

13 August 2021

To: The Leader of the Council, Councillors Jeff Beck, Elizabeth O’Keeffe, Olivia Lewis, Andy Moore and Vaughan Miller.

Substitutes: Councillors Billy Drummond, Nigel Foot, Sarah Slack.

Dear Councillor

You are required to attend a meeting of the Staff Sub-Committee to be held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall at 7.30 pm on 18 August 2021

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Peacocke
Chief Executive Officer

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
Chairman

2. Declarations of interest and dispensations
Chairman

To receive any declarations of interest relating to business to be conducted in this meeting and confirmation of any relevant dispensations.

3. Minutes of the Staff Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 April 2021 (Appendix 1)
Chairman

To agree the minutes of the Staff Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 April 2021.

4. Re-opening the Town Hall (Appendix 2)
Chairman

To Approve the arrangements for staff returning to the Town Council offices and re-opening the Town Hall to the public from 1 September 2021.

5. Staff Restructuring-1 (Appendix 3)
Chairman

1. To Approve the creation of the new post of Senior Accounts Officer and the Job Description for same (This is the role currently carried out by one of the Council’s Corporate Services Officers.)

6. Exclusion of the press and public

Chairman

To move that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential and personal nature of the business to be transacted.

7. Staff Restructuring -2

Chairman

To Review the Council's arrangements for facilities operations and management and

To authorise the Council's officers to progress any redundancies or recruitments arising from the review.

Newbury Town Council

Private Minutes of the Staff Sub-Committee held on Zoom at 5.00 pm on 27 April 2021.

Present:

Councillors Martin Colston (Chairman), Elizabeth O’Keeffe, Olivia Lewis, Jeff Beck, Billy Drummond and Nigel Foot.

In Attendance:

Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Councillor Sarah Slack

Apologies for absence

None- all present

46. Declarations of interest and dispensations

The CEO declared that Councillors Jeff Beck and Andy Moore were also members of West Berkshire District Council and that they had a dispensation in relation to any business relating to that Council. there were no declarations regarding the items on the agenda.

47. Minutes of the Staff Sub- Committee meeting held on 8 March 2021

Proposed: Councillor Jeff Beck

Seconded: Councillor Elizabeth O’Keeffe

Resolved that the Chairman sign the minutes of the Staff Sub- Committee meeting held on 8 March 2021 as a true record.

48. Remote/ Homeworking Policy

The Subcommittee considered the report of the CEO and agreed all of the matters it contained. The CEO pointed out that this Policy reflected the dramatic changes in working arrangements and lifestyles which employees had experienced over the past 13 months. The Policy introduced a discretionary power for the Council and sought to strike a balance with the employees’ statutory rights to apply for remote or flexible working arrangements. The CEO felt that this Policy would help to deal with staff issues which might arise when the Town Hall re-opens after Lockdown and business hopefully returns to normal after 20 June. Staff would be required to get the Town Hall into shape, fit for their return, before any applications under the Policy are approved.

Members noted the “Guiding principles to be applied” which were:

Approval is at the discretion of the Council

- Approval would not override the terms or conditions of an employee’s contract
- The Policy sets out minimum attendances at the Town Hall, including team and all staff meetings
- The Council will not incur any extra costs arising from discretionary remote working.
- Regular review of the arrangements by line managers
- Remote working arrangements not to impact adversely on colleagues
- Managers to monitor health and wellbeing of remote workers

The following additions were agreed:

- Managers may approve ad-hoc, short-term arrangements for remote working, where required
- The operation of the Policy should be reviewed by the Sub-Committee at its meeting in late November/ Early December, when overall staff performance and appraisals are carried out
- The rota of staff attendances and other relevant arrangements would be sent to all members for information. (Via the Team Calendar on Outlook, if this can be arranged)

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Olivia Lewis

Resolved: That the Council approves the Remote Working Policy as circulated and with the additions agreed above.

(Councillor Elizabeth O’Keeffe abstained on this vote)

49. Exclusion of the press and public

Proposed: Councillor Martin Colston

Seconded: Councillor Elizabeth O’Keeffe

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential personal nature of the business to be transacted.

50. Staff Matters

The CEO updated the Committee on a confidential staff matter.

The meeting finished at 5.46 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____

Newbury Town Council

Public Report

To: The Staff Subcommittee

Date of meeting: 18 August 2021

Agenda item No. : 4. Re-opening the Town Hall

Decision Required: To Approve the arrangements for staff returning to the Town Council offices and re-opening the Town Hall to the public from 1 September 2021.

Background

The Town Council closed the Town Hall to the public following the breakout of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 and it has remained closed since then. In line with Government guidance, staff have been working from home since then, with a few exceptions- 2 officers cannot complete their duties from home and some staff have been in the offices on occasion to carry out work which they could not do from home, or, more recently, preparing the offices for the return of staff and re-opening to the public.

The Government guidance changed from 19 July with the lifting of most coronavirus restrictions. The Government is also encouraging a gradual return to offices.

Issues arising/ Options considered

A great deal has changed over the past 18 months. Staff have proven that they can work remotely and still deliver Council services. The Council has provided the equipment to enable this and staff have adapted to new ways of working. The public have never complained that the offices were closed or that services had deteriorated. The Council's Annual Strategic Risk Assessment no longer rates the Town Hall as a key risk to business continuity- these risks now are centred around our staff and our IT resources.

Nevertheless, the Town Hall is a key resource, strategically located in the Town Centre and an imposing presence for the Town Council. Now that staff can return and re-open to the public we should do so in a safe and gradual manner, ensuring, as far as possible, the health and safety of all who work there, use its facilities or simply visit.

With this in mind, the Council aims to re-open the Town Hall to the public from 1 September 2021.

Considerations:

1. Reference to Council Strategy 2019-2024

The Council is *working to make Newbury a Town of which we can all be proud* and the Town Hall is a symbol of the presence and role of the Town Council in Newbury.

Re-opening the Town Hall will help the Council to achieve its goal to *Ensure our public and historic buildings are properly cared for and well used*. This includes “ To Promote the use and enjoyment of the Town Hall for all the people of Newbury, including as a venue for meetings, conferences, receptions, the celebration of weddings, etc. The Town Hall is a focal point and from there the Council can *Provide brochures, maps, signage and other information for the benefit of visitors to Newbury*. The Council also aims to *Encourage public engagement with both the Town Council and local democracy* through being *visible, relevant responsive and accountable to our residents*. The Town Hall and Victoria Park are the 2 best known assets of the Town Council, helping the Council to achieve these objectives.

The Council wishes to *exercise best practice as an employer, promoting fairness and equality for our employees and volunteers*. In this regard the Council has approved a Flexible/ remote Working Policy to facilitate staff who wish to continue to work from home some of the time. The Council has also carried out an extensive risk assessment (Appendix 2A) and will take appropriate measures to protect the health and safety of staff when the offices re-open to the public (Appendix 2B).

2. **Legal:** The Council will meet all its employment, health and safety, and equality obligations
3. **Financial:** The Council has provided £1,000 in this year’s budget for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Staff have been advised that now that the “Work From Home” guidance has changed, that allowances and expenses associated with this will no longer be paid.
4. **Climate/ Environmental issues:** Re-opening the Town Hall will have minimal impact the Council’s carbon footprint; offices will require heating and lighting and some officers drive to work. However, this is offset by the current cost of still having to heat the Town hall to protect the fabric, uncontrolled ad hoc use of the facility and the current calculations for carbon emissions from remote working. The Footprint should not be as high as pandemic levels.
5. **Crime and Disorder:** Although vacant for long periods of time, surprisingly, the Town Hall suffered no vandalism or criminal damage. No impact in this regard.
6. **Risk assessment:** The Community Services Manager and the Chief Executive Officer have completed risk assessments (see Appendix 2A) and prepared a plan for staff to safely return to the Town Hall (see Appendix 2B). This includes a staff rota (Appendix 2C) which aims to align teams with their managers and also observe the Council’s Lone Working Policy.

Already, in preparation for staff returning to the Town Hall, the offices have been decluttered to facilitate improved hygiene, Perspex screens have been erected where

required to protect staff and obsolete furniture removed to create more space and reduce “pinch points” in the offices.

The Plan includes hygiene requirements- “Hands, Face, Space” and encouragement for staff around regular testing and vaccinations. Much of this advice is also relevant for members of the Council who enter the Town Hall and will be shared with them.

PPE, hygiene supplies, protective screens and signage will be provided, as required.

Please note that the Plan proposes that the Town Hall is open to the public from 10 am to 4.30 pm each day so that staff can carry out hygiene duties and any other preparation required each day before opening the doors to the public.

These arrangements are for a trial period for 3 months and will be reviewed by the Staff Subcommittee at its meeting in late November/ early December.

- 7. Equality and Diversity:** Any staff with disabilities or other concerns have been asked to take these matters up with their managers so that the Council can be aware of the issues and provide suitable support and arrangements.
- 8. Consultation:** All of the council’s staff have been consulted on these proposals.

Conclusion/ Recommendation

That the Staff subcommittee approves the arrangements for staff returning to the Town Council offices and re-opening the Town Hall to the public from 1 September 2021.

Report Author: Hugh Peacocke, (CEO)

Date: 10 August 2021

NEWBURY TOWN COUNCIL

JOB DESCRIPTION

POST:	Senior Accounts Officer
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Responsible Financial Officer
POST HOLDER:	Margaret Gore
DATE APPOINTED:	14 August 2001

MAIN OBJECTIVES

- A) To keep up to date financial accounts for the Council, including monthly bank reconciliation and year end accounts.
 - B) To prepare the monthly employee payroll, holidays and expenses
 - C) To line-manage the Council's part time accounts officer.
 - D) To undertake any personal development required to successfully fill the role
 - E) To provide such other support commensurate with the post and grade as may be required by the CEO/ RFO.
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MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A) To keep up to date financial accounts for the Council, including monthly bank reconciliation and year end accounts.**
 - i. Dealing with the Council's debtors and creditors
 - ii. Entering income and expenditure details on Omega, the Council's accounting software
 - iii. Monthly bank reconciliations
 - iv. Preparation for year end, including reversing journals, prepayments and accruals
 - v. Internet banking preparation, documentation and authorisation
 - vi. Supporting the internal auditor
 - vii. Checking on outstanding purchase orders and chasing invoices
 - viii. VAT returns
 - ix. Managing the officers' account and the petty cash account

B) Monthly employee payroll, holidays and expenses

- i. Collecting timesheets and expenses claims from officers and preparing the monthly payroll for DCK, our payroll support service
- ii. Recording annual leave, sick leave and TOIL (Time Off In Lieu)
- iii. Journaling the salary re-allocations on Omega

C) To line-manage the Council's part time accounts officer.

- i. To assign any appropriate tasks to the Council's Part-time accounts officer
- ii. To agree priorities for the Council's Part-time accounts officer
- iii. To promote the professional development of the Council's Part-time accounts officer
- iv. To hold regular (at least monthly) 1 to 1's with the Council's Part-time accounts officer
- v. To complete the Council's Annual Appraisal/ review process with the Council's Part-time accounts officer

D) Performance management and Personal Development

- i. The SAO will engage in regular 1 to 1's with the Responsible Financial Officer
- ii. The Council will complete an annual appraisal with the SAO, identifying any agreed personal development needs, which the SAO will address
- iii. The SAO will keep all relevant mandatory training and qualifications up to date
- iv. The SAO may join an appropriate professional organization/ network
- v. The Council will cover all reasonable subscription fees and/ or expenses approved as part of the SAO's personal development

E) To provide such other support commensurate with the post and grade as may be required by the CEO/ RFO.

This includes:

- i. To provide appropriate cover, when required, for staff on leave or absent
- ii. To assist in dealing with the public, when required
- iii. To support colleagues during any abnormal or emergency situation, as required