

**COOKHAM PARISH COUNCIL****Minutes of a Meeting of the STAFFING COMMITTEE****Held in the Council Office, Cookham Library on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 6.00pm.**

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**PRESENT:** Cllrs C. Aisladie (Chairman)  
Cllrs L. Austin, J. Edwards and M. Howard.

Also Present: There were no members of the press or public present.

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**1. APOLOGIES:**

Apologies were received from Cllr R. Kellaway.

**2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST:**

None.

**3. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE:**

Cllr C. Aisladie had indicated that she was willing to continue in the role of Chairman of the Committee. Therefore, on the proposal of Cllr M. Howard, seconded by Cllr L. Austin, Cllrs unanimously approved Cllr C. Aisladie as Chairman of the Staffing Committee.

**4. TO REVIEW THE DECISION TO INCREASE WORKING HOURS MADE IN APRIL 2023 AND CONSIDER WHETHER TO MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL (IN OCTOBER) TO MAKE THE EXTRA HOURS PERMANENT:**

Both Cllrs and staff have been happy with the way the additional hours were working for the council. A proposal to recommend that the additional hours, discussed in April 2023, become permanent will be put to Full Council at the October meeting.

**5. TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE REGARDING THE RECRUITING OF A NEW MEMBER OF STAFF.**

Cllr Aisladie and the Clerk will meet on October 24<sup>th</sup> to confirm the details of the new staff member e.g. Job Specification, hours, recommended pay scale. A proposal will be taken to Full Council for approval.

**6. TO RESOLVE THE ISSUES REGARDING THE HOLIDAY ALLOWANCE ENTITLEMENT TO '2 EXTRA STATUTORY DAYS' AS REFERRED TO IN THE NATIONAL AGREEMENT ON PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE OF THE NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL ("THE NJC") FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES ("THE GREEN BOOK") WHICH IS A CONDITION OF SERVICE IN THE COUNCILS EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS:**

Up until December 2020 the council used NALC's Template Employment contract for their Clerks. This states '*Condition of Service*' - *The National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council ("the NJC") for Local Government Services ("the Green Book") applies to your employment save as amended by this contract.* Section 14.2 on the NALC template contract: "In addition to normal bank and public holidays, you will be entitled to two extra statutory days."

In December 2020, the council engaged the services of HR Consultant, Croner Group Ltd. As part of the move to their services, staff contracts (called Statement of Main Terms) were revised and updated but continued to be based on the NALC template. The new SMT also states the reference to "*The National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council ("the NJC") for Local Government Services ("the Green Book") applies to your employment save as amended by this contract.*" However, during the process of moving over to Croner HR Services, entitlement to the 2 extra days has been lost and no longer appears in the contract. Although probably done in error, this is a removal of a benefit which needs to be reinstated.

The current Clerk started in January 2018. At that point, the council had not made the relevance of this entitlement clear, nor allocated specific days on which the entitlement would be taken, almost certainly through lack of awareness. The matter came to light following investigation by the Clerk and a check with old and new contracts. It was raised with the Chairman of the Staffing Committee.

There are three matters to address: the removal of the entitlement in the contract, and the lack of awareness in the first place, and how to rectify the matter.

**a. To ensure this entitlement is reinstated within the council's employment contracts for all employees:**

HR consultants Croner HR will be asked to update the Statement of Main Terms.

**b. To approve the allocation of previous years entitlement for the Clerk:**

Cllrs approved that the unclaimed allowance of 10 days (2 days x 5 years) would be awarded to the Clerk. With agreement from the Clerk, 5 days will be added to the holiday entitlement for this year 23/24 and 5 days (37 hours) would be paid at the current hourly rate.

Due to the misleading advice, Croner will be asked for a contribution to rectify their part of the issue which amounts to four days (2 days x 2 years).

**c. To agree a process by which the 2 extra statutory days are agreed by Council:**

After discussion, Cllrs agreed that the two extra statutory days will be permanently nominated as the last working day before Christmas and the Thursday before Easter (Maundy Thursday).

**d. To consider if the advice given by Croner HR Ltd was satisfactory for this matter:**

It was felt that the advice given on this matter has been unsatisfactory on two fronts:

1. The entitlement was removed from the employment contracts during the change over to Croner. It is felt that as experts in HR matters and Employment Law, the reference to the National Joint Council ("the NJC") for Local Government Services ("the Green Book") conditions should have been thoroughly researched and the benefit not removed.
2. Over the course of this matter, and generally over the last 12 months, Cllrs dealing with Croner Ltd have struggled to speak to the same advisor with the advisor often needing to arrange a call back whilst information is checked, leading to a lack of continuity and inconsistent advice. There has also been no annual document review as indicated in the Service Level Agreement.

On the proposal of Cllr Howard, the Council will write to Croner Ltd to highlight the areas of concern and that the Service Level Agreement is not being met.

**The meeting closed at 6.50pm**