

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
GOVERNANCE AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE 11th June 2019
MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Bernard Hunt, Mark Dykes, Brian Wilcox, Susan Boulter, Aubrey Oliver and Paul Stevens. Councillor Rob Williams attended part of the meeting.

Attending: Steve Kerry, Town Clerk

GP2019/20.11 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The Mayor asked for nominations for Chair of the Committee. It was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Hunt and unanimously

RESOLVED That Councillor Wilcox be appointed as Chair of the Committee.

Councillor Wilcox asked for nominations for Vice Chair of the Committee. It was proposed by Councillor Dykes, seconded by Councillor Boulter and unanimously

RESOLVED That Councillor Stevens be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee.

GP2019/20.12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk reported apologies from Councillors Andrews, Kenyon and Powell and from Councillor Williams for lateness.

GP2019/20.13 SUBSTITUTIONS

The Clerk reported that Councillor Andrews had nominated Councillor Oliver as her substitute. The Chair thanked Councillor Oliver for stepping in for this meeting.

GP2019/20.14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made at the start of the meeting.

GP2019/20.15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

It was proposed by Councillor Dykes, seconded by Councillor Stevens and

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 30th April be accepted as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

GP2019/20.16 YOUTH COUNCIL

The Clerk introduced the report, explaining that a number of connected issues had been raised with him in recent months by individual members. Tackling each of these piecemeal could have led to confused and possibly contradictory decisions and he had felt it was more appropriate to bring all the areas of review into a single working group remit. This would enable members, officers, youth council members and support staff from Close House all to be involved and lead to a single set of coherent proposals for the future. It was important to recognise the progress the youth council had made and that it was now a well-established group.

Councillor Stevens suggested that the two youngest members of the City Council should be the representatives on this group, but unfortunately neither of them was at the meeting. Nonetheless he felt that Councillors Powell and Williams were well placed. Other members agreed and Councillor Wilcox said he had discussed this with Councillor Williams who was keen to do it.

On the wider issue of the make up of the working group it was felt there did not need to be two council officers as well as two members. The Clerk advised that if there was only one officer it should be the Deputy Clerk who had had been heavily involved in starting the youth council and has supported it throughout its growth and development to its present position. In answer to a query it was confirmed that this did not pre-determine the issue of officer support going forward, but simply ensured the working group had the best advice available from an officer who was heavily involved in the issue. The terms of reference included reviewing support from the officer team for the ongoing work of the youth council.

The wording of item 3.1.3 in the terms of reference was discussed in detail, and it was felt that this was too prescriptive in terms of the youth council's role in appointing the Junior Mayor. It was noted that the Junior Mayor is an ex-officio member of the youth council, and that on completing their term they are invited to remain on that body, so some involvement is clearly appropriate. The wording of this term of reference was changed to read "To examine the involvement of the youth council in choosing the Junior Mayor and how best to integrate this task with the roles of members and officers at the City Council."

Councillor Wilcox proposed, Councillor Dykes seconded and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee approves the setting up of a working group of two councillors, the Deputy Town Clerk, a member of the youth council and the senior officer at Close House to address the terms of reference as amended by the Committee and to report to the next meeting of this Committee on 23rd July 2019.

That the two members on the working group be Councillors Powell and Williams.

GP2019/20.17 FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The Clerk explained that this had been approved in principle at the end of the previous administration, but they had felt it reasonable to ask the new council to consider it rather than imposing something on their successors. The idea was to have a council meeting when there was a key decision to be made, rather than just having a meeting because it was six weeks since the last one. This would hopefully improve attendance and give councillors a reason to attend every meeting if they could. This would lead to a reduction of two council meetings from eight to six per year. Committees had been invited to consider their own arrangements. Planning Committee had reduced from meeting every three weeks to every four and had streamlined its business to enable this. Community Development sometimes took grant applications at its Tuesday evening meetings if there was insufficient business for the Monday meetings during the day.

This Committee had previously met only once every twelve weeks but recently had moved to every six, and there had been some additional meetings on top of that because of the amount of business being progressed. The sensible plan is probably to keep the dates on the diary for the year and cancel meetings rather than reducing the frequency and then trying to reinstate venues at short notice if they were needed. Each committee has autonomy to determine their own date of next meeting.

The Chair suggested that to address the issue about members not being up to speed with committee business between council meetings, it would be useful for minutes to be prepared no later than one week after the meeting and checked with the Chair of each committee. Subject to that, the draft minutes could then be circulated to all members of Council and placed on the website. These would be clearly marked as DRAFT. Members agreed this would be a useful step.

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

RESOLVED

That the Committee agrees to recommend the proposals for a reduction in the frequency of council meetings from eight per year to six to the next meeting of full council for final approval.

That the recommendation includes a new proposal that draft minutes be circulated to all members of council after consultation with the Chair of each committee and presented on the website.

GP2019/20.18 TRAINING STRATEGY ISSUES

The Clerk introduced the report and explained that like the previous item this had been considered by the retiring council and had been referred to the new administration. It was possible that members would wish to commit at this stage to the training strategy for both officers and members, or that they may wish to wait until after the council has completed its first fully comprehensive corporate, or business, plan for many years. This was due to be presented to council on 29th October. Once that meeting had agreed the plan this would set the context for two other key decisions; a budget and financial strategy for the remaining term of this administration and an assessment of staff and member resources available to deliver the plan. The gap between the skills and knowledge of the staff and members available and those required to deliver the business plan would be addressed. This process, known as training needs analysis would align training decisions to specific objectives in the corporate plan.

In the decisions listed in the report for members of the committee, if the response to item 4.1 was to await the completion of the business plan then all the other decisions would naturally be put on hold to await that document.

The Mayor commented that the structure of completing a corporate plan, then quickly completing the Clerk's appraisal which he would then follow up with appraisals for staff would enable a proper training needs assessment to be done. It

was important, however, that this process did not drift and that timescales were kept to.

It was the proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Wilcox and unanimously

RESOLVED That members will resolve the issue of a training strategy after completion of the business plan for the Council and in the context of a training needs analysis for officers and members based on that plan.

GP2019/20.19 CITY COUNCIL EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR COUNCILLORS

The Chair introduced the background to this item and that he had asked for a brief report to be done setting out how addresses could be provided for those members that did not wish to use a personal email for city council business. In the past most twin-hatted members had used their Herefordshire Council address for council business for both councils, and had kept separate folder for documents etc. He felt it looked more professional if city council emails came from a common set of addresses rather than an ad hoc mixture of City Council, Herefordshire Council and personal.

Some members commented that they had already issued election addresses which included their email contact details and it would not be helpful to the electorate to try and introduce a change now. There was no opposition to making addresses available if members wished to use them, but equally several members did not wish to feel they were obliged to change from a system that was working for them and their constituents.

Members also considered whether they wished to have access to documents on the SharePoint system and there was little enthusiasm for this, especially in view of the earlier recommendation to send draft minutes of every committee meeting to every councillor and place them on the website.

The Clerk reminded members that it was the Council, not the individual member, that had responsibility under the GDPR and that members who wanted to use a City Council email address would be required to sign a protocol or code of conduct as described in the report.

It was noted that a Freedom of Information request for correspondence relating to an item could only apply to information held by the Council. Therefore, a legitimate request for sight of correspondence by a data subject would include emails from the councillor on the City Council system. The individual member would have to be served with a request if they were not using the Council system, and the Council could not therefore guarantee a complete or timely response. This would not create a legal liability for the Council but could cause considerable difficulty in closing a request properly.

It was noted that as well as offering email addresses to all members, Herefordshire Council also supplies a laptop to each of its members to enable them to have private use of a computer upon with the relevant email address is set up with a suitable password protection. The City Council is not proposing to offer this level of infrastructure support.

The Clerk suggested that the consensus of the meeting was to offer a City Council email address to any member that wanted to use it. The suggestion for SharePoint access to selected files would not be proceeded with.

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

RESOLVED That officers work up a proposal for members to be offered a City Council ward email address if they wish to use it.

GP2019/20.20 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

RESOLVED That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1(2) that the press and public be excluded to enable the discussion of a confidential item in which a member of the public would be personally identified.

GP2019/20.21 PROPOSAL TO AWARD THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY

The Mayor confirmed that she had asked for this item to be placed on the agenda and that she wished to propose a named individual for the honour of being made a Freeman of the City. The Mayor briefly summarised their achievements and service to the City.

Several members commented that they felt the named person was worthy of this honour and they would be happy to support it going forward.

Councillor Boulter proposed that consideration also be given to two other people who she felt were of equal eminence, but there was no seconder for this proposal and it was not put to the vote.

In answer to a query from Councillor Oliver, the Clerk explained that members could bring forward a recommendation of this nature at any time. It could be raised as an amendment to Council's consideration of this proposal, if the Committee agreed to refer it on. There might be some disadvantage in having a formal proposal referred from committee supported by a report which he would write, with assistance from the Mayor, and then trying to consider other proposals presented in debate without the back up of a prepared report. The Mayor added that she wished to have the proposal regarding the named individual she had referred to considered on its particular merits, rather than as a cluster of similar people.

It was noted that in the past the former District Council had awarded the freedom automatically on completion of twenty five years' service as a city councillor. This automatic provision had somewhat diminished the honour in the eyes of some, as had the automatic award to long serving senior staff. The Clerk added that he regarded his salary as the reward for his service, and that it was not appropriate to consider the freedom of the city as an award for doing a paid job. The unpaid service of a councillor was an entirely different matter.

It was proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Stevens and unanimously

RESOLVED That the individual mentioned by the Mayor be recommended to Council for the award of Freeman of the City of Hereford and that the Clerk will prepare a report setting out the reasons for this.

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

RESOLVED That automatic consideration should be given to awarding the Freedom of the City of Hereford to any councillor who has completed twenty five years' service on the Council, but that any award be made on merit.

GP2019/20.22 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved to readmit the press and public.

GP2019/20.23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Youth Council Working Group for 23rd July meeting

Freedom award (depending on Council's response) including an update on the use of vellum for the charter for 23rd July meeting

Summary of policies agreed recently with review dates and a list of policies needing to be reviewed for 23rd July meeting

Standard format of reports including a "resource implications" paragraph for 23rd July meeting

Relationship with National and Herefordshire Association of Local Councils.

GP2019/20.24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 23rd July at 6 pm at the Town Hall

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm.

Signed

Date