

**Sevenoaks Town Council
Notes of the Personnel Committee Working Party
Held via Zoom on Monday 25th October 2021.**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 p.m.

Meeting Concluded: 8.10 p.m.

Present: Cllr Clayton (Vice Chairman), Cllr Eyre (Chairman), Cllr Piper (substitute for Cllr Bonin), Cllr Parry (7.20 p.m.) Cllr Shea.

In Attendance: Town Clerk

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Bonin, Cllr Dr Canet and Cllr Waite

2. Requests for Dispensations

There were no requests for Dispensations

3. Declaration of Interests

There was no declaration of interests

4. Minutes of the Personnel Committee 29th March 2021

These were considered to be a correct record.

5. Notes of Staff Meetings held on 14th April, 25th August, 5th October 2021

Councillors received and considered the notes of the staff meetings and made the overall following comments:

- Pleased to note that the internal STC financial procedures worked to uncover computer hacking and potential loss of funds.
- Noted that Finance Dept would move offices once telephone system installation had been addressed
- Noted the length of time it took for UKPN final connection to upgrade the electrics at the Business Hub
- Number of compliments received for which staff should be thanked and congratulated.

6. Sevenoaks Town Council Staff – HR Management Information – Reports to September 2021

Councillors received and considered the information in the following reports and noted that the current format of providing the information worked well.

- i) Staffing details
- ii) Pension details

- iii) Absence Details
- iv) Turnover Details
- v) EAP Report from Wellbeing Solutions

Councillors also welcomed the information in the EAP report and that it was being used and helped members of staff.

Councillors were reminded that the service was also available to them and their families.

7. Christmas Arrangements 2021

Staff Christmas Meal

In past years a meal was provided for staff at Donington Manor, and it is hoped that this will be able to take place again this year. As per normal a sum of £600 has been set aside for this purpose.

Last year a virtual quiz was held, and a comedian paid for as an alternative to get staff together during the difficult lockdown period and was a popular and successful evening.

It was suggested that the Town Clerk make a booking for the meal asap.

Closure of Offices – Christmas / New Year Period

In previous years Town Council Offices have been closed from Christmas Day until the day following New Year Bank Holiday. Grounds staff have also traditionally taken the same days leave. It is proposed that this arrangement be continued. The exception would be if cemetery staff were required to dig / backfill a grave. Traditionally staff have two days deducted from their annual leave entitlement and the third working day is awarded to all as an extra day's leave - a gesture of Christmas goodwill.

There will be slightly different holiday arrangements for the cafes and House in the Basement, but the staff will be treated to equivalent leave time.

Arrangements will be put in place for emergency cover with a list of out of hours numbers in place.

For 2021 the Town Council Offices and Departments will be closed from 16.00 on Friday 24th December 2021 until 08.45 on Tuesday 4th January 2022 inclusive and two days will be deducted from the leave entitlement of all staff.

Cafes and House in the Basement staff will be given equivalent holiday subject to the opening hours of the premises.

8. Retention and Recruitment Policies

Copies of the Town Council's current Retention and Recruitment Policies had been circulated with the agenda and were discussed. It was noted that the policies had been created several years ago and prior to changes implemented in provision of benefits and

policies to encourage retention of policies and did not reflect the work within the Town Council's Investors in People status.

It was also noted that the policies had worked well to date and enabled a degree of discretion and adaption for recruitment of very different roles within the staff. It was noted that the policies would be reviewed again at a later date considering the points mentioned.

9. Town Clerk's Report

i) Government Kickstart Scheme

Sevenoaks Town Council is participating in the Government Kickstart Scheme. The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16-to-24-year-old on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers:

- 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months.
- Associated employer National insurance contributions
- Minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions.

The Town Council has created the following vacancies.

Job Role	Location	First 6 Months	Second 6 months
Clerical Assistant	STC Offices	Completed	recruiting
Gardening Assistant	Vine	Promoted to permanent staff Recruiting	
Caretaker Assistant	Bat & Ball Centre	Started October	
Café Assistant	Café on the Vine	Recruiting	
Café Assistant	Bat & Ball Station Cafe	Moved from Café on the Vine Started September	

Initially it was possible to have two persons per role each working six months, one after the other. It is understood the government is looking to extend the scheme further. Applicants have to be referred via the Job Centre.

Two candidates who initially applied via the Kickstart Scheme have been taken on as permanent employees – Planning Committee Clerk and Cemetery Gardener.

ii) Impact of Kent Living Wage

Sevenoaks Town Council agreed some years ago that it would pay all its employees the Kent Living Wage, this is above the National Living Wage – see details below.

Government Minimum and Living Wages & Living Wage Foundation Living Wage

Year	Living Wage Foundation	25 and over (new)	21 to 24	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice
2021	TBC in November	£8.91	£8.36	£6.56	£4.62	£4.30
2020	£9.50	£8.72	£8.20	£6.45	£4.55	£4.15
2019	£9.30	£8.21	£7.70	£6.15	£4.35	£3.90
2018	£9.00	£7.83	£7.38	£5.90	£4.20	£3.70
2017	£8.75	£7.50	£7.05	£5.60	£4.05	£3.50
2016	£8.45	£7.20	£6.95	£5.55	£4.00	£3.40
2015	£8.45		£6.70	£5.30	£3.87	£3.30
2014	£8.25		£6.50	£5.13	£3.79	£2.73
2013	£7.85		£6.31	£5.03	£3.72	£2.68
2012	£7.65		£6.19	£4.98	£3.68	£2.65
2011	£7.45		£6.08	£4.98	£3.68	£2.60

* Government set limits changed in April/ October

* Living Wage Foundation limits set each November

As intended, this has increased level of pay for staff at the lower end of the pay scale. It has however had two other consequences.

- i) It has removed the pay separation in some instances of those on the lower pay scale without any responsibilities e.g., supervision of other staff and those who do have these responsibilities. Understandably this has created some tension and where possible within budgets this has been addressed to some level.
- ii) Paying the Kent Living Wage to casual staff in cafés has made the cafes difficult to operate commercially due to the additional financial burden. It is expected that the Town Council's Five-Year Financial Review will recommend that the minimum wage is paid to newly appointed casual staff.

iii) Staffing Review

Some time ago the Town Council carried out an internal staffing review and identified the following below. The Town Clerk has recommended that when the Town Council reviews future projects it considers relevant resources at the same time. There is also some consideration needed to succession planning for Senior Management roles:

Job Role	Job Purpose	Location	Update
Facility Manager	Facilities Manager to remove some workload from both the Open Spaces Manager and Town Clerk in relation to maintenance of STC's assets and facilities, including H&S checks.	Across all non-open spaces' buildings	Caretaker promoted to this role May 2021
Finance Staff	Increase team to reflect additional operation of functions and facilities.	Finance Dept	Full team in place for some time.
Grounds Staff	Increase team to reflect additional operation of functions and facilities.	Open Spaces	Dedicated Vine Gardener appointed. Dedicated part time Bat & Ball Centre Gardener appointed. Additional Cemetery Gardener appointed.
Town Clerk's Secretary	To provide secretarial support to the Town Clerk. It is envisaged at some stage this will be combined with the secretarial support currently given to the Mayor. It could be considered in the short term as a Kickstart role.	Central Services	To be considered as a Kickstart role.

iv) Town Clerk Commitments

The Town Clerk's term of President of SLCC has come to an end in October 2021, this was extended by one year due to the pandemic.

v) Jury Service

The Town Clerk has been called for Jury Service from 18th October 2021.

Sevenoaks Town Council's Employee Handbook states the following in relation to this:

There are a number of circumstances in which employees have the right to time off from work either with or without pay. These include jury service and certain public duties such as serving as a local councillor, magistrate, or school governor. Where a need for such time off arises you should discuss the matter with the Town Clerk or your manager who will consider what arrangements should be put in place.

While the Council will do its best to accommodate time off in these circumstances, the requirements of any employee's role may mean that the amount of time off granted may be limited. Where serving on a jury would lead to a level of absence that would be detrimental to the organisation, the Council may require you to seek a deferment.

It was noted that Sevenoaks Town Council was currently paying staff for jury service in line with other benefits e.g., sickness policy. It was agreed that the Employees Handbook should be updated to reflect this within its next review.