

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
On Wednesday 29th July 2020 at 9.30 a.m.

This meeting shall be closed under the **Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 S1(2)**

A body may, by resolution, exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies.

PRESENT WERE: Cllr S Criswell, Cllr C Dolby, Cllr R Sutton (in the Chair) and Mrs P Bryant, Parish Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES

All members were present.

a. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2020

It was agreed by a unanimous vote to approve the Minutes.

2. UPDATE ON RISK ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED FOR COVID-19

The Clerk explained both she and Alex Scriven (admin), have been completing and updating a raft of risk assessments for the various activities/services and buildings under the parish council's responsibility in line with Government guidance. At present indoor facilities are not open but they are looking to open the Millennium Sports Field for youth football training shortly.

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown has affected Somersham Parish Council staff in different ways and has certainly affected the health & wellbeing of several staff working on the 'frontline'.

Initially, staff had a two week break from all contact to prevent the spread of possible infection and where possible staff worked from home.

All staff are now working their usual hours except for Mrs Draper as the facilities she normally books for the council are closed.

There is an informal rota of staff going into the Norwood Building Office; this will not change for the foreseeable future unless Government restrictions are relaxed.

3. UPDATING THE COUNCILS' EMERGENCY PLAN

The Clerk reported the Council's Emergency Plan was drawn up in the late 1980s/early 1990s and is obsolete. The Clerk suggested it was time to create a new plan and to include a process for a pandemic; this did not feature in the old plan as it was probably thought very unlikely. This was agreed.

The Clerk will give this project to the Deputy Clerk Megan Blewett to draft.

4. PARISH COUNCIL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS FOR CONTRACTS & COUNCILLOR INTERESTS

Owing to a recent issue it was agreed the Clerk would draw up a statement detailing a Councillors duty to declare business interests on their Register of Interests and other obligations. This is particularly important if it is in relation to potential contracts with the parish council for goods or services plus the legislation which prevents the council paying a councillor for council related work.

5. THE COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT WORKING PARTY ROLE

Discussion was held on the role of the working party, there seems to be a misunderstanding by the working party on their role. The WP should be sourcing local interest articles in addition to reviewing emails in the newsletter email address for inclusion in the hardcopy newsletter.

Discussion was held on operational matters generally and the Clerk's decision to create an electronic version for April/May due to the pandemic and lockdown using information already submitted to the working group.

It was agreed to pause the hardcopy newsletter with immediate effect whilst pandemic restrictions are still in place.

The Clerk will produce revised TOR's based on the longstanding hardcopy newsletter criteria for the newsletter working group.

Mrs Bryant will compile an Options Report on matters relating to Somersham4u as above for consideration.

6. STAFF COMPLAINT CONCERNING COUNCILLOR BEHAVIOUR

Confidential discussion held.

7. P3 OFFICER ROLE AND THE SNRG

The Clerk was contacted by Mr P McCloskey stating at an SNRG meeting, the P3 Officer said he was standing down and could the SNRG take it on? The Clerk/parish council *has not* been notified by the current P3 officer he wishes to hand the position over and there are no definitive footpaths on the Nature Reserve.

It was agreed the Clerk will contact Philip Clark to find out his perspective on the P3 role as a county countryside officer and Chairman of the SNRG.

8. TO CHANGE COUNCILLOR EMAIL ADDRESSES – 'somersham-pc.gov.uk'

The Clerk explained with the closure of the SSLA charity and their bespoke website plus an obsolete Somersham PC website, it was an unnecessary expense to pay for the extra domain names and separate councillor email addresses to BT.

It was agreed to move Councillor email addresses away from BT and to Somersham-pc.gov.uk immediately.

9. MATTERS RELATING TO WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY

The Website Accessibility Regulations come fully into force on 23rd September 2020.

The parish council have a website accessibility statement in place on the website but there are a few updates to be made before then. Miss Blewett will be undertaking this.

The Clerk is concerned due to the Website Accessibility Regulations and the desire to maintain Quality Gold Standards, the website design, contents and layout should be the sole responsibility of the parish office to avoid conflict of opinion.

This was agreed.

10. UPDATED REMOTE MEETING PROTOCOL

The revised Remote Meeting Protocol was approved and a copy will be sent to councillors. Updates include reminders not to drink alcohol during meetings in line with legislation or to eat as this would not happen at a face-to-face meeting.

11. NATIONAL SALARY REVIEW FOR 2020/2021

The Clerk reported an update on the National Salary Review for 2020/2021 is expected shortly and likely to be in the range of 2%.

It was agreed the Clerk could implement the nationally agreed pay scales once they were received and to back date them as usual (and recommended) to April 2020.

12. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT - Review of Staff Roles, Responsibilities & Procedures with Recommendations in light of COVID-19 and moving forward

Key Points agreed by the Personnel Committee;

- **Parish Clerk**

Agreed to consider reducing from 31 to 20 hours per week commencing April 2021.

Gratuity pension pot would be ring-fenced as at 31 March 2021 and calculated on any amended hours from 1 April 2021 to continue to build up the gratuity pension.

In the interim months, train admin (A Scriven) to take on data inputting and extending the risk assessment role.

- **Alex Scriven**

Currently Alex splits his role between the parish office and Millennium Sports Facility.

Agreed to retain 30 hours but change job role.

Alex to move away from the caretaker role and concentrate solely on admin and risk assessment for both the Norwood Building, Millennium Pavilion and any other parish council facility indoor or outdoor.

As the Clerk will be reducing her hours from April 2021 she will train Alex to take on the finance data inputting and other tasks. Alex will also take a greater responsibility for the risk assessments across all facilities. This would be expanding on the risk assessments he is already compiling with the Clerk during this pandemic.

Cleaner for Millennium – new job role

The Millennium Sports Facility to employ a cleaner *to sanitise and clean after each hirer as required under current government guidance*

In 20 years it has not been possible to employ someone to undertake this role but it is essential if the facility is to re-open and this must be at a realistic cost.

The Clerk will investigate employing a cleaner or perhaps small business contractor prepared to do this work.

To go forward for approval at full council;

Mental health during COVID-19 has been a major issue across the country. The mental health and stress implications for Somersham Parish Council staff members were taken into consideration in the Confidential Report. The proposed policies below form part of the process.

i) Scheme of Delegation

Since the coronavirus lockdown much reliance is placed on the Clerk to ensure the council can function on a day-to-day basis with the need for permitting decisions outside of the formal framework of the council and committee meetings. The Local Government Act 1972 s 101 permits councils to make arrangements for the discharge of their functions. Somersham Parish Council currently does this in a passive way through their Standing orders and Financial Regulations to the Clerk. This can be made clearer through a Scheme of Delegated Powers.

ii) Career Break (unpaid Sabbatical) Policy

A growing number of working people, particularly those who have been in the same job or with the same employer for several years, are taking extended periods of leave (usually unpaid) to broaden their horizons and develop themselves on a personal and professional level. This can have benefits for the employer as well as the employee.

Mental health during COVID-19 has been a major issue across the country. The mental health and stress implications for all Somersham Parish Council staff members have been taken into consideration.

13. NOTICES & MATTERS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

No matters were raised.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11 am.

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Richard Sutton, Chairman