

# **Personnel and Administrative Sub-Committee Meeting at 7:30am on Tuesday 16 January 2024 held online via Teams**

Present:        K French                    Chairman  
                  J French  
                  G Christy  
  
                  S Lemmon                    Town Clerk

No apologies were received.

## **The Committee confirmed the following points;**

- a)        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.
  
- b)        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.
  3.        Because of the discounts available, another five years contract with Zurich Municipal had been implemented in 2021 and so we shall remain with Zurich until at least 2026.
  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 although a consultation was launched by NALC in August 2023 with a view to updating the model regulations. Clerk to update councillors as and when changes are implemented.
  5.        The physical security arrangements for the buildings, contents and other items had been reviewed and considered adequate. However, the new main doors had not been replaced as hoped pursuant to the grant of planning permission in Autumn 2022 due to the Civic Trust's inability to secure grant funding thus far. Discussions with Historic England are ongoing and all potential sources of funding are being explored for essential repair and maintenance work to the Town Hall.
  6.        At the meeting in January 2023, it was resolved to amend the Standing Orders to clarify the requirements in relation to members of the public registering with the Clerk to speak at Council meetings. The revised Standing Orders were duly updated and approved on 6 February 2023. The Standing Orders

contain time limits for speakers/motions. These need to be invoked and enforced to prevent prolonged/unfocused debate.

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. This is stored securely when not in use and is insured.
9. The Christmas Lights are erected and dismantled each year using local labour and paid “volunteers”. Any payments made from Council funds are agreed by the Christmas Lights Sub-Committee. The Clerk would review the Method Statement and Risk Assessment and circulate to those involved with erecting the lights in 2024. These could be discussed at the next meeting of the Christmas Lights Working Party Committee. 2023 labour costs were expected imminently.

**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 November 2023, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk received the NALC approved increase (with back pay to April 2023).
- b) That the Assistant Town Clerk’s weekly hours continue as at present.
- c) That the Town Clerk’s hours had increased from 30 hours per week to 37.5 hours per week from October 2023 (pursuant to a meeting of this committee on 2 October 2023 and ratified by councillors on 6 November 2023). The Clerk is still working considerably longer than her contracted hours owing to projects and challenges that have generated a significant, increased workload. The nature of the job is often chaotic and unpredictable.
- d) The long-standing Town Hall cleaner left the employ of MTC in November 2023. A new cleaner has been employed although there have been issues and it is likely that the Trust will be advertising for a replacement shortly. One thing to be mindful of is the increase in minimum wage once again in April 2024 which will have a significant impact on staff costs.
- 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 Civility and Respect/NALC Model Councillor Officer Protocol – a guide for councillors and officers in their working relationships with one another which seeks to reflect the principles underlying the Councillor Code of Conduct with the objective is to enhance and maintain the integrity of local government was adopted on 6 February 2023 by March Town Council.

- g) The Clerk recommended that Councillor training continue to be strongly encouraged. We should, in particular, continue to focus on and monitor the planning committee and arrange additional planning training.
- h) The Clerk was now using the Scribe accounting package and engaged in regular training and was interested to see how the year-end process would differ this year and whether the process would be simplified. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk had had a demonstration of the Scribe Allotments package, although this was not being used at the current time.
- i) The Clerk had finally managed to open new bank accounts for all existing council accounts with the exception of the Mayors Charity Ball Account which was still being processed (the application was submitted in May 2023!) The process had been far from straightforward. However, it was essential going forward to have all on-line accounts, especially with the local branch of Lloyds closing in a few months' time.
- j) In light of the i) (above) and the need to reduce the amount of physical banking to be done, MTC no longer used petty cash and cash is longer accepted (allotment rent, for example). It was accepted that there would, from time-to-time, be cash – from the civic service, Mayor's charity events etc, that could be deposited at the Post Office.
- k) The new cloud-based telephones are continuing to cause headaches. Clerk to contact BT again to action/sort. Clerk to also explore alternative systems and providers. The Clerk would contact our IT consultants for advice.
- l) There is the potential in the not-too-distant future that March Town Council may need to secure temporary office accommodation in the event that plumbing/building works take place in the Town Hall. The Clerk is concerned that storage space is very tight but there does not seem to be an obvious solution to this problem.
- m) New office furniture (2 new chairs) for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk are required urgently. Both are old, broken/in poor repair. Suitable replacements to be ordered before year-end.
- n) The invoice for the May 2023 elections was expected from FDC shortly but was expected to be in line with the amount budgeted. This invoice always needs to be chased.



- q) The Clerk would investigate options for recording council meetings.
- r) The Clerk would revert to the council's solicitors forthwith confirming authority to instruct counsel in relation to ongoing legal matters.

It was agreed that Councillor K French, should report to the Main March Town Council Meeting of 5 February 2024 and request them to ratify the above recommendations and all findings of this Sub-Committee.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:45am.

Councillor K French..... 5 February 2024  
Mayor of March.