



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Practices Committee  
Tuesday 30 April 2024  
5.00pm**

**Present:** Cllrs Doug Waller (Chairman), Ken Peters and Steve Thomas.

**In attendance:**

G Burt, Clerk to the Council

**01/24 Chairman's Announcements.**

1. The meeting was being streamed to the internet.
2. Cllrs wishing to speak should raise their hand and speak loudly and clearly.
3. Mobile 'phones should either be switched off or silenced.
4. The January meeting had been regrettably cancelled due to the need to rearrange the Council's meeting calendar due to staff sickness.

**02/24 Apologies.**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Craig Gale - prior commitment. On the proposal of Cllr Doug Waller, seconded by Cllr Ken Peters, **RESOLVED** to accept the apology and reason given.

**03/24 To Receive Declarations of Interest and Notification of Changes to Members' Interests.**

None.

**04/24 Public Session.**

None.

**05/24 Approval of the Minutes of the Working Practices Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023, previously circulated.**

On the proposal of Cllr Steve Thomas, seconded by Cllr Doug Waller, **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and signed as a correct record accordingly.

**06/24 Clerk's Report.**

None.

**07/24 To review wording of *public session item* on agendas.**

The Committee considered whether the wording on agendas relating to public question time required amendment to reduce potential misuse. Wording on agendas of other councils had been looked at but Councillors considered that the alternative forms were all very similar. Councillors did not want wording to be so restrictive that it prevented good points being raised that weren't necessarily on the agenda.

On the proposal of Cllr Ken Peters, seconded by Cllr Doug Waller, **RESOLVED** that the existing wording be retained, but that the requirement for names to be given added. Also, the wording should be consistent through each and on all agendas. Suitable training identified by the Clerk on chairing difficult situations would be offered.

**08/24 To consider *Approved Reasons in accepting apologies.***

The Clerk had presented a report suggesting that all reasons given by Councillors in tendering apologies must be in accordance with a prescribed list; this followed a suggestion made by a trainer at a recent training session. The meeting clerk would just then report to the meeting that the reason given was for an approved reason; this would help preserve Councillors' personal business. On the proposal of Cllr Doug Waller, seconded by Cllr Steve Thomas, **RESOLVED** that the list of approved reasons be agreed with the addition of *bereavement*. [A new policy would reflect this practice accordingly.] Also, absences would be recorded in the minutes as used to be the practice.

**09/24 To consider how agendas/other paperwork is sent to Cllrs.**

Individual Councillors had periodically suggested receiving agendas and minutes etc. electronically. The Clerk had canvassed members views and a significant majority of those responding has supported such a move and other comments had been summarized in the Clerk's report. The Clerk had also set out some of the pros and cons, plus the likely cost of providing each councilor with an electronic device, plus ongoing IT support. There was currently no budget provision and the Committee agreed that an IT provider would be unlikely to wish to support devices they had provided AND a myriad of individual's devices if Cllrs wished to use their own device. It was suggested that Councillors could just download papers from the website if they chose not to receive hard copies. The Clerk was happy for officers to try to accommodate individual Councillors' preferences rather than impose a decision on all Councillors. On the proposal of Cllr Doug Waller, seconded by Cllr Ken Peters, **RESOLVED** that Councillors be given the option to not receive paper copies of agendas and minutes as an interim measure. (The onus would be on the individual Councillor to ensure all meeting dates are in their diaries and to download the meeting papers from the Council's website. Confidential papers will be e-mailed to them.

The Clerk reserves the right to still send hard copies when the Clerk considers it appropriate to do so, e.g. large consultation documents, memos or Budget Workshop papers etc.)

**10/24 Exclusion of Press & Public.**

On the proposal of Cllr Steve Thomas seconded by Cllr Doug Waller, **RESOLVED** that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted (staffing), the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

**11/24 Staffing Updates.**

The Committee received updates on the appointment of a third Environmental Operative; 2024-25 pay award and the new office for the Neighbourhood Wardens. End of Year Reviews had all been completed and reviewed by the Committee Chairman, who had undertaken the Clerk's. Most matters raised required either no action or had been dealt

with by the Clerk. No matters were raised requiring action by the Committee except one which the Chairman was addressing directly.

**12/24 Staffing Review.**

Budgetary provision had been made in the current year for a new FT person in the office, who would start midway through the year, after this Committee had defined the role, approved the JD etc.

Members were interested in how the new role would fit with other roles and whether it could address the issue of deputising for the Clerk in his absence.

The Clerk had suggested that a consultant undertake a brief staffing review of the office to inform any decision. Three quotes had been sourced and circulated.

On the proposal of Cllr Ken Peters seconded by Cllr Doug Waller, **RESOLVED** that that the quote from Mulberry & Co be accepted accordingly, with the Clerk confirming with them on the approximate numbers of hours required prior to work commencing.

**13/24 Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 10 July 2024.**

Meeting closed at 6.23pm.

**Chairman**

**Date**