

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AT LIVESEY HOUSE, 7 ST JOHNS HILL
ON 4 OCTOBER 2023

PRESENT

Councillors Bernie Bentick, Rosemary Dartnall, Pam Moseley, Alan Mosley (Chair) and Kevin Pardy

Staff Adam Clifford, Andy Davies, Sally Nicholson and Ian Thorpe

IN ATTENDANCE

Stuart Farmer (Acting Operations Manager) Danny Powell (Acting Operations Manager), Claire Osborn (Unison), Ash Silverstone (Unison) and Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk)

09/23 APOLOGIES

Resolved:

That apologies be accepted from Helen Ball, Andy Hall, Mike Pugh and Andy Watkin.

10/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

11/23 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Chair gave a formal welcome to the three new staff members who had just been voted onto the committee. Adam Clifford, Sally Nicholson and Ian Thorpe all introduced themselves and explained what their roles were within the organisation.

12/23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the meeting held on 12 July 2023 had been circulated prior to the meeting and agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

13/23 MATTERS ARISING

(i) **Staff Security Alarms**

The Deputy Town Clerk introduced the item and explained that the Town Council was currently trialling a particular piece of software that was linked to people's mobile phones. As Stuart Farmer was leading on the trial, she asked him to say more. Stuart advised that they were testing software currently but there had been some issues which he was discussing with the supplier. These were related to the mobile phone being used rather than the software itself. The software linked to Google maps to help quickly identify where the member of staff was located.

Councillor Bentick asked if the device could be linked to a contact line for the police. Stuart explained that it could be set up to be connected to any number but they would need to ensure that this was an appropriate service for the type of emergencies that may occur. One option was to pay for an upgrade to the service to link to a bespoke call centre.

Councillor Mosley asked the union representatives if they were aware of the solution that Shropshire used for this purpose. Ash Silverstone responded that they had a number of solutions in place depending upon the nature of the work of the individual.

Andy Davies said that at the previous meeting it had been made clear that responsibility for a solution sat with another member of staff and expressed concerns that there may be duplicated effort. Amanda Spencer explained that the project was now being investigated by Stuart and the Town Clerk in order to move it forward.

(ii) **Visioning Exercise**

Councillor Mosley ran through the activities that had taken place so far in relation to the Town Council's Visioning Exercise. He added that they were now in a position where they would be going out to public consultation on the proposed strategy.

Amanda explained that staff consultation had taken place via a questionnaire and some focus groups.

Councillor Bentick asked if the public consultation exercise would be purely online as this may mean some people don't engage. Amanda replied that Full Council had agreed the previous week that access to the questionnaire would be made as widely available as possible including physical copies for those who would prefer this method.

Andy Davies asked if the consultant's report had been received regarding the recent review of operations within the Town Council. Councillor Mosley replied that he had received a copy via the Town Clerk and that it was due to be discussed by Personnel Committee at a meeting scheduled for the following week.

(iii) **Union Recognition**

Councillor Mosley asked the union representatives available for an update. Ash replied that Unison were currently renegotiating their agreement with Shropshire Council and that, once that had been agreed, they would use this as a template to draft the agreement with the Town Council.

Amanda explained that GMB representatives were also invited to the meeting but, unfortunately, did not attend.

Councillor Bentick asked if staff members who were members of GMB were aware of their lack of attendance and Councillor Dartnall replied that this would be clear via published JCC minutes.

Councillor Mosley added that the JCC arrangements within the Town Council were unique to the sector and different to the JCC arrangements at Shropshire Council as staff members were not on the committee there. He said that the Town Council should be proud of this.

14/23 ITEMS RAISED BY THE COUNCIL

(i) Whole Staff Meeting and plans for Team Meetings going forward

Amanda explained that the Town Council had held a meeting the previous week to which all staff members were invited. She reported that around 50 people had attended and that it appeared to be a positive event.

She went on to explain that pre Covid regular team meetings took place on a regular basis but that these had stopped during lockdown and never restarted. The whole staff meeting kicked off the reintroduction of these which had now been scheduled on a quarterly basis for individual teams.

She asked the staff members present for their feedback and asked if they would value a whole Town Council meeting on an annual basis. They replied that they found the meeting to be positive and thought that an annual meeting was a good idea. It would allow an opportunity for staff to meet people from other areas of work who they did not ordinarily have contact with.

Councillor Mosley added that members would be happy to attend the next whole staff meeting if that would be helpful.

Councillor Bentick said that the issue of communications seemed to stand out on the list of things that the Town Council could improve on. He asked the staff members present how this could be improved.

Andy Davies replied it felt as if communication flowing both up and down the organisation hit barriers sometimes and this had come up a lot at the staff meeting.

Councillor Bentick asked if emails got cascaded to members of staff when they should. Andy replied that this wasn't always the case and sometimes individuals found out something relevant to them third hand rather than directly from their line manager.

Councillor Mosley added that the recent consultant's report also made reference to this and so the issue would be discussed further by Personnel Committee.

Amanda added that she would also raise the issue at the Operations Managers meeting the following week as the Town Council clearly needed to address the issue. She asked the staff members present if a suggestion box might be useful at all depots and they replied that they thought it was worth trialling.

Councillor Pardy then said that he was surprised that PPE had come up as something that the Town Council could improve on but Councillor Dartnall added that it was also on the list of things the Town Council did well. Adam Clifford said that he thought the issue only related to one individual but that all comments were communicated.

Danny Powell responded that the choice of relevant PPE for each team was the responsibility of individual Team Manager as each team had different needs. He added that at a recent compliance visit from HSE their representative had specifically commented on the large amount of PPE that the Town Council made available to staff.

Resolved: That an annual staff meeting to which all employees and members be invited take place.

(ii) White Ribbon Accreditation – requirement for a male member of staff to be the Ambassador

Amanda explained that at Full Council on 25 September a resolution had been passed to sign up to the White Ribbon Accreditation. She explained that White Ribbon is the UK's leading charity engaging men and boys to end violence against women and girls. This has been a key theme for us with the Ranger Project and Safer Streets. The Charity's mission is to prevent men's violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes — harmful and dominant masculine norms. Through the Safer Streets funding it had been possible to collectively condemn some of that bad behaviour and promote equality and respect.

The actions required included:

- encouraging all staff to make the White Ribbon Promise to never use, excuse or remain silent about men's violence against women
- recruiting at least one volunteer man White Ribbon Ambassador (or woman Champion if there are no men staff who can undertake this role)
- holding at least one awareness and fund raising event or activity a year
- ensuring that women who are experiencing violence know where to get help

She said they were looking for a male member of staff to put themselves forward as a volunteer and asked the representatives to communicate this to their wider teams. She also said she would raise it at the Operational Managers meeting the following week.

Ash added that it would also be helpful if a male member also volunteered to show the commitment of the Town Council at a leadership level.

Resolved: That both a male member of staff and a member be identified as a representative.

(iii) Draft Stress Policy & Violence in the Workplace Policy

Councillor Mosley asked if there were any comments on either of the draft policies from members of the committee.

Councillor Pardy asked if access to counselling services was made available to staff and Amanda replied that they were able to access this directly via Vivup which ensured the service remained anonymous. She added that five members of staff had accessed the service in the previous year.

Councillor Mosley said that some further work was clearly needed on both policies as there was some information included that was not needed.

Resolved: That the Deputy Town Clerk redraft both of the policies and bring them back to the committee for consideration.

(iv) Draft Flexible Working Policy

Amanda introduced the item saying that she had drafted the policy in response to the changes in the law related to flexible working requests including the right to request from day one of employment.

Claire Osborn reported that ACAS had recently revised their guidelines on flexible working and asked that this policy be cross referenced with those guidelines. Amanda said that she would do this and then put the policy out for consultation with staff before it went to Personnel Committee for approval in December. She advised that she had largely based the policy on the template currently available on the Unison website.

Andy asked what the process was to allow staff to comment on draft policies, particularly if they didn't have access to email. Amanda replied that she made paper copies available at all Depots for staff to write comments on if they wished and that these were then collected up and collated.

Councillor Bentick asked if there was one email address available for all staff to view if they did not have access to an individual email account. Amanda replied that there wasn't and that the Town Council needed to be careful not to rely on email communication with staff who do not have this as a requirement of their role.

Councillor Dartnall responded that she did not think that email was the answer and that portal would be a better idea.

Resolved:

- **That the Flexible Working Policy be forward to staff for comment and taken forward to the next Personnel Committee for approval.**
- **That a report on communications with staff discussed at the next meeting.**

15/23 ITEMS RAISED FROM STAFF REPRESENTATIVES

No items were raised for discussion.

16/23 NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 24 January 2024.