

EMPLOYMENT OF DIRECTLY EMPLOYED STAFF AND OTHERS

Administration Staffing

I have looked at the Parish Council's proposed recruitment program for administration staff and it looks as if some research has been carried out identifying the staffing needs. The separation of roles between the Clerk/Proper Officer and the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO Section 151) in a Parish Council the size of Metheringham is, in my opinion, essential. These are two different skill sets and it is not often an applicant can be found who is excellent in both roles. Reducing the Proper Officer's role to 16 hours per week and employing an Administration Assistant at 16 hours plus 2 hours as a Hod support person also makes sense. This will reduce the risk of being without a Proper Officer or RFO for any length of time.

It is far too onerous to expect a parish the size of Metheringham to take on the role of Acting Clerk when the Proper Officer either leaves, falls sick or is dismissed. The workload is far too great and over the last three years the Parish Council have twice found themselves in this position. Consequently, the Parish Council has not been run as efficiently as it should have been during this period and also afterwards.

I note this staffing combination was recommended to the Parish Council in November 2022 by the Monitoring Officer of North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) and the CEO of the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC). In hindsight this would have been a far better route to have taken.

Going forward, I am quite happy with the Parish Council's proposals for the procurement of administration staff.

Handy Person and Litterpicker

I find it difficult to understand how the Parish Council assess your Handy Person role and workloads. It appears that approval has been given for employing another Handy Person for 10 hours per week without undertaking any research into what the role entails and the skills required. Also, programs of planned and cyclical maintenance which has to be undertaken and analysis of reactive maintenance (firefighting). None of these disciplines appear to have been considered.

It is also understood that the current Handy Person has not been completing timesheets for some considerable time. This has lead me to be even more confused as to how the Parish Council can accurately assess the role and workload of the Handy Person and Litterpicker since it is not possible to differentiate the time spent on each role and task.

In my opinion the recruitment of a Handy Person should be left in abeyance until after a full job evaluation exercise has been carried out including the role and skill set required. Consequently, it is suggested the following should be considered to asses both the existing and proposed appointments;

1. Schedules of planned maintenance for both annual and quinquennial should be produced and assessed.
2. Evaluate the seasonal workload, grass cutting, gardening, etc
3. Prepare weekly inspections of premises and playground equipment assessments of workload.
4. Evaluate how much time per week/month is spent on reactive maintenance/fire fighting (employee communication).
5. Forecast future workload requirements.
6. Evaluate the workload differential involved in seasonal and cyclical patterns.
7. Conduct a skills gap analysis before creating the job description of the prospective Handy Person.
8. As previously mentioned, seek employee feedback on existing workload.
9. Assess leveraging technology, outsourcing and automation into the workplace.

During my review of the Parish Council's administration I cannot find any workplace risk assessments either specific or generic. I therefore recommend such assessments are carried out as a matter of urgency.

Administration Staff Risk Assessments

For the Parish Council Officers in all respects including display screen equipment. For their respective places of residence when required to work from home as part of a working week including display screen equipment.

Handy Person and Litterpicker Risk Assessments

Relevant risk assessments and method statements should be provided to the Proper Officer before commencement of any work. The Proper Officer must approve any such risk assessments and method statements in writing before commencement of any work.

Contractors will also be required to produce a current Certificate of Public Liability Insurance covering all risks to a value of £10 million.

Contractors with employees must provide a current Certificate of Employers Liability Insurance to the Proper Officer for approval in writing as previously stated.

Michael Credland BEM
14 February 2025

