

SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

The Minutes of the **Human Resources Committee** Meeting held on Wednesday, 28th August, 2013 in the Council Chamber, Beeson House, Southwater commencing at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Chairman:	Mr P.Buckley
Vice Chairman:	Mrs.P.Flores-Moore
	Mr L. Apted
Clerk:	Mrs C. Tobin
District Councillors:	Not Present
Press:	Not Present
Members of the Public:	1

HR 01/08/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman asked those present to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the meeting, unless in an emergency, when they should go through the Chair. In the event of a fire alarm sounding, everyone should evacuate the building via the exits indicated.

Mr.Apted asked whether the Clerk had any further news in relation to the road works in Woodfield other than that provided to him. The Clerk responded that she had no further information but had a meeting planned for the following week, at which she would enquire as to whether there was any further development.

HR 02/08/13 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr.A.Prosser-Snelling via the Chairman of Council, Mr.Buckley. Mr.Buckley asked whether Mr.Prosser-Snelling had provided the Clerk with any feedback in relation to the employment policies, the Clerk responded that she had not received any correspondence.

HR 03/08/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests at this point.

HR 04/08/13 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that he had no announcements.

HR 05/08/13 CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk referred to an employment update issued to all Members by the

Council's employment advisor, Action in Rural Sussex. The updates referred to:-

- Upfront Tribunal Fees for Employees
- Settlement Agreements
- Pre-claim Conciliation

Members noted the Clerk's comments.

Staff Structure – August 2013

The Clerk issued to Members of the Committee the revised staff structure as of August 2013. This being posted to the Council's website.

Member's noted the Clerk's comments.

HR 06/08/13 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME REFORMS & ACTUARIAL REPORTS

The Clerk referred to correspondence issued to all Members of Council and a meeting attended by the Clerk on behalf of the Council in July at the Annual General Meeting of the Pension Fund.

At the meeting the overall financial position of the Fund was discussed; this doing generally well. The Fund are looking to invest in the Far East and new emerging social media companies where there were felt to be growth, as UK Bonds were not performing as well as could be expected. Emerging markets with an upsurge in industrial output in America are also being investigated.

However, just prior to the meeting each Council were issued with potential contribution rates these to be confirmed for the next three years sometime in December 13. Those present expressed concerns about the predictions which would see the Southwater Parish Council contribution rise from 18.1% to 23.5%. The Council in being prudent took out the insurance option on 'ill health' which in turn reduced the 18.1% to 16.1% however, based on the new predictions it is currently difficult to say what percentage reduction will be gained in future. Actuaries cannot provide figures prior to December, for some within the pooling arrangement had not completed their returns for the previous year and they cannot start the process until late September/early October.

The Parish Council will need to consider therefore this increase in the Budget for Year 2014/15. As explained previously to Members for the Council to simply withdraw from the Scheme is not an option due to the sum which would have to be paid to the Pension Fund to compensate for withdrawal; the Council does not have such reserves on which to call upon. Secondly whilst seven members of staff are within the scheme, all staff had the right to do so. Should the Committee wish to recommend suspending the Scheme for any new members of staff the Clerk would strongly advise that formal employment law legal advice be sought on the ways of doing so.

Whilst it appears that the Council will have to increase its contributions, participating staff in cases will also have to pay a much larger contribution towards the scheme.

The anticipated total cost projected based on the proposed contribution rates to date would be in the region of £2,237 to include for any potential salary increase in 2013/14 of 1%.

From 2016 as previously explained all staff will be entered into the Scheme under the new Pension Regulations, with staff opting out if they do not wish to remain in the scheme. The Council has always budgeted for all staff who are eligible.

Staff may also have the option of joining the scheme paying a 50% reduction on their actual rate. However, the Council will have to pay the full employer's contribution costs, for the staff would be entitled to their full rights should in the event of their retiring through ill health or other come about.

Mr.Buckley felt that these costs should be taken up by The National Association of Local Councils with Government; such cost increases being unsustainable both now and possibly in the future.

Mrs.Flores-Moore said that it would be a question of whether the scheme was affordable with staffing costs being the major cost for the Council, this in turn would affect the services which the Council were able to offer to the community. It may be that these would have to be substantially decreased. Mrs.Flores-Moore was also concerned that the Council may in future be capped. Mr.Buckley said that whilst this may be the case, the Council would only reluctantly look at such options.

Mrs.Flores-Moore said that she was quite concerned about whether the Funds investments were ethically placed, with no investment in arms companies. The Clerk believed having attended the AGM that this was the case, as the question had been raised.

The Clerk stated that she had discussed this matter with the Director of Sussex and Surrey Association of Local Councils and also the Chief Executive of the Society of Local Council Clerks. Unfortunately, she had been advised that both organisations had differing views as to whether Councils could participate in two schemes as opposed to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Council should write to the National Association of Local Councils requesting that they take up the issue surrounding increased in pension contributions following actuarial advice; the Local Government Pension Scheme becoming unaffordable to Councils.

HR 07/08/13 2013/14 NATIONAL SALARY AWARD**

The Clerk advised Members that the 2013/14 National Salary Awards had been issued providing a 1% increase in staff salaries. Whilst in the past four years there had been a zero increase, where a National Award was granted, Council have approved such an increase.

The Chairman stated that this was the case, the Council had in the past approved such National Awards. His was aware that a commercial company had recently awarded a 3% rise having not issued one for a number of years.

It was RECOMMENDED by all present, that the Council APPROVE a pay award of 1% to all staff.

HR 08/08/13 PARISH COUNCIL HR POLICY & DOCUMENTS

The Clerk referred to the documents provided to each Member of the Committee in relation to the revision of the Council's HR Policy Statement and related documents.

7.20 pm – the meeting was interrupted by Dr.A.Cash who passed to the Clerk documents, stating that “there had been a suicide at Croydon”. Dr.Cash left the meeting at 7.21 pm.

The Clerk indicated that to date Mrs.Flores-Moore had provided comments. These comments and all documents were subsequently reviewed and minor changes made to individual documents, with the exception of the Inclement Weather Policy which the Clerk was asked to revisit and represent to Council.

It was RECOMMENDED that following the approved changes made by the Committee that the Council APPROVE for staff consultation all the HR Policies and Documents; the exception being the Inclement Weather Policy this to be revised and represented.

HR 09/08/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To Be Advised

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.