

Clerk's Report
Southwell Town Council
Full Council Meeting
20 May 2026

The Clerk had a pre-planned/agreed holiday this month, so was out of the office for two weeks. She is now mostly caught up with any issues that arose during her absence.

Finance

- Bank Access and Signatories Updated (NatWest), but payments have been difficult because there is a time lag on getting biometric approval on the app. Salaries were paid by telephone banking again.
- CCLA is ongoing- need to agree signatories and current signatories to action.
- NatWest has refunded all charges for in branch transactions done in order to pay staff in April. They have also added an additional £150 in compensation for the inconvenience. Thanks to Cllr Harris for following through on the complaints procedure and securing the refund and compensation.
- A meeting with NCC payroll on outsourcing will take place on 15 May.
- Pensions – have recently got access and need to update leavers.
- The 26/27 Budget has been entered into Rialtas. The Clerk worked with Rialtas to fix any issues, but any comments on the reports are welcome, so the Clerk can look into any remaining issues.
- Trudy has been working part-time as the temporary Finance Assistant (MWF) and comes with a strong background in processing invoices and keeping financial records using financial software.
- The digital filing system needs to be organised, and this could require several hours of work. The email inbox also needs to be organised and files created. This process will also require several hours of work. Therefore, it is suggested that someone be dedicated (temp or part-time) to do this organisation work along with Trudy and alongside the existing workload.

IT

- Quotes for a full-service provider for email and all office-relevant software as well as cyber security, storage and hardware are being gathered and the Clerk met virtually with three providers. One provider will come to the STC offices to do an assessment of the existing systems and hardware. The quotes will be presented at the June G&F or FC meeting.
- Aubergine has requested that documents and other items to be uploaded to the new website be gathered by the Clerk. They will not take from the old website. This will involve several hours/days of work to gather everything from digital files. They also recommended removing any unlicensed photos and replacing them with short drone footage videos on the homepage. Quotes are being gathered for this.
- An upgrade to council email accounts was completed in late April. The transition was not smooth and some data were lost. Various issues remain and the Clerk is contacting Vision ICT for resolutions. IT security breaches and issues are being reported to Vision ICT until a new provider is in place.
- Some email inboxes contain thousands of emails. The staff need time to sort/organise/delete from inherited inboxes. With the daily workload, there is not much time to do this. This also applies to desktop files and shared drive files. A system for organising and storing information which is consistent (naming, categorising) with appropriate permissions is required – this system also needs to be easily transferred in the case of staff changes. No apps/accounts/contracts should be named or assigned to individuals unless it is required by the providers. Redundant or old email addresses should be deleted and forwarded to active accounts where appropriate. This will ensure that any staff coming into a position can log on to accounts without issue. The new IT provider can also help with this.

Administration

- The temporary Administrative Assistant, Tracy, found a permanent role elsewhere, and the Clerk would like to extend her thanks to Tracy for all the great work she did at STC and congratulations on the new job. Hilary has started on the Reception desk, also as a temporary staff member, and the Clerk extends her thanks for all the cover Hilary has provided during the Clerk's annual leave.
- Hilary is working on various tasks and is also working to organise the office as well as the shared drive. Markets and events (planning) are also an area where Hilary is providing support.
- Additional support for large events as well as markets should be considered as they can be very time consuming. It is the Clerk's understanding that in the past there was a part-time staff member to manage events. The Clerk proposes to use a temp to help with markets and events at least until the September Garden Party which was agreed by TE Committee.

Estates

- The Clerk would like to recognise and extend sincere appreciation to our Grounds Staff for all their hard work to not only make the town look beautiful, but also to support biodiversity by maintaining natural habitats. Positive feedback on the work of the Grounds Staff has been received via a post on the Southwell Community Chat Facebook, noting how good the Little Burgage and the Burgage look. There were 78 likes and 2 supportive comments received. The Clerk would also like to discuss a possible proposal for staff appreciation options with the HR Committee at their next meeting.
- The Estate Operations Manager took the Clerk around to most of the areas of work in Southwell to discuss ongoing and regular projects as well as work to be planned/completed. The Clerk will follow up on any future planning for works to ensure supplies and equipment are funded (either through existing budgets or grants).

Human Resources

- The Clerk's suggested staffing plan was submitted to the HR Committee. The Clerk's recommendations are based on qualifications, duties, establishing more efficient systems and processes, and number of hours per week needed to support the various workloads. It should be noted that any revisions/reductions in the recommendations could result in workload management issues for staff.
- The rhythm of work in the office fluctuates and there are ebbs and flows to requirements (often procedural obligations), causing workloads to be heavier at certain times. This can result in extra hours being worked, which is unavoidable. Having a reasonable time off in lieu (TOIL) policy will help to avoid the need for excessive overtime. It was suggested by the Clerk that the amount of TOIL accrued could reach 21 hours (roughly three days) before staff were required to use it. This allows for flexibility during busy periods but also ensures staff would not accrue excessive amounts of TOIL. The Clerk advises that a lower limit could result in either staff working without pay (because many deadlines are actual requirements and staff have no choice but to meet them) or could result in staff requesting overtime payments because their TOIL limit was exceeded. The anticipation is that 21 hours would very rarely be reached, but it would be a reasonable upper limit for TOIL accrual to avoid the aforementioned issues.
- Full Council will be asked to approve job adverts so that staff can be recruited to open positions. The Estates team job descriptions have been updated and will also be reviewed based on actual/current workloads.

Projects

- The Clerk is working on designing public consultation surveys for such events as the Annual Town Meeting to better gauge the priorities, especially in relation to grant funding.
- Grant funding options are being explored, and the Clerk is working to complete applications, gather feedback and provide quotes for committee review. Areas being considered are accessibility, parks and recreation with a focus on wellbeing as well as inclusivity for all, and green spaces/environment. Surveys will help to focus on the needs and priorities of the community.