

MISTERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Interview Panel Established to Appoint a Receptionist for The Misterton Centre, held in the Church Room on Thursday 4th January, 2007

Present: Councillors Batty and Keat

No members of the public were present, but Councillor White was present for part of the meeting

06/07/362 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved: That Councillor Keat be appointed Chairman.

06/07/363 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Moffett (important, unforeseen business commitment).

Councillors Batty and Keat considered that, as the Parish Council had established an interview panel of three members, it would be inappropriate for an appointment to be made with just two Members present, and, therefore, the Panel would submit a recommendation for an appointment to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

06/07/364 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

06/07/365 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Resolved: That, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be excluded, and they are requested to withdraw.

06/07/366 COUNCILLOR WHITE

Councillor White remained in that part of the room reserved for the public, and said that, as a Member of the Parish Council, he should be allowed to stay for the interviews. The Chairman and Clerk explained to Councillor White that he was not a member of the Interview Panel and, therefore, it would be best if he were to leave. Councillor White suggested that, as the Panel was short of one Member, he should join it. However, it was explained to him that he had not been authorised by the Parish Council to serve on the Panel.

After some discussion, during which Councillor White protested that he had not received an agenda and that the interviews were being held at an inconvenient time, he did leave, but remained in the foyer, talking to the first candidate for interview, Mrs. Barry.

A discussion ensued, when the Clerk explained that he was unsure as to the precise legal position. Certainly, a resolution had been passed under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, but he could not say for certain whether this applied to Councillor White, a Member of the Parish Council. He was fairly certain that, as the Parish Council had determined the way in which the interviews were to be held, Councillor White was not entitled to be present, but was not 100% certain.

The Panel and the Clerk were extremely concerned that Councillor White was bringing himself and the Parish Council into disrepute, but recognised the fact that it would not be possible to obtain an immediate legal ruling. In the circumstances the Panel agreed that, if Councillor White insisted on returning to the room during the interviews, each candidate would be asked whether he or she agreed to proceed on that basis. The Clerk acquiesced in view of the fact that, as he was unsure of the legal position, he did not want to be a party to a denial of Councillor White's rights as a Member of the Parish Council.

06/07/367 INTERVIEWS

Mrs. Barry was invited into the room for interview, and was followed in by Councillor White. The Chairman asked Mrs. Barry if she was happy to proceed with Councillor White present, and she said she was. The interview then proceeded. However, most unfortunately, Councillor White began taking notes.

When the interview was concluded, the Chairman asked Mrs. Barry if she was happy with the way her interview had been conducted, and she said she was.

Mrs. Barry left the room, followed by Councillor White, who remained in the foyer, talking to the next candidate Ms. Deakin.

The Clerk then expressed his grave dissatisfaction over Councillor White's presence, both in the room during interviews and also outside in the foyer talking to candidates, and suggested that the Chairman explain to Councillor White that, although the precise legal position regarding his presence was uncertain, the Panel would prefer Councillor White to leave the building, as his presence was not appropriate to the interview process and was unfair to the candidates.

Both the Chairman and Councillor Batty said that they shared the Clerk's dissatisfaction.

Councillor White was requested to return to the room, when the abovementioned concerns were expressed to him. A lengthy discussion took place, delaying the second interview considerably. It was stressed to Councillor White by the Chairman that he was not being instructed to leave the building, but was being asked to. It was up to him to decide.

During the discussion, Councillor White repeatedly told the Panel that he knew whom they were going to recommend for appointment. The Chairman told Councillor White that this was preposterous, but Councillor White maintained that it was true. Councillor White also referred to the notes he had taken, and enquired as to what use he could make of them, whilst acknowledging that they were confidential. He was told that the notes were confidential and should remain so. He then asked if he could divulge them to the Parish Council, and was told that he possibly could divulge them to the Parish Council in confidential session, although the Clerk would make enquiries about this and the whole issue.

Also during the discussion, the Clerk attempted to reason with Councillor White, telling him that he was bringing himself and the Parish Council into disrepute, and that his interference with the interview process was inexcusable. Councillor White refused to acknowledge the Clerk, telling him to speak through the Chair.

After a delay of almost fifteen minutes, Councillor White voluntarily left the building, saying that he was going to report the matter to the Monitoring Officer.

The following candidates were then interviewed:

Sally Deakin
Kevin Dunne
Andrea Sly

All three candidates said they were happy with the way their interviews had been conducted.

After the interviews were completed, the Panel unanimously agreed on the person to be recommended for appointment.

Resolved: That, subject to satisfactory references and Police vetting, a recommendation be made to the Parish Council accordingly.

