



Horndean Parish Council STAFF COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF MEETING

A MEETING OF THE STAFF COMMITTEE WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 7.30 P.M. OR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PLANNING AND PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING AT JUBILEE HALL.

Members are summoned to attend.

Carla Baverstock-Jones GCILEx
Executive Officer and Clerk to the Council

03 September 2015

AGENDA

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. To receive any Declarations of Interest.
3. To receive and approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 09 March 2015.
4. To receive a report and consider the future staffing structure of the Countryside Team.
5. To consider the Budget 2016/2017 in respect of staff.
6. **To agree to exclude the public and press, in the view that publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business or arising out of the business about to be transacted. (Public Bodies (Admissions to meetings) Act 1960)**
7. To receive and agree the Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on the 09 March 2015.
8. To consider payment for any additional hours worked in respect of the Executive Officer.
9. To receive and note an update in respect of the Countryside staff.
10. To receive an update regarding the Finance staff.

HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

STAFF MEETING

Date: 14 September 2015

AGENDA ITEM: 4

SUBJECT OF REPORT: Budget Planning - Future Staffing and Structure.

BACKGROUND

It has become evident through discussion and observation that the Countryside Team is in need of additional staff. The team currently manage 160 acres of land which consists of amenity sites, SSSI's and nature reserves. The variance of these sites necessitates a wide range of resources in terms of skills and manpower.

The team currently consists of the Grounds Manager and albeit that the reorganisation of the workload has enabled her to be working on site more frequently, she inevitably spends the majority of her time working within the office. This being an essential part of her role ensuring that grant applications and funding requests are processed in a timely manner. Additionally, the planning and scheduling of work, future projects, public events and responding to residents.

The remainder of the team consists of 3 full-time Estate Wardens with varying skills. The team is reduced to 2 during periods of annual leave and sickness.

It is my understanding that the current staffing level is at its lowest and to this end I am informed that the requirements of the HLS agreement are not being fully completed. The compliance with the agreement has greatly improved since the restructuring of the team but we remain below the standard required in terms of work undertaken. It is of note that this has additionally been brought to my attention by a Member of the Council.

It is perhaps time to consider restructuring the Countryside Team insofar as the introduction of a new role being an Assistant Grounds Manager. This would enable the Grounds Manager to alternate with working on site and the completion of work within the office. The team would additionally benefit from the leadership that this arrangement would provide whilst working on site. The team would increase by one additional member of staff and therefore in totality the team would consist of a Grounds Manager, Assistant Grounds Manager and 3 Estate Wardens.

The arrival of the new Countryside vehicle is expected this month and the dealer as previously agreed will take the Toyota in part exchange allowing £1,000. However, recently the vehicle required repairs to be undertaken to the cost of £478.80 + VAT. It is perhaps not cost effective to now dispose of the vehicle given the recent cost of repairs. Additionally, the Grounds Manager is often in the office without transport which necessitates the use of the Senior Administrators vehicle should the need arise. This is not conducive to the organisation or productivity of the office.

If the Council is minded to consider the recruitment of an additional member of staff it may be prudent to retain the Toyota particularly given the recent expenditure. This would

Report

additionally ensure that the Grounds Manager has the use of a vehicle without the involvement of office staff.

RECOMMENDATION

In giving consideration to the setting of the Budget in respect of staff, I have identified that the current staffing levels within the office is suffice. It is recognised that on occasions additional assistance is required, this may arise during annul leave or in order to complete a particular project. However, this is not an ongoing requirement and can be obtained on an ad hoc basis.

The staffing in respect of maintaining the halls is satisfactory, with the Caretakers being able to manage in respect of annual leave cover.

In observing the workload of the Countryside Team and the staffing levels of comparative authorities, consideration should be given to the recruitment of an additional staff member. Additionally, for the team to be restructured to incorporate the new role, of Assistant Grounds Manager and for the retention of the Toyota vehicle to be considered.

Report prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carla Baverstock-Jones', written in a cursive style.

Carla Baverstock-Jones
Executive Officer and Clerk to the Council

HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

STAFF MEETING

Date: 14/09/15

AGENDA ITEM 4

Work not currently possible or not enough carried out with the current number of staff in the Countryside Team

Listed in Management Plans and HLSA

- Ecological surveying on all Parish sites (monthly, yearly and five yearly surveys are required). All HPC Management Plans state the need for regular surveying in order to ensure current management of the sites is adequate in order to meet the ecological targets set out in the HLSA.
- Fixed point photography (a useful tool to keep Parish boundaries clear, well documented and aid land disputes).
- Controlling invasive species. Some work is currently carried out but it is labour intensive due the nature of Parish sites and chemical control not always being feasible or practical.
- Woodland management including coppicing, thinning and felling on nature reserves. There are enormous amounts of tree work needed across the Parish. If we are going to try to action the Management Plans this will take a great deal of man hours.
- Tree management in residential areas and amenity sites (large areas of not previously managed trees such as the borders of Yoells Copse, Wagtail Copse but also in other areas of the Parish, such as Godwin Crescent).

Office work

Would ideally require a full time office based Ranger, however this is not suitable for the position at HPC. Grant applications, work planning, contract management, revision of management plans, planning events and outreach work. Very stretched at present to achieve alongside being outside with the team for a couple of days a week.

HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

STAFF MEETING

Date: 14 September 2015

AGENDA ITEM: 10

SUBJECT OF REPORT: Finance Staff

BACKGROUND

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) currently works 15 hours per week, it became evident earlier this year that this was insufficient to cover the workload in an efficient and timely manner. It was agreed for an additional member of staff (Finance Administrator) to be provided by a staff agency for 1 day per week. A considerable amount of time and effort has been provided by the RFO in order to train and support the new staff member over the past months, this is now coming to fruition and proving successful.

However, the fees in respect of agency workers are considerable and are not cost effective in the long term. It is not the best use of resources to recruit and train an entirely new member of staff and therefore it would be beneficial to permanently employ the current person. This would enable continuity in terms of productivity within the financial team. It is difficult to recruit and train a suitable person given the requirement of 7.5 hours per week. It is of note that the current person is a valued member of staff and has demonstrated her suitability for the role in both experience and personality. It has not been the easiest of tasks to adapt to a new role on a once weekly basis and it is to her credit that this has been achieved. It is for these reasons that consideration should be given to the retention of this person.

I have discussed the possible cost involved in terminating the temporary assignment with the recruitment agency, thereby enabling her to be employed on a permanent basis directly with the parish Council. The settlement fee is quoted as being £1,000. However, given the reduction in terms of the hourly rate, this amount would be relatively quickly, redeemed between 17 – 21 weeks.

- Current rate per hour paid to the recruitment agency £15.56
- Proposed hourly rate paid directly to the employee being between £8.95 - £9.85.

RECOMMENDATION

To provide stability and continuity within the finance team consideration could be given to agreeing a settlement figure with the recruitment agency and employing this member of staff on a permanent basis.

Report prepared by:



Carla Baverstock-Jones
Executive Officer and Clerk to the Council

Report