

Personnel and Administrative Sub-Committee Meeting at 7:30am on Tuesday 10 January 2023 held online via Zoom

Present: K French Chairman
 J French
 RF Skoulding
 S Lemmon Town Clerk

No apologies were received.

The Committee confirmed the following points;

- a) The new Assistant Clerk (Mrs Sally Taylor) was appointed and commenced employment on 14 February 2022. The Town Clerk Elect (Miss S Lemmon) started on 28 March 2022 in time for the year-end procedures. Notwithstanding his contracted notice period of one month, the outgoing Clerk (Mr C Lemmon) had agreed to remain in post until the end of September 2022 to enable a vital 5-month hand over period of work to S Lemmon.
- b) Both the Clerk and Assistant Clerk had satisfactorily completed their respective probationary periods.
- c) That the March Town Council Risk Assessment (See Appendix 1 – 4 pages) had been reviewed and adequately covered all areas of concern. The Clerk had made some minor amendments to reflect enhanced procedures, and these were accepted by the Sub-Committee.
- d) In particular it was confirmed that:
 1. All assets listed within the March Town Council Asset Register had been inspected.
 2. In general, the levels of insurance cover were deemed to be sufficient. It was noted that the standard cover provided by Zurich Municipal for Fidelity Guarantee Insurance was now £250,000. It was agreed that this amount was more than sufficient to cover this Council's needs.
 3. Because of the discounts available, another five years contract with Zurich Municipal had been implemented in 2021.
 4. The financial internal control procedures had been reviewed and considered adequate. The Financial Regulations had last been updated and approved by MTC on 2 September 2019. There had been no further updates by NALC to the Financial Regulations since 2019.
 5. The physical security arrangements for the buildings, contents and other items had been reviewed and considered adequate. The new main doors would be replaced this year, having been granted planning permission in Autumn 2022.
 6. The Standing Orders were updated and approved by MTC on 5 September 2022. It was deemed necessary, however, to revisit the Standing Orders once more to clarify the requirements in relation to members of the public registering with the Clerk to speak at Council meetings; it was suggested that requests must be submitted in writing by 17:00 on a Sunday preceding a

meeting, given that agendas were not published until the Wednesday prior, usually in the afternoon.

7. The Council was observing all legal requirements.
8. Encrypted computer back-up data-sticks are taken home by the Clerk each evening. Manual and automatic back-ups are performed regularly. The Clerk has a lap-top computer for home-working.
9. The Christmas Lights are erected and dismantled each year using local labour and volunteers. Any payments made from Council funds are agreed by the Christmas Lights Sub-Committee. There had been more issues than usual in 2022 in part due to aging and defunct infrastructure (timers and sockets). FDC would be responsible for replacing timer switches on the new street lighting furniture in Broad Street. The Clerk advised that there would still be a “switch-on” event in 2023 notwithstanding the works in Broad Street, and road closures would be applied for as usual.

Other recommendations/points to note;

- a) That the Town Clerk’s and Assistant Town Clerk’s wages be automatically increased in line with future National Salary Awards for Local Council Clerks as agreed by The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services. In December, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk received the NALC approved increase (with back pay to April 2022). Additionally, NALC had agreed to an award of 1 day’s extra annual leave for all officers.
- b) That the Town Clerk’s and Assistant Town Clerk’s weekly hours continue as at present. The Town Clerk’s hours had increased from 28 hours per week to 30 hours per week from October 2022. The Clerk is still working considerably longer than her contracted hours, no longer due to newness to the role and inexperience, but owing to projects and challenges that have generated a significant, increased workload. The nature of the job is often chaotic and unpredictable.
- c) The Town Hall cleaner had received a pay rise (effective from December 2022), from [REDACTED] per hour, as approved by the Mayor. Since the minimum wage was rising to £10.42 in April, a pay rise was considered necessary for staff retention purposes.
- d) The outgoing Clerk officially retired on 31 December 2022 with his last day in the office being 30 September 2022. The 5-month hand-over to the current Clerk was considered invaluable given the breadth of the role and allowed for a seamless transition in October 2022.
- e) It was noted that it is now compulsory for employers to enrol employees in a company pension scheme if the employee is of pensionable age. The Clerk is enrolled in the pension scheme although the Assistant Clerk has an arrangement similar to the outgoing Clerk and is entitled to half a month’s salary per year employed in lieu of a pension.
- f) The Town Clerk advised that it would be prudent to adopt the Civility and Respect/NALC Model Councillor Officer Protocol, to guide councillors and officers in their working relationships with one another. The protocol seeks to

reflect the principles underlying the Councillor Code of Conduct and its objective is to enhance and maintain the integrity of local government. Whilst there had been no issues regarding councillor/officer relationships hitherto, it was considered good practice to adopt the Protocol, particularly in light of forthcoming elections in 2023. It was resolved that the Protocol be adopted forthwith by March Town Council.

- g) The Clerk asked the Sub-Committee to consider moving to online banking and using specially designed software such as “Scribe” to modernise payments and invoicing for the March Town Council. Currently, the majority of payments are made by cheque and all MTC accounting processes are manual. Most town councils now used Scribe. The Clerk was arranging a demonstration with a neighbouring council to assess its effectiveness and ease of use. Scribe is capable of producing many reports, with online bank reconciliations, and there are lots of free training sessions and support available. The introduction of online banking and supported by specialist software would ultimately be far more efficient administratively and likely welcomed by payees. If the Sub-Committee was agreeable, the Clerk would look at costings/subscriptions. It was stressed that online banking facilities had not been implemented before now as the previous clerk was an accountant who had trained with manual systems. This system had worked faultlessly, but a manual system and payment by cheque was now outmoded and it is deemed essential to move with the times and take advantage of the possibilities that modern software can offer including the production of reports and completion of online VAT returns. It was agreed by the Sub-Committee that the Clerk should make further enquiries with a view to using Scribe in future.
- h) The Clerk recommended that Councillor training continue to be strongly encouraged, particularly in view of elections in May 2023 and the possibility of a large contingent of new councillors entering the world of politics and local government for the first time.
- i) The Clerk reported that the issues regarding Wordpress (the system we use to update the MTC website) would be resolved by our IT consultants this week, so that documents could be published as normal.

It was agreed that Councillor K French, should report to the Main March Town Council Meeting of 6 February 2023 and request them to ratify the above recommendations and all findings of this Sub-Committee.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:10am.

Councillor K French..... 6 February 2023
Mayor of March.