

clerk@spoonerrow-cc.gov.uk

From: SBA <SBA@pkf-l.com>
Sent: 14 August 2025 15:35
To: clerk@spoonerrow-cc.gov.uk; SBA
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: NO0542 SPOONER ROW COMMUNITY COUNCIL - OBJECTIONS TO 2023/24 AGAR - INFORMATION FROM COUNCIL - STEP 3

Dear Dawn

I am assisting Rebecca in reviewing the objections that we have received to the Council's 2023/24 AGAR.

I have a couple of queries/requests for further information:

- Could you please provide the Terms of Reference for the Employment Committee;
- Could you please provide the minutes of the Employment Committee meeting on 20 September 2023;
- Could you please provide the report (or other documentation if no report) relating to the assessment of the Clerk's role that was commissioned; and
- In relation to Objection 3d, we are not interested in individual invoices, the objection was accepted more in the general sense regarding that if invoices were not in the sharepoint folder, how was the Chair able to assure herself regarding the invoices being authorised for payment in the second half of 2023/24.

Hopefully the above makes sense, but if you do have any queries please do let me know.

I realise it is short notice, but as my contract runs to the end of August, would it be possible to reply by 22 August. Don't worry if this isn't possible, it will just mean that Rebecca will need to pick it up later.

Regards

Antony

Antony Smith
Senior Manager
SBA Team
PKF

For and on behalf of

PKF Littlejohn LLP

15 Westferry Circus
London E14 4HD
United Kingdom

www.pkf-l.com

Tel: +44(0)20 7516 2200



-77-

Please find below the responses prepared and agreed by council to the questions from Antony Smith:

I have a couple of queries/requests for further information:

- Could you please provide the Terms of Reference for the Employment Committee;
- Could you please provide the minutes of the Employment Committee meeting on 20 September 2023;
- Could you please provide the report (or other documentation if no report) relating to the assessment of the Clerk's role that was commissioned; and
- In relation to Objection 3d, we are not interested in individual invoices, the objection was accepted more in the general sense regarding that if invoices were not in the SharePoint folder, how was the Chair able to assure herself regarding the invoices being authorised for payment in the second half of 2023/24.

Dawn Clarke

20.08.2025

Could you please provide the Terms of Reference for the Employment Committee;

Response:



Spooner Row, Sutton & Wattlefield
Community Council
Where community matters

Spooner Row Community Council Employment Committee Terms of Reference

Background:

The council can not devolve delegated authority to councillors only committees or the Clerk: LGA1972, s 101 – so the clerk can not have a single line manager.

Purpose

- To facilitate the discharge of the Council's responsibilities as an employer and make recommendations on such matters to the full Council.
- To review all personnel procedures, be the first contact for all employee/employer matters, advise full Council accordingly on such matters, and act on its instructions when called upon.
- To undertake specific tasks as delegated by full Council under Standing Orders.

Membership

- The Committee shall comprise of 3 Councillors, the chair as casting vote member who will be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May and subsequent Council meetings if the need arises. No committee member may have lodged a complaint in writing, in the 2 years prior against any staff member.
- The quorum of the Committee will be three.

Meetings

- Meetings will take place as required but at least for times annually to authorise accrued overtime and preform the Clerks appraisal and review staff conditions and pay scales.
- The Committee shall be convened by the calling of a meeting by the Clerk as directed, or by the Chair or any members of the Committee by written request to the Chair at any time.
- Once properly convened and the appropriate resolution passed, all business of the Committee shall be conducted in closed session and shall remain confidential, other than to other members of the Council should they have legitimate need to have access to this information and who will also respect the confidential nature of such information, and the representative of employees where appropriate.
- Should this be broken the council is entirely liable for restitution to the staff member.

Committee Services

- The Committee will be serviced by the Clerk.
- Notes of meetings shall be presented to the full Council in closed session, at the earliest opportunity, and formally approved at the next meeting of the Committee. It is essential that any recommendations are fully understood and agreed before the personnel committee meeting closes.

Voting

- Each member shall have a single vote, in the event of a tie, the the Chair will have a casting vote.

Roles And Responsibilities

- To review, and update annually where necessary, all documents relating to employees including Employment Contracts and Staff Handbook. This will be conducted in conjunction with the Clerk and recommend to full Council for a formal resolution to accept any changes. Expert services (such as NALC, NPTS & SLCC) may be used to re-assess the grading, hours and scope when necessary.
- To conduct and be responsible for all Grievance and Disciplinary action within the Council.
- No grievance or disciplinary action will be accepted unless it is supported by evidence.
- The Grievance and Disciplinary policy will be followed.
- To investigate any health or attendance issue concerning Employees of the Council. The Committee has a budget of [X] to arrange for medical assessments and reports by either an independent Occupational Health Provider, or an Employee's own Doctor, to enable this investigation to be conducted.
- The Committee will be responsible for the full implementation of the Council's capability procedure relating to Employee health and attendance at work. This includes the ability to recommend and implement reasonable adjustments to accommodate an Employee's needs. The Committee will have a budget of [X] to pay for any necessary adjustments.
- To ensure annual appraisals of staff are undertaken and to inform full Council that they have been conducted. One member of the Committee will complete the Clerk's Appraisal. The Clerk will conduct subordinate Appraisals. Both the committee member and Clerk will attend appraisal training.
- The outcome and associated action plan from the appraisal will be reported back to the Committee within 2 meetings. The Committee will hold a budget of [X] to cover the cost of resultant action plans, including training costs.
- To manage all elements of recruitment to the post of Clerk. Subordinate posts will be managed by the Clerk. The Committee will be responsible for advertising the vacancy, short listing applicants, conducting interviews, and deciding the outcome of the recruitment process. The Committee has a budget of [X] to enable it to conduct these activities.
- To ensure necessary policies and procedures are addressed in accordance with relevant legal requirements, and the outcome of any discussions on employment matters are fully reported to full Council to consider appropriate action.
- To approve the Clerk's holiday requests.
- To manage the overtime and agree any additional hours to be worked within the financial constraints of that budget, consistent overtime will trigger a review of the posts hours.

- To conduct an annual review of the overall staff structure of the Council, the number and type of Employees employed by the Council and salary costs, to ensure that the workforce is able to meet the needs and ambitions of the Council.

DC

10 2023 – to be reviewed 2026 or if legislation requires so.



Spooner Row, Sutton & Wattiefield

Community Council

Where community matters

Spooner Row Community Council Minutes

Thursday 18th May 2023 at 19:30, Spooner Row Village Hall

Present:	Councillor Sue Hewitson	SH	Chair
	Councillor Martyn Lemon	ML	Vice Chair after item 2.
	Councillor John Morton	JM	
	Councillor Mal Andrews	MA	
	Councillor Nicola Skey	NS	
	Councillor Robert Foster	RF	
	Dawn Clarke	DC	Clerk to the Community Council
	1 member of the public		

- | | |
|----|---|
| 6. | <p>To agree the appointment of councillors to Committees.</p> <p>Personnel Committee: Staffing must be overseen by more than one committee member. Councillor Robert Foster suggested himself. Due to his history of hostility towards the Clerk and raising a complaint against the Clerk it was determined he would be biased. It was clarified that due to no evidence being submitted the complaint against the clerk was rejected. It was clarified that the meeting on December 13th 2022 was an informal chat to move the issue forward and not a grievance meeting as there was no evidence as had been required. Councillor Robert Foster withdrew his nomination to the panel. Councillor Mal Andrews nominated himself. Councillor Martyn Lemon nominated himself. Agreed.</p> <p>Woodland Working Group. It was agreed not to convene a working party and leave the management of the woodland as full committee.</p> |
|----|---|

Could you please provide the minutes of the Employment Committee meeting on 20 September 2023;

Response:

Background: The committee was appointed and given the mandate to agree the salary (for the new Clerk & RFO post taking guidance from the assessment) by whole council on the 14th of September.

Spooner Row, Sutton & Wattlefield
Community Council
Where community matters

Spooner Row Community Council

Thursday September 14th at 6:30pm, Spooner Row Village Hall

Meeting of the Council.

Present: Councillor Sue Hewitson	SH	Chair.
Councillor John Morton	JM	Vice Chair.
Councillor Phillip Price	PP	
Councillor Robert Foster	RF	
Dawn Clarke	DC	Clerk to the Community Council.
Stephen Ward	SW	RFO
3 Members of the public		

New Items.

12. To appoint additional members to the employment committee.

The Employment committee is 3 members, there are now 2 vacancies. This is a sub-committee as agreed in May. It was agreed that Councillor John Morton and Councillor Philip Price would sit on the committee along with Councillor Sue Hewitson. It was agreed that the meeting would take place on Wednesday 20th of August, and due to the nature of the meeting it would be closed.

Agreed unanimously.

13. To delegate authority to the employment committee to resolve the pay scale and outstanding remuneration for the clerk.

It was resolved to delegate authority to the Employment Committee to resolve the outstanding pay for the clerk.
Proposed PP, Seconded JM, agreed.

Clerk's Report.

16. Verbal update.

The clerk is currently at 16 of her 20 monthly hours and asked that the update in conditions of her contract be expediated as council is currently in breach of her contract. The additional hours since April have not been paid as they have not been authorised by council. This is a considerable number, and the Clerk was reluctant to complete any additional hours until this was resolved and authorised as needed going forward.

The terms of reference require the clerk to service the Employment Committee. With tonight's minutes, the Employment committee and the website work additional hours were requested.

10 hours for Clerk duties, and 15 hours for Website.

It was agreed that 25 additional hours be authorised.

*Typo – the date of the meeting was September 20th, the week after the whole council meeting on September 14th 2023

On 20 September 2023, concerns were raised that the Employment Committee was inquorate as John Morton had resigned, and as its Terms of Reference did not align with the Standing Orders. While legislation permits a committee to operate with two members, it was agreed that the meeting would proceed in an informal capacity. The committee therefore discussed the matters at hand but did not make any decisions. Instead, suggestions regarding the employment issue and the appointment of the RFO were carried forward to the next full council meeting for formal consideration and ratification. No members of the public were in attendance. Although this approach was somewhat unorthodox, no resolutions were made by the committee, and the process allowed the RFO appointment to progress without unnecessary delay.



Spooner Row, Sutton and Wattlefield Community Council Employment Committee

Wednesday September 20th 2023 at 6:00pm, Spooner Row Village Hall.

Present:	Councillor Sue Hewitson	SH	
	Councillor Phillip Price	PP	
	Dawn Clarke	DC	Clerk to the Community

Employment Committee Minutes

- 2023/001 Chair's welcome and to consider accepting apologies for absence.
- It was noted that John Moton's resignation would make the meeting illegal if a decision was taken.
- 2023/002 To resolve to exclude members of the public and press.
In accordance with Sched 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- A discussion was held with respect to the Norfolk Parish Training Service and the suggestion made to resolve terms and salary for the Clerk and becoming RFO.
- Notes of the conversation would be submitted to full council in October for ratification.

Meeting Closure.

Signed:

Date:

26 / 02 / 2024

This approach ensured that the points could be reviewed and approved at the council meeting on 10 October. At the meeting the points were presented by the committee and endorsed by the whole council. The Monitoring Officer and her deputy were also present at that meeting.

Spooner Row Community Council

Thursday October 10th at 6:00pm, Spooner Row Village Hall

Meeting of the Council.

Present: Councillor Sue Hewitson SH Chair.

Councillor Phillip Price PP

Councillor Robert Foster RF

Dawn Clarke DC Clerk to the Community

Council.

5 Members of the public including Emma Hodds and Linda Mockford from South Norfolk and Broadland District Council.

5. To ratify the appointment of Dawn Clarke as RFO, and note the updated terms of employment.

The employment committee is quorate at 2 members.

Standing orders are quorate at 3 members.

The decisions of the committee members were for ratification.

It was proposed by SH, Seconded by PP. RF Abstained.

Could you please provide the report (or other documentation if no report) relating to the assessment of the Clerk's role that was commissioned;

Response:

It was resolved in council to use NPTS in May 2023 when it was made clear that the RFO post would be vacant.



**Spooner Row Community Council
Minutes**

Thursday 18th May 2023 at 19:30, Spooner Row Village Hall

Present:	Councillor Sue Hewitson	SH	Chair
	Councillor Martyn Lemon	ML	Vice Chair after item 2.
	Councillor John Morton	JM	
	Councillor Mai Andrews	MA	
	Councillor Nicola Skey	NS	
	Councillor Robert Foster	RF	
	Dawn Clarke	DC	Clerk to the Community Council
	1 member of the public		

30. The public and press are excluded from this agenda items as the item for discussion are either confidential or exempt as defined in Schedule 12 of the Local Gov Act 1972
Staffing, Website and legal advice.

Clerk's salary: The contractual single spinal point was granted back dated to February 27th 2023 reflecting the Clerk's CiLCA qualification (from SP 8 to SP 9)
An additional 2 points were suggested for the RFO post with 2 additional hours. The Clerk declined this offer at this time, but would accept the RFO post after a full independent evaluation of the post.

It was agreed that Norfolk Parish Training Support would be approached, the situation explained and asked to make the assessment as quickly as possible. Councillor Sue Hewitson will action and keep council informed.
Proposed SH, Seconded ML, Agreed

In the interim period there are members who can pay the bills.

Councillor Robert Foster was asked to leave.

Legal advice was discussed with regards to Councillor Robert Foster.

it was agreed that Councillor Mai Andrews will work with the clerk to determine the best solution.

A letter response was discussed and agreed. Clerk to

NPTS was commissioned in May, however it was completed until August 10, 2023.

NORFOLK PARISH TRAINING & SUPPORT

BACKGROUND

I work for Norfolk PTS supporting over 175 local councils, training many more councils and I am a practising CiLCA qualified clerk with over 10 years' experience.

Spooner Row Parish Council requested NPTS undertake a job evaluation exercise in respect of their clerk's role; Dawn Clarke is the current clerk (Clerk).

Job evaluation is about the job tasks and responsibilities, not the person, their performance or capabilities.

This exercise is an independent assessment of the clerk's role.

RESEARCH

The Clerk completed an NPTS standard questionnaire to assist with the job evaluation exercise which she returned to me prior to our meeting on 13th June, 2023. I met with Sue Hewitson (Chair) and Robert Foster (Councillor) on 8th August 2023, the focus of this meeting was for me to obtain the councillors' view of their clerk's role.

The Clerk's role involves looking after street furniture (this includes dog and litter bins, bus shelters, and benches), as well as organising and clerking meetings, maintaining the website and dealing with questions from the public. The annual precept for Spooner Row Community Council is £11,610 with an electorate of 601 and 7 Councillors. There are no committees. It operates a portfolio system for projects. The Clerk is currently not the responsible financial officer, however, the plan is for her to take on this role in the future.

The Clerk is contracted to work 5 hours per week. The Council uses a time-capture system therefore, accurate records of time worked are available.

After completion of a profiling exercise, which helps to determine the correct salary range for the post irrespective of post holder, the Clerk's CiLCA qualifications put her into the LC1 (above substantive range) (SCP 13 - 17) the Clerk is currently on Spinal Column Point (SCP) 8 and is paid £11.84 per hour which is at the bottom end of the LC1 (SCP 7 - 12) (below substantive range).

-87-

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

In my view this role meets the description of profile 1 (detailed on page 4). It is recommended that the Council moves the role to SCP 13 (XXXX) with immediate effect, to SCP 15 (XXXX) when the role of Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) is assumed and following a satisfactory 6 month review of the work as Clerk/RFO the role is increased to SCP 18 (XXXX). This allows 3 moves on the pay scale, subject to satisfactory performance. This marks an increase in pay.

Assuming the pay is increased from 1 August 2023, the council can then use this date each year to review the Clerk's salary. I recommend that an annual appraisal is held each Summer ahead of the discussion on review of the Clerk's SCP. An appraisal between the Clerk and two Councillors is normal - this can be any two Councillors but usually the chair or vice-chair would be involved plus one other.

The Clerk has spoken about working over her contracted hours of 5 hours per week, averaging between 7-8 hours per week. The Council operate a time capture system. I suggest that 5 hours per week should be sufficient for a clerk at a council of Spooner Row's size and precept to undertake the tasks listed above but that these hours are increased to 8 per week when the RFO duties are taken on. The Clerk will continue to record her hours with an explanation of the duties undertaken and shares this data with Councillors, additional hours, if any, will be reviewed quarterly with a clear explanation of why and approved by Council. This will enable the Council to understand her workload and identify any potential training needs. The Clerk is currently spending a disproportionate number of hours reviewing planning applications, this is not part of the role of the clerk, this needs to be reviewed by Council. The Clerk also travels to the parishes to update noticeboards, this could be undertaken by Councillors to assist with workload.

In the past, there have been issues which have involved lengthy discussions with the Monitoring Officer. I suggest that any future issues of this nature are clearly recorded (time, duration and precise reasons) and paid for in addition to the clerks normal working hours.

It will be useful for the Clerk to provide a monthly update to the Council on her activities in the form of a clerk's report. Sometimes the clerk will be working on tasks that the Council is not aware of (or only one or two Councillors) so it is an opportunity to summarise what has been worked on.

JOB PROFILES AGREED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS AND THE SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS:

PROFILE 1

The job requires predominantly practical and procedural knowledge across a technical or specialist area or an equivalent level of organisational, procedural and policy knowledge. e.g. Small or medium parish.

The job requires judgmental or creative skills; where there is some need to interpret information or situations and to solve straightforward problems.

The job involves exchanging orally or in writing varied information with a range of audiences; or exercising advisory, guiding, negotiating or persuasive skills, e.g. Up to 6 meetings a year.

The job involves working within recognised procedures, which leave some room for initiative. The work may involve responding independently to unexpected problems and situations. The jobholder generally has access to guidance on unusual or difficult problems. e.g. No devolved functions.

The job involves some direct impact on the well-being of individual, or groups of people, through undertaking tasks or duties, which are to their direct benefit, or impact directly on their health and safety.

The job involves limited, or no direct responsibility for the supervision, direction or co-ordination of other employees. The work may involve demonstration of own duties, or advice and guidance, to new employees, or others, e.g. No Staff.

The job involves some direct responsibility for financial resources. The work regularly involves either handling of cash, or processing of cheques, invoices or equivalent; or being accountable for small expenditures from an agreed budget or equivalent income e.g. Typical budget of up to £25,000.

The job involves some direct responsibility for physical resources. The work regularly involves either some responsibility for security of buildings, external locations or equivalent; or day-to-day maintenance of equipment or premises; or ordering, or stock control of, a limited range of supplies.

PROFILE 2

The job requires predominantly practical and procedural knowledge across a technical or specialist area or an equivalent level of organisational, procedural and policy knowledge, e.g. Small or medium parish.

The job requires judgmental or creative skills; where there is some need to interpret information or situations and to solve straightforward problems.

The job involves either exchanging orally or in writing varied information with a range of audiences or exercising advisory, guiding, negotiating or persuasive skills, e.g. 6-12 meetings per year.

The job involves working within recognised procedures, within which the jobholder is required to organise own workload. The work involves making decisions as to when and how duties are to be carried out, and responding independently to unanticipated problems and situations. The jobholder generally has access to guidance on serious problems, e.g. 2 devolved functions.

The job involves considerable direct impact on the well-being of individual, or groups of, people, e.g. Many statutory functions.

The job involves considerable direct responsibility for the supervision, direction, co-ordination or training/development of other employees. The work involves the allocation of work to a small group or team, checking of work, and the direction of staff, including, where appropriate, on-the job training, e.g. Small team of up to 10 staff.

The job involves considerable direct responsibility for financial resources. The work involves either: Accounting for large sums of money, in the form of cash, cheques, direct debits, invoices, or equivalent, where care, accuracy and security are important; or being accountable for considerable expenditures from an agreed budget or equivalent income. The responsibility may include contributing to the setting and monitoring of the relevant budget and ensuring effective spend of budgeted sums, e.g. Typical budget £25,000 – £250,000.

The job involves considerable direct responsibility for physical resources. The work involves either cleaning, maintenance and repair of a range of equipment, buildings, external locations or equivalent, or security of buildings, external locations or equivalent; or ordering, or stock control of, a range of equipment and supplies.

In relation to Objection 3d, we are not interested in individual invoices, the objection was accepted more in the general sense regarding that if invoices were not in the SharePoint folder, how was the Chair able to assure herself regarding the invoices being authorised for payment in the second half of 2023/24.

Response:

d. the authorisation and payment of invoices;

Response:

Please specify the invoices in question.

Payments to be agreed are listed on the payment list, contractual and payments that have been listed along with pre-authorized payments. Authorised and minitued payments are then included in the minutes.

Clarification of the invoice payment process

Invoices are placed in the monthly folder as part of the document pack made available to all councillors for review.

Invoices are then listed and authorised at council meetings, with the decisions recorded in the minutes. This includes both contractual and pre-authorised payments.

Once authorised, the clerk enters the payment details into the council's online banking system. At the time referred to, two councillors were authorised to provide the second electronic signature that triggers payment. These were Cllr Sue Hewitson and Cllr Robert Foster.

The whole council is notified when payments are ready to be authorised, after which either of the designated councillors can complete the process.

Once paid, invoices are copied from the Meeting Pack to the Invoices file, assigned a payment reference number that matches the spreadsheet record, and stored electronically for audit purposes (where legally permissible).

In response to the question raised:

The responsibility for authorising payments does not rest solely with the chair; both the chair and Cllr Robert Foster have authority. Notifications are sent to the whole council, not just to individuals.

If any councillor has a query about an invoice, they should raise it with the clerk, who will confirm its details and location of the invoice. To date, there has been no instance of invoices being "missing", and no such issue has been identified by the auditor.

As stated in the council's original response, the invoices referred to are not specified, as there is no evidence of any being absent.

All councillors have full access to both the Meeting Packs and the Invoice file within SharePoint.