



## **DISS TOWN COUNCIL**

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Report Number:

**09 /1920**

Report to:	Full Council
Date of Meeting:	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2019
Authorship:	Town Clerk
Subject:	Responsible Finance Officer Recruitment

### **Introduction**

1. The Council's Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) submitted her resignation on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 and her last working day will be 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019.
2. The Council therefore needs to recruit a replacement as quickly as possible particularly as it coincides with the Clerk's annual leave during August.
3. This has provided the opportunity to review the finance administration roles of the Council now that the maintenance team staffing has been reviewed.
4. The RFO, Deputy Clerk and Clerk met to review the RFO's job description (Appendix A) alongside the job descriptions of the additional two finance related posts (Appendix B & C).

### **RFO post**

5. The RFO currently works 30 hours per week and one proposed amendment regarding line management has been included to the job description at point c (Appendix A).
6. The Council is required under the Local Government Act s151 to have an appointed Responsible Finance Officer. The RFO title could be assigned to the Clerk with a Finance Officer employed to undertake most of the tasks now completed by the RFO, without overall responsibility and some Council's operate in this way.
7. Given the relatively recent appointments of the Clerks, current demands, and a new Council, it is considered better risk management for the RFO & Clerk roles to be remain separate.
8. Outsourcing some of the accounting work is not deemed an appropriate option given the above and significant costs estimated to be around £400 per day.
9. With the completion of the Heritage Triangle Project and streamlining of systems and processes, it is recommended that Council consider reducing the number of hours of the RFO post to 25 per week.
10. A further recommendation is to increase the notice period of the new RFO post to three months given that this is a senior Officer post to reduce the risk to Council of having this post vacant for longer than necessary.

### **Finance / Admin post**

11. The Finance / Admin Assistant currently works 18 hours per week over three days and the job description accurately reflects the finance aspects of the role (Appendix B).

12. Council recently reviewed its internal controls, which recommended that payroll would be carried out by a senior Officer. This has been removed from both Assistant roles and added to that of the Deputy Town Clerk and appropriate training will be provided. It is essential that more than one staff member can process payroll in order to ensure staff are paid during absences.
13. The Finance / Admin role was extended to provide administrative support to the main office and the administrative duties have been more clearly defined in the amended job description (Appendix B).
14. The Finance / Admin Assistant currently spends at least one day per week undertaking administrative duties. In order to provide additional administrative cover, it is proposed that these hours are worked Tuesday – Thursday rather than the current Monday to Wednesday arrangement.
15. There are no proposed changes to the weekly working hours of this role.

### **Admin / Finance post**

16. The Administrative / Finance Assistant currently works 25 hours per week. The primary finance duties relate to maintaining the sales ledger given the postholder's extensive knowledge of bookings (see item 3 of Appendix C).
17. There are several changes proposed to this post. The Admin / Marketing postholder assists the Clerks in the preparation of meeting agendas and assists with the Town Mayor's diary so these have been removed. Ordering stationery has been included in the Finance / Admin post.
18. Additional duties have been included to better reflect this role.

### **Recruitment Timetable**

19. Given the RFO is only contracted to work a one-month notice period, there will not be an opportunity for a hand over to their successor. The Clerks will meet with the RFO prior to her departure to undertake such.
20. In order to recruit a new RFO with a minimal gap in staffing of this role, it is proposed that the advert (Appendix D) goes live by 19<sup>th</sup> July with the following recruitment timetable:

Application deadline – 16<sup>th</sup> August  
 Shortlist – w/c 19<sup>th</sup> August  
 Interviews – w/e 30<sup>th</sup> August  
 Start date – asap / 1<sup>st</sup> October (assuming one-month notice period)

21. The Deputy Clerk will be available to help the shortlisting process and the Clerk returns from leave on 27<sup>th</sup> August so will be available for interviews.
22. The payment run & payroll for July will be authorised by the Clerk prior to her leave and authorised by the Deputy Town Clerk during August.
23. It is proposed that the post is advertised for free on the following; Council's website with links on social media, the Clerk Forum, Norfolk Association of Local Councils, via the Job Centre, Indeed, LGRC, posters on the notice boards and via word of mouth.
24. Paid for advertising via the Society of Local Council Clerks was used when recruiting the Deputy Town Clerk and no enquiries were received.

### **Budget**

25. Assuming the new RFO starts on SCP 20 of the new salary scale range SCP 19-23, these proposals will reduce the Council's staffing budget by £2,671 bringing the total Admin staffing wages cost for 2019-20 from £160,125 to £157,454. There will also be a further saving during the two months gap in RFO staffing during August and September.

**Recommendations**

1. To advertise the Responsible Finance Officer post on 25 hours per week as per the aforementioned job description, specification, advert & recruitment timetable.
2. To increase the notice period of the RFO post to three months.
3. To approve the revised job descriptions of the Finance / Admin and Admin / Finance posts.