**HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL**

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| **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING** | **Date: 28 October 2024** |

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| **AGENDA ITEM:** |

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: Staff Structure and reduced Parish Office Opening**

**BACKGROUND**

At the meeting of the Council on the 07 October 2024, the move from the current salary assessment arrangements to the NJC grading, and salary structure was formally adopted.

The salary increases due to be implemented on the 01 April 2025 are significant **(£28k).** In order to mitigate the cost, any potential to reduce expenditure needs to be explored.

It is for this reason the proposal is presented to reduce the opening hours of the Parish Office to four days per week, with the office being closed on a Friday.

The current vacant post which historically has been recruited for three days could be reduced to two days per week, providing a saving of **£7,310** per annum.

Staff are not permitted to lone work, and therefore additional cover is required for periods of annual leave and sickness. This could also be reduced as the hours worked by staff would be compressed into four days which provides increased coverage.

In the past five months 64 hrs overtime claimed in the avoidance of lone working. On an annual basis this could potentially amount to **£3,281.**

Total predicted annual reduction in expenditure of **£10,591.**

There are of course disadvantages, not least the level of service provision to the residents. The community halls, and the Countryside Team remain fully operational, and to some extent will have less support if required.

In mitigation of the negative aspects:

* The Grounds Manager will usually be working within the Countryside Office, on Fridays, therefore the building will be occupied
* Two caretakers are contactable, in respect of any hall related issues
* Napier and Jubilee Halls both fully booked on Fridays with regular hirers, and as such are self-sufficient
* Chief Officer contactable via telephone/email until 11.00am
* Parish Office answerphone available to take messages, website contact form
* Low number of visitors to the Parish Office seeking information/assistance
* Friday is overall the least busy day in respect of telephone enquiries and visitors.

It is evident that in recent times the world of work has changed greatly with working from home becoming the norm, and to this end the working practices within EHDC are without exception.

The EHDC Council Offices have limited numbers of staff in attendance, and are without public access. It is of note that employee numbers have been reduced as part of a cost saving strategy.

Local Authorities are under financial pressure with significant deficits to be addressed. It is therefore prudent to explore any potential areas whereby a reduction in expenditure can be achieved, particularly with the least detrimental impact on residents.

The proposed staffing schedule and operation of the Parish Office is as follows:

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| **MON** | **TUE** | **WED** | **THUR** | **FRI** | **NOTES** |
|  |  |  |  | **Office Closed** |  |
| **CO**  **8.00-5.00** | **CO**  **8.00-5.00** | **CO**  **8.00-5.00** | **CO**  **8.00-5.00** | **CO Working from home 8-11am** |  |
| **SG**  **8.30-2.00** | **SG**  **8.30-5.00** | **SG**  **8.30-5.00** | **SG**  **8.30-5.00** |  |  |
| **SB**  **8.30-4.30** | **SB**  **8.30-4.30** | **SB**  **8.30-4.30** |  |  |  |
| **SR**  **8.00-5.00** |  |  | **SR**  **8.00-2.30** |  |  |
| **KH**  **8.30-4.30** |  |  | **KH**  **8.30-4.30** |  | **Admin Mon & Finance Thur.** |
| **Vacant**  **8.30-4.30** | **Vacant**  **8.30-4.30** |  |  |  |  |
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It is important to note that existing staff will not be subject to any reduction in their contractual hours, and are content with the proposed schedule.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Members may wish to give consideration to the closure of the Parish Office on Fridays in order to curtail the escalation of expenditure, and for this to commence on or before the 01 January 2025.

Report prepared by:

Carla Baverstock-Jones

Chief Officer