance measure. Fuller details can be found on the website of the Living Wage Foundation at [www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk). The Council has several posts which are either currently paid below this rate or have pay-

scales attached which extend below it, so seeking such accreditation would require a review of pay-scales.

- 2.5 Whether prompted by an application for Living Wage Accreditation or otherwise, the Green Book contains much information on how reviews of pay-scales should be conducted. It is not a simple or quick process. Every post would have to be analysed in detail in consultation with the current holder. The agreed findings would then have to be compared with standard criteria to determine fair comparisons, with care being taken to exclude personal factors (it is the role that is being assessed, not the person) and avoid discrimination. It would require significant officer time and member input. However, there is no sensible “quick and dirty” alternative. A rushed or botched review risks lowering staff morale and doing more harm than good. Unless there is a commitment to doing the review properly, it is best avoided altogether.
- 2.6 It is also prudent to be realistic about the likely outcome. This could not be an immediate saving on payroll costs – it could only result in either no change or an increase. Moreover, with payroll costs accounting for (very roughly) 4/7ths of all revenue expenditure, any increase would have a noticeable effect on future budgets. If it transpired that any staff are currently being paid more than the fair rate, the lower rate could only be applied when the post next falls vacant. Conversely, it would be difficult to justify delaying the implementation of pay increases (or awards of increments) beyond 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. It would be sensible to begin any review early in the financial year so that the outcome can be established (or estimated) in good time for setting of the budget for the following year.
- 2.7 It would be possible for the review to be undertaken entirely “in-house” by officers and members. However, there may be benefits to enlisting the help of outside consultants. The two obvious providers (because they are specialists in our sector) would be Local Councils Consultancy (a “not-for-profit” arm of the Society of Local Council Clerks formed in 2018) and Local Government Resource Centre (a private firm formed in 2014 by a leading former clerk). Both provide consultants who are very experienced in doing reviews of this kind – they are familiar with the process and with the outcomes at other comparable councils. Their involvement would not only relieve the burden on officers and members, but also give greater assurance about the fairness of the outcome. Such assurance would be important to the morale effect and to members being asked to sanction any budget increases that may ensue. There would, obviously, be a cost to engaging consultants but this could only be established after briefing them on precisely what help is being sought.

### **3. Issues for decision and any recommendations**

**The Committee is invited to consider whether to approve all or any of the staff retention measures canvassed in this report or suggested at the meeting and, if a general review of staff grades is approved, how it should be conducted (with particular reference to the question of whether outside consultants should be engaged).**

For further information, contact:

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk  
Direct Dial: 01425 484720  
Email: [chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk)

Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk  
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