

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Tuesday, 20th June 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Simon Edwards

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors
and Opposition Spokesmen: Philippa Hart
Hazel Smith
John Williams

Officers:

Gemma Barron Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing
Susan Gardner Craig Head of People and Organisational Development
Wilma Wilkie Democratic Services Team Leader
Elizabeth Davy Project Officer
Kirsty Human Programme Manager

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2017 were **confirmed** as a correct record and signed by the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder.

3. COMMUNITY CHEST: FUNDING APPLICATIONS

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder considered a report on recent applications for funding from the Community Chest grants scheme for 2017/18. Each application was considered against the scheme criteria.

The Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing reported that the total amount of funding made available in the Community Chest in 2017/18 was £55,000 and this was allocated on a first come first served basis. The amount remaining for allocation was £30,225.16.

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **agreed** the following Community Chest funding:

Name of Applicant	Project Description	Total cost of project (£)	Total Awarded (£)
St Mary the Virgin Church	Purchase of materials to create a Community Peace Garden	£8,597.00	£805.88
Fen Drayton Parish Council	Purchase of notice board to be placed at the west end of the village	£2,023.68	£1,000.00
Cherry Hinton Baptist Church	Replacement chairs for the Family Centre	£905.76	£452.88
Linton Heights Junior School	Purchase of Forest School equipment	£991.98	£797.86

Melbourn Amateur Dramatics Society	Purchase of two stand alone spot lights to improve the lighting in the performance hall and a graphic equaliser to eliminate feedback from the sound system.	£987.00	£987.00
Smarties Pre School	Creation of a sensory garden. Including a new surface, wind chimes, wooden play features including an imaginative play kitchen.	£2866.29	£1,000.00
Hinxton Parish Council	Purchase & installation of a set of baby swings for the playground	£2329.20	£1,000.00
Hardwick Pre- school	Replacement of rotten decking.	£2,500	£1,000.00
Hardwick Play Parks Group	Purchase of a 'Tango Swing' as part of the redevelopment of the play area	£22,420.42	£1,000.00
Power 2 Inspire	Purchase of specialist sports equipment	£797.89	£398.95
Bethel Baptist Church	Purchase of a combined Electric Cooker/Microwave and hob for the kitchen as part of the kitchen refurbishment	£8,000	£1,000.00
Green Minds	Gardening project to help people to recover from a range of health problems by increasing social networks and self confidence.	£1,400.00	£890.00
Great Shelford Playscape	Construction of a bridge across a ditch as part of the transformation of the copse into a den building space with trails. This will make the area accessible for pushchairs and wheelchairs	£1,519.00	£1,000.00
1 st Orwell Guides	Purchase of new lightweight tents	£600.00	£600.00

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **refused** the following applications:

Name of Applicant	Project Description	Total cost of project (£)	Total Awarded (£)	Reason for Refusal
Meadow Primary School	Purchase and installation of a Willow Structure for the children to play in and improve the grounds	£938.40	0	Does not comply with the Community Chest criteria
Coton Primary School	Purchase of folding exhibition display boards and cotton bags to support the start up of the Great Plastics Quest project	£1,386.40	0	Does not comply with the Community Chest criteria

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **deferred** the following applications:

Name of Applicant	Project Description	Total cost of project (£)	Total Awarded (£)	Reason for Deferral
Horseheath Cricket Club	Repair and replace the windows in the pavilion and equipment to maintain the playing field	£4750.00	Pending	Further information needed
Stepping Stones	Breakfast & After School Club	£2310.00	Pending	Further information needed
ICU Steps Cambridge	Set up costs for a support group for families of patients who have been admitted to ICU & ex patients suffering from PTSD	£868.00	Pending	Further information needed

4. APPRENTICESHIPS

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder received a report which set out details of the Government's new Apprenticeship Scheme and considered a draft Apprenticeship Strategy for South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Apprenticeship Scheme required all employers with at least 250 staff operating in the UK, with an annual pay bill of over £3,000,000 to make an investment in apprenticeships. This involved payment of an apprenticeship levy equating to 0.5% of their annual pay bill. The levy would be collected by HM Revenue and Customs monthly and could be accessed by employers through an online digital service account. Levy funding could be used for direct training and assessment costs for apprentices but could not be used to support apprentice wages.

Employers who paid the levy and were committed to apprenticeship training would be able to access more funds than the amount of levy paid through a 'top up' to their Apprentice Digital accounts. It was not yet clear how this would work but it was anticipated that employers would be able to bid for additional funding based on certain criteria.

The Government had also set a target for public sector bodies with 250 or more staff to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their workforce as new apprentices over the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2021. Apprenticeships could be considered either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff.

It was noted that the annual levy payment for South Cambridgeshire District Council was £66,686. This was based on a 0.5% levy of the Council's gross salary bill and included a £15,000 Government allowance. The apprenticeship target, based on 2.3% of the current headcount (426), equated to a requirement for 11 apprentices to start each year for the next three years. The Portfolio Holder was invited to consider a draft strategy which set out how South Cambridgeshire District Council would optimise use of its apprenticeship levy contributions and meet the Government's public sector apprenticeship targets.

The Portfolio Holder raised a number of issues related to partnership working, in particular 3C Shared Services partners. In response to a question it was noted that it would be difficult to spread costs across partners as the employing body was ultimately responsible

for paying the levy. The Council would however endeavour to work with partners to optimise use of the apprenticeship levy and where possible procure training providers. It would also seek to take advantage of opportunities arising from the Greater Cambridge City Deal skills funding initiatives. The Council would also work with village colleges to promote opportunities. The possibility of holding an open day to showcase South Cambridgeshire District Council as a potential employer was suggested.

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **agreed**:

- (a) To note the report setting out details of the Government's new Apprentice Scheme and apprenticeship levy; and
- (b) To approve the Council's 4 year Apprenticeship Strategy.

5. RETENTION AND TURNOVER REPORT

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **received and noted** a report analysing the turnover of staff between 1st January and 31st March 2017.

The report emphasised that regular reporting of turnover was intended to highlight trends, inform recruitment decisions and where necessary, promote change within a team or service in order to achieve the Council's objectives.

The Portfolio Holder noted changes to the exit interview process. He welcomed the increase in the number of exit interviews completed, but felt there remained room for further improvement. In response to a question about work experience, it was noted that arrangements were in place to offer eight two week placements. This would include for the first time students from Cambourne Village College. It was acknowledged that this would present an ideal opportunity to promote the benefits of securing an apprenticeship with the Council.

The Portfolio Holder suggested that it might be timely to review the Council's recruitment process balancing the desire to offer job opportunities to existing staff against the benefits of attracting 'new blood' via external advertising campaigns.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **noted** the work programme identifying items for discussion at future meetings.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **noted** that the next meeting would take place at 6.00 p.m. on Tuesday 20th June 2017.

8. SICKNESS ABSENCE 1 JANUARY 2017 - 31 MARCH 2017

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **received and noted** a confidential report containing information about sickness absence for the period 1st January 2017 to 31st March 2017. This report was the latest in a quarterly cycle of monitoring reports, and detailed performance as at the end of 2016/17.

The Head of People and Organisational Development reported that there had been a significant increase in absence during this quarter and explained that an analysis of available data had established this was mainly attributable to an increase in headcount following the TUPE transfer undertaken within the Shared Waste Service. Management action was being taken to address this.

It was noted that a key area of concern was the continuing delays caused by line managers in the notification of absences and completion of return to work meetings. This could result in a delay in putting in place appropriate measures to support employees as well as causing inaccurate reporting. The Portfolio Holder reinforced the role and responsibility of service managers in terms of active attendance management in particular, the need for prompt reporting of absences and close liaison with HR in terms of employee support, in line with the Council's Attendance Management Policy. He undertook to look at this in more detail, where necessary raising concerns with the appropriate service Portfolio Holder. With that in mind, he asked that the next monitoring report contain a more detailed breakdown on performance.

**The Meeting ended
at 7.20 p.m.**
