

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
GOVERNANCE AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE 23rd July 2019

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present : The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Susan Boulter, Bernard Hunt, Paul Stevens, Kevin Tillett, Diana Toynbee, Brian Wilcox and Rob Williams and Cat Hornsey (part) also attended.

Also attending: Steve Kerry Town Clerk and Tracy Morriss Deputy Town Clerk (part)

GP2019/20.25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Dykes, Powell, Kenyon and Andrews.

GP2019/20.26 SUBSTITUTIONS

Noted that Councillor Tillett was substituting for Councillor Andrews and that Councillor Toynbee was attending out of interest in the agenda, and Councillor Hornsey regarding the Youth Council item (6) as she had been on the working group, and not as substitutes.

GP2019/20.27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were made at the start of the meeting.

GP2019/20.28 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Stevens and unanimously

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 11th June 2019 be accepted as a true record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

GP2019/20.29 YOUTH COUNCIL

The Chair thanked Cllr Hornsey and the Deputy Town Clerk for attending specifically for this item and proposed to move it up the agenda, which was agreed.

The Deputy Town Clerk introduced the report and gave an account of the process by which issues had been examined and the views of the members of the Youth Council had been sought. The Chair asked if Cllr Hornsey wanted to add anything and she confirmed that she fully supported the recommendations, and that the account of the processes that had led to them was accurate.

Cllr Wilcox expressed some concern that no members of the Youth Council were present at the meeting but was reassured by the Deputy Town Clerk that the recommendations as presented reflected their views. There had been an issue with getting the working group together, and the council members had been changed because one of the original choices had been unavailable. The clash with work and college commitments balanced against member availability had been impossible within the tight timescale and so two separate discussions had taken place and the combined results were the finished report.

It was noted that some members wish to see the Youth Council operating as autonomously as possible, but that with ten Youth Councillors who could all be under 18, it is necessary to have at least two responsible adults present and that the two who normally attend, Ben Lea and the Deputy Town Clerk have specific roles.

The presence of one or two city councillors at some future meetings for mentoring and help with marketing is of benefit but does not remove the need for the two officers mentioned to be at meetings.

There was considerable discussion about the role of the Youth Council in appointing the Junior Mayor, and Councillor Boulter expressed concern about the effectiveness of the publicity put out through the Youth Council which had yielded only three applicants. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that in many years there have been only two or three applicants and that there would have been at least five if all the parental permissions had been returned. It was noted that the October 2017 resolution referred to in the report is based on the assumption of a December council meeting, which has now changed. The Mayor advised that she, the Deputy Town Clerk and the Mayor's Officer would work around that to find a suitable venue and means for inducting the Junior Mayor once chosen.

Members also discussed the importance of safeguarding training not only for members who will be dealing directly with Youth Councillors in a mentoring or advisory role, or who are being shadowed by a youth member in their city role, but also in the wider context of dealing with vulnerable adults in ward work. The recommendations on safeguarding were amended as shown below.

In order to improve awareness, the agendas and minutes of Youth Council meetings will be circulated to members of the Council and Youth Councillors invited to attend a city council or committee meeting.

It was then proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Tillett and unanimously

RESOLVED

That Youth Council support by officers should remain as currently in place.

Cllrs Hornsey and Powell to attend Youth Council meetings when available to assist with providing mentoring and other offers of support where needed.

Youth Councillors will have the opportunity to shadow the above Councillors in their council work.

Cllr Hornsey will support and assist the Youth Councillor responsible for marketing and promotion with the delivery of this role.

The Youth Council to continue to be responsible for the delivery of the Junior Mayor and the selection process as resolved at the meeting of this Committee in October 2017 (subject to adjustment regarding the December Council Meeting).

The Youth Council to produce two videos, one for recruitment of youth councillors and one for the Junior Mayor which can be taken out to schools and other youth

groups by the Mayor and other Councillors to promote the Youth Council and the role of the Junior Mayor.

Dates, agendas and minutes of Youth Council meetings to be circulated to all city councillors.

Councillor Hornsey will take Youth Council application packs and other information to the Hinton Community Group event on 6th August.

Councillors and officers supporting/mentoring the Youth Council or individual youth councillors to have level two safeguarding training and for this training to be offered to all other councillors if they wish to take it up.

That a draft safeguarding policy be presented to the next meeting of this Committee.

That all these conclusions be reported to the next meeting of the Youth Council and that any further comments from the Youth Council be reported to the next meeting of this Committee.

At the conclusion of this item Cllr Hornsey and the Deputy Town Clerk left the meeting.

GP2019/20.30 HARMONISATION OF ANNUAL LEAVE AND CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

The Clerk explained that the principle of harmonisation of conditions of service with Hoople and Herefordshire Council, approved as a general principle at the last meeting before the elections, had thrown up an anomaly about the way annual leave is treated around Christmas. Herefordshire Council have more days of annual leave given to staff but insist that leave is taken on some days when their offices are closed. It was not proposed to introduce a similar policy for the City Council staff. There was no service need to open the offices on the days when they have been closed in former years. Staff were happy with the current arrangement which was to close the City Council offices on the three working days between Christmas and New Year, and to give staff a reduced flexible leave entitlement to be taken when they wished subject to the need to cover key elements of work and keep sufficient people in the office when it was open.

Cllr Wilcox confirmed that while in general harmonisation is a good principle and has been followed in many elements of the new staffing procedures and employment contracts it was not always practical or appropriate, and some variations such as this one are sensible.

There was a further complication this year in that Herefordshire had announced, without any consultation with their tenants, that the Town Hall would be closed on Christmas Eve. A direction was needed from the Committee as to whether staff would be required to work in offices opened by one of the key holders (Clerk and Deputy), staff would be expected not to work but lose a day's leave or Time Off In Lieu, or that, if the offices were closed by the landlord, the Council would not expect staff to work nor suffer a penalty from something imposed on them.

After a brief discussion it was proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Stevens and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes that the present arrangement suits both staff and the Council and is well understood. It therefore remains unchanged and the new contracts of employment would be modified accordingly.

That the Committee noting the unilateral closure of the Town Hall by Herefordshire Council, agrees that staff will not be expected to work on 24th December, and that this be granted as an additional concession day on this specific occasion.

GP2019/20.31 FORMATS FOR REPORTS

The Clerk introduced the report and explained that the format in which it was presented was in fact the proposed format for future reports, and had been used for many years for the majority of items presented to Committee and Council.

In discussion members expressed a wish to see page numbers as suggested as an option, these would be positioned at the bottom of each page in the centre.

Also, the opening paragraph headed "Background" should explicitly set out the purpose of the report, i.e. why is a decision needed now and what is the decision required. To act as a reminder this paragraph would be retitled "Purpose of report and background" as a standard heading.

Members considered the possibilities of adding a title footer to every page and a coloured or greyscale logo on the agenda front sheet but saw no need to change current practice.

It was then proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Stevens and unanimously

RESOLVED That the committee format as proposed be adopted as standard for all committees and council meetings, with the addition of page numbers and the change of title of the first paragraph in every report to "Purpose of report and background".

GP2019/20.32 PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The Clerk reported that when drawing up the list of policies and procedures listed elsewhere on the agenda he had trawled some other parish council websites to check for completeness. This area of dealing with compliments, comments or complaints was an obvious gap and he had drafted a policy based on best practice examples from other parishes to meet that need.

Councillor Wilcox noted it was a pity this hadn't been in place earlier since two staff (the Deputy Town Clerk and the Finance Officer) had been complimented by the Lord Lieutenant for their sterling efforts to make the Shire Hall look presentable on Armed Forces Day and the Clerk added that Cllr Kenyon had been extremely complimentary about the support given on a roadshow outing by the Administration and Information Officer. It was noted that the register of compliments could be backdated if the Committee agreed.

It was then proposed by Councillor Tillett, seconded by the Mayor and

Resolved that the proposed procedure for dealing with compliments, comments and complaints be agreed and that it be applied with effect from 1st May 2019.

GP2019/20.33 CITY COUNCIL EMAIL ADDRESSES

The Clerk reported that today he had printed an email circular sent to all councillors and posted hard copies of it to two members who did not have declared email addresses. It was his view that this was archaic. The matter had been before Committee before and this was a simplified process whereby members would be able to divert emails from the city address to another email account and deal with them there if they so wished. Advice on how to do this and a brief declaration concerning security and data protection issues would be prepared and the system could be live in two weeks once Committee agree.

Members noted that this was a simple solution and expressed happiness that this had been brought to a conclusion.

It was proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Williams and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee agrees to the implementation of the standard form of address for each councillor and for addresses in that form to be opened as soon as possible.

That all members be required to make the necessary declaration, in relation to the email address being used solely for Council business, and password protected so that their address can be opened.

That once the addresses are in place all office emails to members will in future use the city council addresses.

GP2019/20.34 COST OF VISIT TO VIERZON

The Clerk reported that the recommendation of this Committee that Community Development Committee consider financially supporting the dancers who were sent to Vierzon with the last twinning trip had not been supported. The Chair of CD Cttee had agreed to have the item on the agenda only if it was formal grant application and as the dancers were not from a formally constituted body, and there was insufficient time to produce an application this had not happened. The up-front costs had been paid by the Council and it was not time to seek reimbursement from those who had not been covered by the Committee's decision to finance the Mayor and Mayor's Officer. The dancers had been advised via the College that they would be funded and this could cause some difficulty if they were to receive invoices now.

There were wider issues noted about the budget pressures on the twinning budget this year as there had been a concentration of activity at one end of the year which had effectively committed a year's budget in the first month of the new financial year. Also the costs of the first Jaworzno visit had used a full year's budget for the link. The whole issue could now be usefully reviewed.

The Mayor added that the youngsters had been a great credit to the City and should be funded. Cllr Hunt commented that it would be very bad publicity for the Council if we now billed them.

It was then proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Hunt and unanimously

RESOLVED

That that Committee agrees that the three dancers and one musician are not billed for their share of the cost of the recent trip to Vierzon.

That a full report into the purpose, value, costs, resourcing and management of twinning and the Jaworzno link be made to the next meeting of the Committee.

GP2019/20.35 SUMMARY OF EXISTING POLICY STATEMENTS AND REVIEW TIMETABLE

The Clerk introduced the report and explained that as so much had been done in the last six months to draw up a set of up to date policies across a number of issues it was necessary for the Committee to review what had been done, identify any gaps and set review dates where they hadn't been declared when the policies would be presented to committee. The Chair added that although bullying and harassment are mentioned in both disciplinary and grievance procedures there might be a need for a discreet policy on these issues.

In discussion it was noted that the risk assessment of the Council should be added, with its annual review working through two committees to full council. It had been picked up in the report that a full review of parental leave and related issues was necessary and the Clerk recommended engaging external support to deliver this. It was noted that the Council has reaffirmed its acceptance of the Herefordshire code of conduct and that will continue to apply until a Council meeting resolves otherwise. The review of the code is the business of Herefordshire Council, but the City Council can choose to adopt their revisions or an alternative or write its own at any time.

Consideration was given to a single date of all policies to be reviewed at one meeting but this was felt would be likely to lead to blanket approval without the necessary scrutiny. Instead members wished to see every policy reviewed at least once in the lifetime of the administration, in manageable sets to enable proper consideration.

It was proposed by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Hunt and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the policies that have been produced.

That the Clerk commissions Hoople to support a full review of parental leave policies, and advise on the bullying and harassment policy issue noted above.

That the Committee requires each policy for which a specific review date has not been set should be reviewed at least once in the lifetime of each administration and the Clerk brings these forward to Committee as appropriate.

GP2019/20.36 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

In order to allow a confidential matter to be discussed, Councillor Hunt proposed, Councillor Stevens seconded and it was

RESOLVED That the press and public be excluded from the meeting and that the item being discussed is confidential.

GP2019/20.37 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 11TH JUNE

After a textual correction it was proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Boulter and

RESOLVED That the minutes as corrected were an accurate record and be signed accordingly by the Chair.

It was also noted that there was one former councillor who had achieved twenty five years' service and therefore some consideration should be given to an award of freedom, although this was not automatic simply on length of service. If a member wished to promulgate that cause they should speak with the Clerk so that a special report on their work and achievements could be brought to the committee as a confidential item.

GP2019/20.38 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Confidential business having been concluded the press and public were readmitted to the meeting.

GP2019/20.39 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the item on affiliation to the National and Herefordshire Associations of Local Councils which had been put forward during the last administration by a former councillor would not be brought forward unless requested by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, as the Chair of this Committee had declared a pecuniary interest in it.

Safeguarding training for councillors and a safeguarding policy for the council.

Twinning and link with Jaworzno – comprehensive review feeding into the business plan process.

Staffing implications arising from business plan initiatives.

Parental leave policy.

GP2019/20.40 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 1st October 2019 at 6 pm

Signed Date