

VIRTUAL STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

26 May, 2020

Town Clerk's Human Resources Open Report

1) Outstanding Holiday Entitlement

- **To approve carry-over of leave into 2020/21**

At the Town Council Meeting on 28 April during deliberation of HR matters, the Town Clerk was requested to ascertain any leave outstanding that could not be taken by the 31 March as a result of reacting to the COVID-19 crisis, and requests that these unused days are added to the employees 2020/21 entitlement.

There are three members affected:

Civic Officer – 16.4 hours

Deputy Town Clerk – 1 Day

Town Clerk – 2 Days

2) Staged Return to Work at the Town Hall

- **To note the report**
- **To instigate a Task & Finish Group or utilise existing Town Hall Income Facilities & Wellbeing Group to oversee a review of a staged, safe return to work**

As of 13 May, those residing in England were no longer being told to 'stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives.' Instead we were being advised to 'stay alert, control the virus, save lives.'

Manufacturing and small pockets of business and retail industries were actively encouraged to return to work and some of the more stringent lockdown restrictions were lifted, enabling people to leave their homes, exercise more widely and even meet someone from another household, providing it was just one person and in the open air.

Since the nation went into lockdown, the Council's business has been able to continue very satisfactorily with the majority of staff working from home on laptops that could still access the computer network at the Town Hall, enabling files to be readily available.

Meetings have continued successfully and although the whole COVID-19 situation has been horrific beyond belief, some interesting working patterns have developed. The crisis has necessitated the need for a thorough review of:

- How we worked then
- How we work now and
- How we will work in the future

It is recommended that the Town Council instigates a Task & Finish group, or alternatively uses the existing Town Hall Income, Facilities & Wellbeing Panel to undertake and oversee a review on how to re-establish safe working practices within the Town Hall in order to plan for a staged return to work by the staff, which aligns with the Council's duty of care.

Prior to the pandemic, the working environment within the Magistrates Room was far from ideal. Now, it is positively dangerous and it would be irresponsible to ask any member of staff to return to that environment at the moment. In any event, the government's advice is still to work from home if you can, and there is actually no need for the staff to be in the office as their home working is adequately efficient and effective at the moment.

However, the Town Clerk has already been actively discussing return to work arrangements with the staff and the Town Council's Health & Safety Consultant and the following proposals were considered viable. Obviously a detailed Risk Assessment will be undertaken by the Council's Health & Safety Consultant which must be observed before staff return:

- i The entrance door to the Town Hall will remain locked. Those wishing access must use the intercom and staff can remotely unlock the door.
- ii Working hours/working days to be staggered;
- iii Upon entering the building, all staff and visitors must first wash their hands with soap and water before undertaking any task;
- iv Hand sanitiser will be readily available in every room;
- v The Magistrates Room is out of bounds to anyone other than staff;
- vi No more than two members of staff to work together at any one time in the Magistrates Room;
- vii Staff who usually sit at the first two stations will access/egress the Magistrate's Room through the normal door;
- viii Staff who sit on the far side of the room will gain access/egress through the robing cupboard which leads into the Magistrate's Room as opposed to Narnia;

- ix Perspex sheets affixed to and at a height approximately 4ft above the top of the desks will separate the four work stations horizontally and diagonally;
- x Staff will only use equipment confined to their own station i.e. keyboard, telephone, printer;
- xi Equipment such as the photocopier/franking machine will be cleansed by the operative after use;
- xii Staff will observe strict social distancing at all times;
- xiii Only one member of staff in the kitchen at any one time and responsible for cleansing after use;
- xiv Crockery, cutlery etc. will not be shared;
- xv Each member of staff will use one loo/cubicle and be responsible for cleansing after use;
- xvi Wherever possible, doors will remain propped open (unless fire doors) or bumped open using shoulder or thigh to limit contact with knobs and handles;
- xvii Cleaning and cleansing communal areas will increase and appropriate cleaning material will be available to staff who will be responsible for regularly cleaning their work station;
- xviii Staff will not 'soldier on' and come in to the Town Hall if suffering illness, including coughs, heavy colds etc. but will work from home if able;
- xix The Town Hall remains closed to the general public for the foreseeable future.

Since writing this agenda item, the Town Council's Health & Safety Consultant has also written a report on how he envisages a safe return to work, not just by administration staff, but also those involved in routine maintenance. His thoughts marry with the Town Clerk's and his report, for information, is attached as **Appendix 'B'**.

Town Clerk
26.5.2020