

Shere Parish Council

Management & Strategy Working Group

30 September 2013

Present: R Davey, C Carlisle, R Andrews, B Grover, M Taylor-Cotter, J Tenner, M Urban and the Clerk, J Millett.

Apologies for absence had been received from C Brooke, J Hutton, R Smith, and B Cohen.

Resourcing the Clerk's workload

The Clerk presented an analysis of her workload, including hours worked since her appointment in January 2013; an analysis of tasks listed in the Clerk's job description by hours worked per annum and feed-back from comparative Parish Councils as to their hours worked and staffing arrangements. The Chairman also tabled a paper on staffing arrangements from a number of comparative Councils. A letter from the contractor currently providing assistance to the Parish Clerk was tabled, stating that she would be willing to continue in that role for 21 hours per week, for a 6 month period.

Historical Time Commitment

The Clerk presented a record of her hours worked since her appointment on 1 January 2013. During that time, she had worked 176 hours in excess of her contracted hours of 37 per week. The 176 hours excluded 10.5 days that she had taken off in lieu of hours worked during that period. She had been unable to take any annual leave (25 days annual leave + 2 days at Christmas are stipulated in the Clerk's contract) because of the demands of her role.

An analysis of tasks listed in the Clerk's job description by hours worked per annum, including a schedule of the time spent on administering meetings, was considered. The total estimated amount of time spent on all tasks was around 90 hours per week; taking into account one item had inadvertently been double counted. Administration of meetings accounted for approximately 36 hours per week.

Experience and resourcing of comparative Parish Councils

Feed-back from comparative Parish Councils as to their hours worked and staffing arrangements was presented. It was noted that all these Councils employed staff, in addition to the Parish Clerk/RFO.

Process Modification and resource ideas

The Clerk suggested ideas to remedy the situation:

- Employ an Assistant for 21 hours per week and delegate discrete areas of work to the assistant
- Combine existing committees, such as Tanyard Hall, Parish Maintenance and Playground Committees into one committee
- Hold 7 Council meetings per year, as opposed to the current 9
- Hold fewer Planning Committee meetings

- Delegate tasks to Councillors, where appropriate/ask Councillors to ‘pitch in’
- Publish limited opening times for the Parish Council office, to try to limit interruptions

Consideration of Committee Structures

There was broad support for combining the Committees, as above, and for having fewer Council and Planning Committee meetings. The need to hold the current amount of Planning Committee meetings and their effectiveness/impact in the planning application process was discussed at length and it was **AGREED** to look into other Parish Councils arrangements for their Planning Committees.

The evening of the week when Council meetings should be held was discussed. Following consultation with all Councillors, the preferred evening was a Wednesday.

The future

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Council that:

1. An assistant to the Parish Clerk be appointed for 21 hours per week for an initial period of six months, to be reviewed after three months, the role to be offered to the existing contractor
2. Tanyard Hall, Parish Maintenance and Playground Committees be merged into one committee
3. Consideration be given to reducing the number of Council meetings and Planning Committee meetings
4. From January 2014, Council meetings be held on Wednesday evenings
5. Limited opening times of the Parish Council office be published, following consultation with the Clerk on the detail of these
6. the recommended arrangement to deal with the excess of hours worked and holidays not taken by the Clerk, as reported to the Council meeting, be agreed (*Note: the Working Party had delegated this action to the Chairman, in consultation with the Clerk, and they had agreed to recommend Council that three weeks’ holiday should be taken before the end of December 2013; two weeks should be remunerated in line with the Clerk’s current salary and the excess hours already worked should be reduced to 0 by the end of 2014 with a record being kept of progress in this and submitted to the Chairman monthly*).