

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2023**

PRESENT: Councillors Bradford, Chowns, Hughes, l'Anson (Chair), and Morris

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor McAll
Angela Price – Town Clerk

R19. APOLOGIES

None received.

R20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

R21. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 31 AUGUST 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 31 August 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Minute No. R17(ii) be amended to read as follows:

“Members were requested to endorse the actions of the Town Clerk in which she had agreed to Post Holder 50 reducing their hours from 37 to 30 per week in support of flexible working.”

R22. ACTION SHEET

Members were provided with an update on the Action Sheet items that remained outstanding.

The Clerk advised that a response had been received from Red Kite Solicitors, who had advised that there was a conflict in respect of the cease-and-desist letter and advised that it would be necessary to speak to an alternative solicitor in relation to this.

Councillor Bradford asked why R17(ii)(2) was still identified as not complete, as he considered that this had been discussed and agreed not to proceed with. The Clerk reminded Members that this committee had agreed that this item should be referred to the Planning, Economy &

Tourism Committee for consideration, and that that committee had agreed that it should be considered as part of the Markets Strategy.

A discussion ensued in respect of the Markets Strategy and Councillor Morris raised concerns over the length of time it has taken to produce a Market Strategy, commenting that this goes back as far as 2019 when the CDO was originally asked to create a draft Strategy and he expressed his frustration at this being no further forward.

It was noted that this was a matter for discussion at the Markets Working Party, or Planning, Economy, & Tourism Committee and not relevant to the Resources Committee and should be marked as discharged by this committee.

RESOLVED:

That the action sheet be received and noted, noting that R17(ii)(2) should now be shown discharged by this committee.

R23.

CONSIDERATION ON WHETHER COVER SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR STAFF ON ANNUAL LEAVE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

Members were requested to consider a report in respect of annual leave cover for staff, which had been raised by Councillor Morris at the meeting of the Resources Committee at its meeting on 31 August 2023.

The report highlighted reasons why getting temporary employees in to cover staff for periods of two weeks or less was impractical and which would have the opposite effect to that suggested by Councillor Morris, which was to help reduce the workload on staff.

RESOLVED:

That external cover for staff on short term annual leave is not considered at this time, and that as this is an operational matter it be left for senior staff to manage as part of their roles.

R24.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

To note that the next meeting of the Resources Committee is scheduled to take place on Thursday, 7 December 2023.

R25.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Before taking the decision to exclude the Press and Public a request was made that Councillor Mc All be permitted to remain for the remainder of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor McAll be permitted to remain for the remainder of the meeting.
2. That in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public are excluded from the remainder of the meeting.

R26.

STAFFING MATTERS

- i. Request from Post Holder 59

Members were requested to consider a request from Post Holder 59 for a period of unpaid leave.

RESOLVED:

1. That Post Holder 59's request for a period of unpaid leave be granted.
 2. That Post Holder 60 be offered the opportunity to step into the role in the absence of Post Holder 59.
 3. That if Post Holder 60 does not wish to step into the role in the absence of Post Holder 59 the Clerk take the necessary steps to fill the post for the period 4 – 22 December 2023 and that the one-week period in January when the post holder will be on paid annual leave be covered as it would usually be.
 4. That the Clerk prepare a draft Unpaid Leave Policy for consideration at the next meeting of the Resources Committee.
- ii. Consideration of extension to paid sick leave – Post Holder 47

RESOLVED:

That sick pay be paid in accordance with Employee Terms and Conditions as detailed in their contracts and the Council's Sickness absence Policy.

R27. iii. Staff Protection Measures

Please refer to Minute No. R40 of the Resources Meeting held on 1 February 2024 for clarification on why this minute has been struck from the record and replaced with the alternative minute as detailed below.

~~Members were requested to give consideration to possible staff protection measures being put in place to protect staff from unwelcome, persistent communications from both Councillors and members of the public.~~

~~It was noted that there was a need for something to be in place currently and it was agreed that Councillor Hughes would be the point of contact for Councillor Sinclair until such time ongoing issues could be resolved.~~

~~That a draft procedure be prepared by the Clerk and that the procedure provide a clear strategy in respect of providing a named senior councillor to take up the role of interim contact.~~

RESOLVED:

- ~~1. **That the Clerk draft a Distancing Procedure designed to protect staff from unwelcome, persistent communications from both Councillors and members of the public.**~~
- ~~2. **That in the interim Councillor Hughes be the point of contact for Councillor Sinclair, until such time ongoing issues can be resolved.**~~

Members were requested to give consideration to possible staff protection measures being put in place to protect staff from unwelcome, persistent communications from both Councillors and members of the public.

It was noted that when contacting the office there is currently a policy in place whereby Councillors are informed that in the first instance they should contact the Clerk, or Deputy Clerk in their absence, they should not be contacting other staff.

Councillor Hughes advised that this conversation is about what distancing measures can be put in place, noting that the Council is not in a position whereby they can “sanction” any one particular Councillor, all that can be done is to protect staff by distancing of people who are reported to a line manager for presenting vexatious and/or aggressive behaviour. It was noted that the Council can put in distancing arrangements by way of a “request” that all communications between an individual and an employee be by way of a named person and if they

want information or want to get in touch with the person and generally speaking this should be the Mayor or Deputy Mayor as the two most senior councillors, however, it could be any other Councillor. He reiterated that this can only be a request and it cannot be ordered as it could then be deemed as a "sanction" which is not within the remit of Council to put in place.

It was suggested that a draft policy/procedure be prepared by the Clerk and that the policy/procedure whereby if a vexatious complaint is reported to a line manager a distancing principle will be adopted and that the individual be asked to consider a request to provide them with one point of contact which should be senior councillor such as the Mayor or Deputy Mayor, due to them having the experience and standing within council in order to handle such a situation."

RECOMMENDATION:

That this council adopt a distancing policy where an individual councillor is acting in a vexatious and/or aggressive manner towards a member of staff who has reported to the Mayor that it be recommended to Council that they apply the distancing policy where that person is requested to only make contact with a named senior councillor.


R28. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM LEDBURY RESIDENT

Members were provided with copies of further communications from a local resident.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk respond to the resident to acknowledge receipt of the latest communication.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.

Signed  Date 