

# Ilminster Town Council Resources Committee Minutes

A meeting of the Resources Committee was held on 29th April 2014 in the Council Chamber, The Council Offices, North Street, Ilminster, Somerset, starting at 19:30hrs

## Present

Chair: Councillor P Burton

Councillors: C Goodall, V Higgins, V Keitch, A Lawson, J Pallister, A Shearman, S. Shepherd, E Taylor, and L Vijeh,

## In Attendance

Mrs M Clayton (Senior Administrator) and Miss J Norris (Town Clerk),

## Members of the Public

No members of the public attended this meeting.

## R18. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miller, Sothern, Storey, and Swann

## R19. Declarations of Interest

| Name          | Minute No | Agenda Item       | Type of Interest | Nature of Interest                         |
|---------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|--|
| Mrs M Clayton | R25       | 8 Staffing Update | Personal         | Currently employed as Senior Administrator |

## R20. Minutes

### RESOLVED:

- a) that the minutes of the Resources meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.
- b) to note the action list relating to the Resources Committee.

Items brought to the attention of the Committee included the following:

- The wait to have broadband updated in Ilminster is between 8 weeks and 3 months
- The cheque for the Youth Club's Revenue Subsidy Grant for 2013/14 has been signed this evening.
- The staff are waiting for training on the new IT system.

## R21. Financial Comparison.

The Committee received information about the Resources expenditure and commitments to date when compared with the 2013/14 budget.

Items discussed included the following:

- VAT claim is for the year 2013/14
- Grant money which has been committed to an organisation but not claimed within the same financial year will be discussed with the Internal Auditors who are due in tomorrow (30<sup>th</sup> April 2014)

Chair's initials

# Ilminster Town Council Resources Committee Minutes

## R22. Financial Regulations

Since sending out the agenda the National Association of Local Councils have issued amendments to their new model Financial Regulations. As the Committee has not had a chance to see the amendments this matter will be deferred to the next Resources meeting.

## R23. Service Level Agreements

The Committee was asked to consider whether or not any changes are required to the Service Level Agreements (SLA) that the Town Council has with Ilminster Tourism and the Ile Youth Club

Issues discussed during the consideration of this item included the following:

- The Revenue Support Grants given in 13/14 were subject to a SLA
- No negative comments or requests for changes have been received
- It has been suggested that the SLA could include a requirement that the recipients of a Revenue Support Grant are expected to give presentation about the work of their organisation at the annual town meeting
- All 2013/14 grant recipients have been invited to give a short presentation and have a display at this year Annual Town Meeting

**RESOLVED** that future Service Level Agreements regarding Revenue Support Grants include a requirement that the recipient organisation will have to give a presentation at the Annual Town meeting.

## R24 Membership of Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC)

Members were asked to consider if the Town Council wishes to continue its membership of Somerset Association of Local Councils as the membership renewal request has been received.

Discussions on this agenda item included the following:

- This although there is a budget for this expenditure, the amount is above the limit in Financial Regulations that the Town Clerk is allowed to spend without Committee approval.
- Does the membership fee offer value for money?
- SALC have been able to provide advice to the Council (the Town Clerk and Councillors) on a wide range of subjects upon request made by phone or email
- Membership does not include free training but enables a discounted prices for courses
- The annual membership is for both the Somerset branch (SALC) and the national organisation (NALC)
- Some of the information provided by SALC can be obtained from other sources.
- The Town Council benefited from the intervention of SALC to obtain the £1,,500 apprentice grant
- SALC is a valuable “single point of contact” information source for the Town Clerk

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the Town Council’s membership of SALC is renewed
- (ii) That a record is kept of each time SALC is contacted or use is made of their material and it is presented to the Committee when the 2015/16 renewal request is received

Chair’s initials

# Iminster Town Council

## Resources Committee Minutes

### R25. Staffing Updates

The Town Clerk circulated a short briefing paper regarding staffing matters.

Discussions on this agenda item included the following:

- The Senior Administrator's leaving date is likely to be 26<sup>th</sup> May 2014
- There is not currently budget provision to offer a full time contract for the Senior Administrator
- The number of hours being worked in addition to contracted hours by the office team is very high
- The Open Spaces Team do not have a similar number of additional hours worked – their working week is much more rigid
- The workload for both Officers and Councillors has increased over the last 18 months as projects have been taken forward and solid working practices implemented
- The Committee needs to monitor the number of additional hours at every meeting for the foreseeable future
- The number of evening meetings has a direct effect on the number of hours worked by the office team - the Working Group looking at the committee structure need to be aware of this
- Many flexible working schemes have a limit on the number of hours carried forward within a fixed time frame
- The contracted hours required for the Senior Administrator need to be considered before the post is advertised
- Suggestions for improving the additional hours situation included: compiling a 6 month plan to reduce the additional hours owing but this would be an additional task; paying for the additional hours worked to date and introducing a limit for the future; offering staff the choice of being paid or taking the time off;
- Any payments may affect the tax, NI and pension contributions of an individual
- Any payments regarding the additional hours to be taken out of the general reserves (the salaries budget for 2013/14 is underspent due to the Open Spaces Warden vacancy)
- Compiling and adopting a strategic vision for the Town council would assist with prioritising projects and resources in the future
- Training which provides a general background to working in a Council is a high priority (usually this would be done as part of an induction process). The Open Spaces Team have included time for this in their new Gantt chart
- When Officers or Councillors have attended training sessions a short written report should be provided giving key learning points and this should be circulated to help share learning.
- Team training sessions offer a useful opportunity for team building and sharing general information
- The Town Clerk and Administration Assistant had recently attended Data Protection training provided free of charge by South Somerset District Council and as a result would be looking to draft a Data Protection Policy for the Council
- The Town Clerk has an objective to attain the Certificate In Local Council Administration, most of the practical experience has been obtained this now needs to be written up and amalgamated into a portfolio

Chair's initials

# Iminster Town Council Resources Committee Minutes

## **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to Council**

- (i) That a limit of 3 working days (based on an individual's contracted hours) be the maximum number of additional hours that a member of staff can carry forward between calendar months
- (ii) That the office team be paid for the number of hours worked to 30 April 2014 which exceeds the 3 day limit in (i) above

### **R26 Costed Training Plan**

The Committee was asked to consider the training plan compiled as a result of training needs identified as part of the appraisal process, as specific courses have not been identified it is not possible at this stage to provide costs.

Issues discussed regarding this agenda included:

- Maths & English courses - many of the local education centres offer functional skills but what is required is at a higher level, distance learning and on-line learning opportunities are being explored
- Chainsaw use and maintenance courses cost between £500 and £1000 – the syllabus is very specific and has recently changed. There are incremental levels and it is mandatory to start with the most basic course and build upon it. The length of course, including the assessment is usually 5 days.
- It is likely that the new Senior Administrator will benefit from some formal training for example the Working With Your Council course is a computer based learning package which costs less than £200

### **R27. NSPCC donation**

The Committee was asked to consider making a donation to the NSPCC "Now I Know Appeal". Discussions included the following:

- The Council does not have any funding for grants in the 2014/15 budget
- The income from NSPCC volunteers is stated as £116 million
- The letter is a mail shot to all local councils
- The NSPCC is a big organization and a national charity there is neither a specific nor direct link or benefit to Iminster

**RESOLVED** not to make a donation to the NSPCC "Now I Know Appeal".

### **R28. Exclusion of Press and Public]**

The Committee was asked to consider taking agenda item no. 12 without members of the public and press present, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

### **R29 Staffing of the Open Spaces Team**

The Committee was asked to consider recommendations made at Open Spaces committee regarding staffing of the Open Spaces team namely that

Chair's initials

## **Iminster Town Council Resources Committee Minutes**

- (i) The Council offers the current apprentice a full time permanent position, with a 3 scale point grading
- (ii) Should the need arise, e.g. staff absence, staff vacancy, agency staff will be taken on using the SSDC agency arrangement
- (iii) The Council actively seeks to recruit a new apprentice in June

Issues discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- The current apprenticeship contract expires at the end of June 2014
- There has been a vacancy for a permanent, full time Open Spaces Warden since December 2013
- The maximum period for an apprenticeship is 18 months
- It may be possible to claim a £1,500 grant towards paying an apprentice
- May / June is a busy time for people leaving education to look for employment and thus is a good time to advertise vacancies
- Many educational and vocational courses / training start in September
- SSDC have said we can use their agency agreement to meet open spaces staffing needs, – this would save on advertising costs and the provision of personal protective clothing
- If an agency worker does not perform to the required standard the agency will deal with the matter
- Agency staff need only be taken on for the period of time when the work required exceeds the number of staff hours available
- When the Senior Open Spaces Warden is absent the Town Clerk manages the Open Spaces Team
- When the volunteer policy (and associated working practices) is in place it will be possible to use volunteers for specific tasks
- May until September is the busiest period for the Open Spaces team
- The newly compiled Gantt chart for the Open Spaces Team will assist in assessing the staffing requirements and any shortfall in available staffing hours
- Having a short, incremental pay scale provides motivation to staff to meet objectives and undertake training and development activities

### **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to Council**

- (iv) That the Council offers the current Apprentice a permanent, full time contract as an Open Spaces Warden
- (v) That the contract referred to in (i) above has a salary scale of Scale Points 8-10 (inclusive)
- (vi) That the starting salary offered in the contract referred to in (i) above is Scale Point 8 and increments will be awarded no more often than annually and subject to
  - (a) satisfactory appraisal, and (b) completion and achievement of agreed objectives and training
- (vii) That agency staff (obtained via the SSDC contract) are used as and when needed
- (viii) That subject to an apprentice grant being available, an Open Spaces Apprentice is recruited

The meeting closed 9.10pm

Chair's signature & Date