

## Abbots Langley Parish Council

Council Offices  
Langley Road  
Abbots Langley  
Herts  
WD5 0EJ

1st December 2017.

To Members of the Staffing Committee

Councillors Liz Burns, Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chairman), Brenda Kersey, Jane Lay, David Major, & Owen Roe.

The next meeting of the Staffing Committee will be held at the above address on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at 9:00 am when your presence is summoned for the purpose of transacting the business outlined below.

The press and public are welcome to attend the meeting.

Tim Perkins  
Clerk to the Council

### AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**  
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of Interest**  
To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.
3. **Public Participation**  
To note if any members of the public have requested to speak at this meeting, in accordance with the Parish Council's Public Speaking Arrangements.
4. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on**  
6<sup>th</sup> September 2017.
5. **Office Staffing**  
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 1.)
6. **Grounds Apprentice**  
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 2.)
7. **Bullying**  
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 3.)
8. **Work Plan**  
To receive an update from the Clerk.

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**Abbots Langley Parish Council**  
**Clerk's Report - Staffing Committee - November 2017**

**1. Office Staffing**

The Planning & Meetings Officer returned to work on 27<sup>th</sup> November on reduced hours until probably the New Year. Colleagues will be covering the Planning & Highways Committee meetings again until at least the New Year.

I would like to start thinking about recruiting in the New Year a role that provides cover for Planning & Highways, customer facing support and possibly taking over the Leisure portfolio from me.

This has been discussed previously but I would like member's views on this proposal, with a view to looking at starting the specification and recruitment process.

**2. Grounds Apprentice**

As I advised members a few weeks ago I thought this was all done and dusted. Unfortunately the training providers appear to have withdrawn the programme which looked ideal. There is a new course that in our view is too focussed on sports turf and not the wider role of an outside worker.

I will be discussing with our HR Business Partner prior to the meeting and will update further. Support from WBC/TRDC HR has been excellent and they are just as frustrated with the changes.

The training providers appear somewhat disorganised, although in mitigation press reports would indicate that the number of apprenticeships being taken up have fallen significantly due to changes in funding from government. This appears to be negatively impacting on the availability of programmes.

**3. Bullying**

Bullying has not been a significant problem in this council. However across the sector it is viewed as possibly the major challenge facing Clerks and the sector as a whole. This is primarily the bullying of officers by members and to a lesser extent officers bullying colleagues.

The Society of Local Council Clerks has launched a "Bullying Working Group" and other initiatives. The Chief Exec of the Society attended the Herts Branch AGM on 29<sup>th</sup> November. He is new in post (early 2017) and coming from outside the sector has been shocked at the extent of the bullying problem. He is making tackling the issue one of the highest priorities of the Society.

There is a major national meeting of Clerks being held on 4<sup>th</sup> December, Julia Warren, Chairman of the SLCC Herts Branch (Wheathampstead PC) is attending. The meeting strap line is "*How Resilient are you to Bullying?*"

I bring this to member's attention as it is likely that in the not too distant future this council will have a new Clerk. Regardless of their experience they will take some time to come up to speed, if you recruit the right person they will want to make changes. The road maybe bumpy, for both members and officers. Equally a new Clerk may not have the same level of assertiveness skills as the current job holder.

This is a time that bullying could occur and this committee has a responsibility to ensure that this does not happen.

There is a view amongst Clerks, with which I have some sympathy, that the toothless nature of the current standards regime means there is very little recourse on members who display less than professional behaviour to colleagues and staff. If officers are proved to be bullying colleagues there is the very robust disciplinary process that can ultimately mean they lose their job.

I am not saying this council currently has a bullying problem, nor do I see any potential problems in the immediate future. But across the sector it is seen as a huge challenge.

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Within Hertfordshire I have supported a number of colleagues who have been bullied, I am also aware of a number of excellent, well qualified Clerks that have resigned due to this behaviour.

**Tim Perkins**  
Clerk to the Council  
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