

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Council offices, The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton on Wednesday 1st March 2017

Present

St Michael's Ward

Cllr Ashley Delasalle
Cllr Sheila Edwards
Cllr Luke Harvey-Ingram
Cllr Jill McNally
Cllr John Taylor
Cllr Jackie Wadsworth
Cllr John Zarczyński

St Paul's Ward

Cllr Henry Brown
Cllr Roy Coombs
Cllr Vera Howard
Cllr Caroline Kolek (Chairperson)
Cllr Graham Smith

In Attendance

Sarah Jenkins – Deputy Town Clerk

17/317 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Halse (P); Cllr Hopkins (P); Cllr Perkins (P)

17/318 To receive declarations of interest and receipt of requests for new DPI dispensations on items on the agenda

None received.

17/319 To appoint a temporary Responsible Financial Officer and to appoint a Deputy Responsible Financial Officer as per the recommendations in the [report by the Deputy Town Clerk](#)

The report by the Deputy Town Clerk, setting out the legal requirements, had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Chairperson read the advice received from the Monitoring Officer. The Deputy Town Clerk read the advice received from DALC.

The Chairperson advised that the position of Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) is a statutory function and that the Town Council must have regard to the risks of making any decision.

All Councillors were given the opportunity to speak on the matter. The following points were raised and noted:

- It would be ill-advised to appoint Cllr Perkins as temporary RFO whilst Cllr Perkins is also a member of the Finance Working Group [minute ref 17/309]
- The backlog of work on the finance records should be addressed immediately
- There could be a conflict of interest in appointing Cllr Perkins as temporary RFO due to Cllr Perkins' association with The Beehive
- It would be irresponsible of the Town Council to appoint Cllr Perkins and Cllr Edwards [to assist with finance data inputting] as the previous internal auditor had disagreed with Cllr Perkins and Cllr Perkins had criticised the presentation of the Town Council's accounts
- The saving of public money by employing a volunteer as temporary RFO could be outweighed by any potential future legal action against the Town Council
- The issue of potential future legal action against the Town Council is based on hearsay only and there is no factual evidence to suggest that this is likely to happen

IT WAS RESOLVED “That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information relating to an employee is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B)”.

- The Town Council, as an employer, needs to be supportive of the Town Clerk on her return to work and support could include assistance with managing the work load
- To be transparent, the Town Council should consider a locum RFO sourced externally through DALC, NALC or by employing the services of a local accountant / book keeper
- The Town Council is currently in breach of its statutory obligations and there is the opportunity to remedy this dereliction of duty by appointing an unpaid Councillor who has the qualifications needed to act as temporary RFO
- The matter should be referred to the Finance Committee to consider other options
- The Town Council could appoint additional members to the Finance Working Group to reduce any perceived risk of a conflict of interest and lack of transparency should Cllr Perkins be appointed temporary RFO
- There appears to be a misunderstanding among Councillors as to the amount of work involved in bringing the financial records up to date and in preparing for the year end
- Referring the matter to the Finance Committee will cause further unnecessary delay
- The Rialtas checklist for preparation for the year end is a matter of simple book keeping

The Chairperson advised that, due to the statutory obligation, it would be detrimental to the Town Council to fail to appoint a temporary RFO.

To address the concerns raised about the membership of the Finance Working Group, the Chairperson proposed that the recommendation of the Deputy Town Clerk be amended to include the appointment of two additional Councillors to the Working Group to reduce any perceived risk.

The Chairperson proposed that Cllr David Perkins be appointed as temporary unpaid Responsible Financial Officer, subject to the following:

- That the appointment will be until 30th June on which date the appointment will be reviewed (Reason: to complete all year end statutory accounts and to meet the deadline for completion and submission of the Annual Return)
- That the appointment will be reviewed at the time the Town Clerk/RFO returns to work if this date is earlier than 30th June (Reason: to allow for flexibility in managing the Town Clerk/RFO's workload on her return)
- To appoint two additional Town Councillors to the Finance Working Group to reduce any perceived risk.

This was seconded by Cllr Harvey-Ingram.

Cllr Zarczynski requested a recorded vote.

		FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
1	Cllr Delasalle	X		
2	Cllr Brown		X	
3	Cllr Coombs		X	
4	Cllr Edwards	X		
5	Cllr Halse	Not present		
6	Cllr Harvey-Ingram	X		
7	Cllr Hopkins	Not present		
8	Cllr Howard	X		
9	Cllr Kolek	X		
10	Cllr McNally		X	
11	Cllr Perkins	Not present		
12	Cllr G Smith	X		
13	Cllr Taylor		X	
14	Cllr Wadsworth	X		
15	Cllr Zarczynski		X	

This was **RESOLVED** (For 7; Against 5).

Cllr Taylor proposed that the recommendation of the Deputy Town Clerk be amended to specify that Cllr Edwards would assist with the backlog of work for the current financial year.

Cllr Taylor proposed that Cllr Sheila Edwards be appointed to assist (unpaid) the temporary Responsible Financial officer with entering of financial data on the accounting system until the backlog of work for the current financial year has been addressed (Reason: to bring the electronic accounting records up to date).

This was seconded by Cllr Brown.

It was agreed that a recorded vote would be taken for all proposals.

		FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
1	Cllr Delasalle	X		
2	Cllr Brown	X		
3	Cllr Coombs		X	
4	Cllr Edwards	X		
5	Cllr Halse	Not present		
6	Cllr Harvey-Ingram	X		
7	Cllr Hopkins	Not present		
8	Cllr Howard	X		
9	Cllr Kolek	X		
10	Cllr McNally		X	
11	Cllr Perkins	Not present		
12	Cllr G Smith	X		
13	Cllr Taylor		X	
14	Cllr Wadsworth	X		
15	Cllr Zarczynski		X	

This was **RESOLVED** (For 8; Against 4).

Cllr Kolek proposed that, following the appointment of the temporary Responsible Financial Officer, the Deputy Town Clerk be appointed as Deputy Responsible Financial Officer. This was seconded by Cllr Brown.

		FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
1	Cllr Delasalle	X		
2	Cllr Brown	X		
3	Cllr Coombs	X		
4	Cllr Edwards	X		
5	Cllr Halse	Not present		
6	Cllr Harvey-Ingram	X		
7	Cllr Hopkins	Not present		
8	Cllr Howard	X		
9	Cllr Kolek	X		
10	Cllr McNally	X		
11	Cllr Perkins	Not present		
12	Cllr G Smith	X		
13	Cllr Taylor	X		
14	Cllr Wadsworth	X		
15	Cllr Zarczynski	X		

This was **RESOLVED** unanimously.

Cllr Kolek proposed that training be provided for the Deputy Responsible Financial Officer by way of working alongside the temporary RFO, provision of internal training and attendance at any relevant external training events, with a budgeted amount of £1,000.00. This was seconded by Cllr Delasalle.

		FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
1	Cllr Delasalle	X		
2	Cllr Brown	X		
3	Cllr Coombs	X		
4	Cllr Edwards	X		
5	Cllr Halse	Not present		
6	Cllr Harvey-Ingram	X		
7	Cllr Hopkins	Not present		
8	Cllr Howard	X		
9	Cllr Kolek	X		
10	Cllr McNally	X		
11	Cllr Perkins	Not present		
12	Cllr G Smith	X		
13	Cllr Taylor	X		
14	Cllr Wadsworth	X		
15	Cllr Zarczynski	X		

This was **RESOLVED** unanimously.

17/320 To close the meeting

The meeting was closed at 9.05pm.