

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

16TH JULY 2018

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE STAFFING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider how to resource the routine administration function of the Office currently, and in the future. As such it does not address areas where a back office corporate resource for mid level tasks may arise, these will be addressed by the Town Clerk in due course.

2. CORPORATE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The effective resourcing of the organisation contributes towards the delivery of value for money and the underpinning goal of continuous improvement for the organisation.

3. LEGAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The Town Council has various obligations placed upon it as an employer and this area has been understaffed for some time.

4. RESOURCE ISSUES

If adopted, there would be a slight decrease in the overall staff costs for this post, amounting to £ 1, 712 per annum, based on current staff costs (having taken into account Employer's National Insurance and the Council's Employer's Pension contributions, should the member of staff choose to remain in the Fund).

5. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

This report has been developed following consultation with the relevant officers involved. The suggestions previously made by Members have also been taken into account, including but not limited to, increased visibility on social media as well as functional usage of the Town Council's website as an effective organisational customer facing tool. Whilst this post holder will not have direct responsibility for the Council's social media presence, they will be able to support the staff member who does, by helping with their workload.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Tavistock Town Council approve the current resource of 74.0 hours per week for the two administration posts in the office (option 2.1 below refers)

1. BACKGROUND – EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS

1.1 The staffing structure in the Administration Office is as indicated on the enclosed structure chart (Appendix 1). The office has had one temporary member of staff since late 2016, whilst we have awaited a decision regarding the future location of the office function. Council did not want to move to hiring a permanent member of staff until such time as that decision had been made. However it is felt that a decision on this now needs to be made, even though any potential change of location has yet to be agreed.

1.2 The Office Administrator (Financial Support) and Office Administrator (Mayoral Support) roles are both currently 37 hours per week, although the previous establishment figure for the Mayoral Support role was 23.5 hours. This role increased to 37 hours per week when a temporary agency member of staff was appointed, and has remained as such since October 2016. These roles are intended to provide the administrative resource to deliver general office duties, customer service and a range of related activities for the organisation including supporting the Mayor's role and some financial support, whilst also allowing for delegation of some tasks from the Assistant to the Town Clerk, who then in turn has increased capacity to receive delegated duties from the Town Clerk.

1.3 In recent times the amount of work undertaken by these positions has increased as the organisation has looked to deliver more. This has led to challenges in capacity to deliver as well as we would want to, which is why both roles were recruited as full-time.

2. CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE NEEDS

2.1. A full-time permanent Office Administrator (Financial Support) was recruited in May 2017. The current Office Administrator (Mayoral Support) post is one of 37 hours per week, although on a temporary basis from a recruitment agency. It has worked well with having two full-time members of staff in these posts, as it has allowed for adequate administrative cover in times of holiday and sickness, as well as allowing for routine administrative tasks to be undertaken efficiently.

- 2.2. This report therefore provides an opportunity to review the current capacity of the office and consider if the current resourcing is at the correct level. Also, looking forward, there may be a number of potential other challenges which need to be taken into account.
- 2.3 As mentioned previously, no decision has yet been made regarding the future location of the administration office. Therefore, depending on the outcome of this decision, I would request the facility to come back to Council, in view of the following possible scenarios for the operating base;
- a) Guildhall
- i. If the office function does not move to the Guildhall, I understand that the Town Council is committed to providing a Reception Desk for the whole building (including the Interpretation/Visitors' Centre). Therefore at least one additional member of staff will be required to provide this facility;
 - ii. If, however, the function does move to the Guildhall, depending on the layout and location of the space Council staff will have available to them, it may be that an additional member(s) of staff will be required to staff the aforementioned Reception Desk anyway. This will be even more likely if the Desk is not immediately adjacent to the office, and to also allow for the increased workload the provision of this facility will likely result in.
- b) Molly Owen Centre
As this is an 'out of town' location, in order that all members of the public would still have access to a Town Council administration office to deal with queries, it may be that a small office will need to be allocated in the Guildhall, which again will require a separate resource, or that this would be met by the receptionist (section a) refers).
- c) Drake Road Offices
If however no move takes place so the administration office remains in its current location, then the staffing position would be as at 2.1 (above). However, item 2.3a) above may still require an additional resource.
- 2.4 Whilst the drafting of a Neighbourhood Plan has been deferred for the time being, there is the possibility that a decision to proceed will be made in the future.

- 2.5 The Recruitment & Retention Review Report provided by South West Councils highlighted the problems the administration office had previously in recruiting staff with the appropriate skill set, and retaining them. Previous post-holders had on occasion not had the required skills to undertake the roles within the office, which not only had a major impact on the quality of the work produced, but also put additional pressure on the other staff in the office. It is recognised that when advertising a full-time vacancy, rather than a part-time one, often attracts applicants who are usually much better qualified and with a higher skill set, thereby needing much less day to day 'close management'.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. I am aware that we are still in a challenging economic climate, however a failure to address the operational issues or add organisational value is unlikely to prove either appropriate or cost effective over the longer term. A common theme raised by staff when leaving had been the difficulty of completing even the essential tasks within the time available, and the pressure the office staff often felt under, when we had one full-time and one part-time member of staff. Since we have had 2 full-time members of staff in the administration office, this pressure has been alleviated to a reasonable degree.

JAN SMALLACOMBE
ASSISTANT TO THE TOWN CLERK
16TH JULY 2018