

# HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

## GOVERNANCE AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF MEETING 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018

**PRESENT:** The Right Worshipful, the Mayor, Cllr Susan Boulter and Cllrs Chappell, Dykes, Lloyd-Hayes (Chair), Michael (Vice Chair), Stevens and Tawn.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Steve Kerry (Town Clerk), Tracy Morriss (Deputy Town Clerk), Lesley Robinson (Administration, Finance & Information Officer).

*At the start of the meeting, the Chairman reminded all present of the fire evacuation procedure.*

#### **GP2018/19.23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bushkes, Hey, Kenyon and Wilcox.

#### **GP2018/19.24 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Cllr Dykes was a substitute member on behalf of Cllr Hey.

#### **GP2018/19.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **GP2018/19.26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Cllr Michael referred to page 4, item GP2018/19.19 'Councillors Training Programme', in that she had not yet received email confirmation of the agreed date for the training event. The Clerk responded that he would be sending the email confirmation to all Councillors this week, i.e. w/c 20<sup>th</sup> August 2018, as mentioned in correspondence at the recent Council meeting.

The **Minutes of the meeting of Governance & Procedures Committee of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018**, were subsequently agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chairman.

#### **GP2018/19.27 VC FOR CIVIC MUSEUM – INSURANCE COSTS**

Members received an oral report from the Town Clerk on the results of enquiries to insurance companies regarding one-off cover for the exhibit.

The Clerk had contacted various insurance outlets, however, he reported that no insurance companies could offer single-item insurance, and City Council was already signed up with Zurich Insurance Group. The price of VCs and their resale value varies widely, the average cost being between £220,000-£250,000 and the Clerk would contact Zurich Insurance to give them a revised figure which we now had clearance for.

In response to a member's query on whether the family were willing to make a contribution the Clerk advised members that since the last committee meeting there had been no correspondence with the family and the only communication had been through General Dennaro. It was requested that the Clerk send an email reminder to General Dennaro in respect of this consideration.

## GP2018/19.28 HEALTH AND SAFETY AND RELATED POLICIES

Members received a report from the Town Clerk to review the existing policies and detailed procedures relating to health, safety and welfare at work including sickness absence management and lone working.

The Clerk had updated the general Health and Safety policy, having checked with the SLCC and used comparators with other parish councils. There were a couple of additions, i.e. inclusion of the defibrillator and a section on lone working, which usually related to employees working unaccompanied when out and about rather than anyone lone working in the offices, where risks could be mitigated by engaging the security keypad lock on the entrance door to City Council's offices. We could also request that Herefordshire Council's CCTV coverage is extended to cover that entrance door.

Included with the policy was the fire risk assessment and explanatory notes for people who would be using the exhibition room on the ground floor of the building.

Members' comments and questions covered the following:

- **Lone-working** - Wi-fi camera could be installed to CC's system on Mayoral parlour (rather than extend CCTV coverage on HC's system).
- Some organisations have panic button systems for lone-workers - This option could alert the Police or a monitoring company.
- Previously observed when attending Town Hall building – Door to CC offices was wide open, Mayor's Secretary was on duty on his own, Mayor's parlour and door to silver room was open during a meeting with HBID - Concerned about security, perhaps we need an extra camera linked to that area?
- Maybe a response alarm is needed, e.g. if Mayor's Secretary was working alone and was taken ill.
- CC has a duty of care to look after its staff plus, a camera would also highlight who is coming in and out.
- **Defibrillator/First Aid** – Although the Clerk indicated no defibrillator training was required, how often do we have first aid training?
- The Mayor had recently completed a first-aid course which included defibrillator training.
- Is there a sign displayed that we have a defibrillator on-site?
- **Injury at Work** - Policy includes Roadshow, but no mention in 12.1 onwards of Mayor's car - Who is responsible for general checks on Mayor's car, e.g. Checking oil, tyres, mileage, etc? What happens if vehicle has not been used for a long time?
- **Review of all policies** - Many of HC's policies are reviewed annually - Suggest that reviewing annually is best practice.
- Committee agreed to have the policies written up and kept in a filing cabinet for members to refer to when needed - We must now be careful on what needs to be reviewed.
- Agree with Clerk there's no need for CC to do annual policy review - HC does annual review of risk register - School Governors, for example, would review their policies every 3 years.
- Observation by a 2015 intake Councillor – This is first insight of these policies as they had never been brought forward – Documents need to be more professional when re-written, with correct logo included etc. These policies should be looked at in respect of an audit commission.
- Policies could be reviewed and reduced in a staggered form, rather than all at the same time.
- Need to consider technology updates, including social media etc.

- **Sickness Absence** - If an employee worked part-time and held another job, how do we determine which is primary and secondary employment? There's also the voluntary sector to consider.
- Self-certification forms cover the employer in event of employee sickness.
- Has any employee used a self-certification form?
- **Fire Risk Assessments** – Suggest numbering the document pages. Believe it is HC's responsibility to review these.
- Concerned that only one officer is trained in use of fire extinguishers.
- Perhaps there should be an evening fire drill - Never been subject to one during evening committee meetings - Suggest also include fire evacuation procedure and escape routes on committee agendas.
- Worrying that members of the public using the Assembly Hall can include people with mobility issues who cannot use stairs and need to use the lift.
- Concerned Mayor's parlour has only one means of escape with the doors through to Assembly Hall generally being locked.

Following input by members, the Clerk responded as follows:

- **Lone Working** - In this respect, he would be happy to implement an extra CCTV camera and also investigate a panic button or fob alert response system.
- **First aid training** was undertaken as and when necessary, when a person was included on the first-aiders list.
- **Defibrillator Sign** - There was currently no sign for this displayed in the building and he would check if we could get one.
- **Mayoral car** can be added to the policy, under the Injury at Work section.
- Cars now have sophisticated warning lights for oil, tyres etc, where faults would automatically be indicated on dashboard - The person who would be driving the vehicle is responsible for making those checks.
- **Policy Review regularity** - There was no legislation which says that policies had to be reviewed annually and such frequency was not necessary. People do not take automatic reviews seriously and there was the danger that people may not read the policies properly.
- There were no recognised unions attached to HCC, so there was no need to seek any and we should be guided by the annual risk assessment as to what we need to look at.
- **Sickness Absence** – Nothing in employment law had changed with regard to this and there was no suggestion that the policy needs any revision. In the case of any long-term sickness absence, we would consult a HR representative as we had already done for a previous instance.
- Confirmed that the sickness absence policy was overdue for review but nothing needed to change on that policy.
- HCC would deal with our employees in our own right - Any second job held by employees would be dealt with separately by any other employer - Employees would need a certificate to show as 'unfit for work'.
- No self-certification forms had been submitted by staff, only some instances of an official doctor's certificate. With regard to frequent short-term sickness absences, suggest we review all sickness related items together but, separate the safety element from sickness when doing the reviews.
- **Fire Risk Assessments** - It was not recommended that the task of using fire extinguishers was done in conjunction with being a fire warden, whilst trying to evacuate the building. The Fire Service advise against this but, we could have a separate person trained in the use of fire extinguishers.

- Confirmed that reviews of fire risk assessments were the responsibility of Herefordshire Council and, that City Council was responsible for knowing those reviews were done.
- With regard to military collections, a protocol had been worked out with Herefordshire Council for using the ground floor exhibition space, which was operated without any problems when Colonel Taylor exhibited from the Light Infantry museum.
- Fire drill costs for the Town Hall building were covered by Herefordshire Council.
- **General** - References to the 'Personnel Sub-Committee' were not relevant to Hereford City Council and would be taken out of policy documents and changed appropriately.
- The trigger needed to remain as dealing with issues as and when they arose which was more effective.

The Deputy Clerk responded to points made by the Clerk, as follows:

- She referred to recent CiLCA training regarding roles and responsibilities of the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer where it was recommended that policies and procedures should be reviewed annually.
- With regard to reviewing policies at the second meeting after an election, new members elected to Hereford City Council may not have been Councillors previously and may not have the knowledge or experience to be able to consider these policies with competence.
- As designated fire warden, she has regular fire warden training which had included the use of extinguishers, however, she was informed only to use extinguishers in the event of escape routes being blocked.

The Clerk added that we could also change the current procedure to ensure that the doors from the Mayor's parlour through to the Assembly Hall are not locked, which would provide two escape routes from the parlour.

The Chair emphasised it was essential that all members of staff read the fire evacuation procedures and the Mayor's Officer had responsibility for escorting people out of the building.

**The Chair then put forward for consideration that, with committee's agreement, a reference to the fire evacuation procedure should be included on agendas for all committees, to cover ourselves and that the policies be referred to staff for consultation and consideration at the next meeting. All members agreed.**

#### **GP2018/19.29 STAFF MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

Members received a report from the Town Clerk with regard to review of the existing policies relating to disciplinary, grievance, bullying and harassment issues.

The Clerk explained he was proposing specific revisions of the disciplinary procedure. Every action required a panel of three members and lower levels would be dealt with by the Managing Officer, i.e. written warnings etc., which the Town Clerk would handle.

The Chairman queried two recommendations and the Clerk clarified that **point 6** related to the grievance procedure and **point 4** related to the disciplinary code. The grievance procedure had been tested for real, twice, and after that, was reviewed by three members. On the second grievance, the procedure worked with no problems, so no change was required.

Members' comments and queries covered the following:

- Is it appropriate to make decisions before starting consultation?

- Previous concerns about members of staff having contact with individual councillors whilst staffing procedures were being worked through need to be strongly emphasised.

Some members felt they needed more time to assimilate the large reports and the information contained within them.

Members of staff would be asked for their views on the current disciplinary procedure and the change proposed and their comments would be reported back to committee for consideration at the next meeting.

The Mayor left the meeting at 7.06pm to make keep a civic appointment.

It was noted that a non-disclosure statement can be added higher up at beginning of each procedure. All members agreed this should be standard on all final versions of procedures.

Where the Clerk is involved in a procedure, external HR advice would be sought as he cannot simultaneously prosecute a disciplinary or defend his actions against any grievance and offer professional or technical advice to a panel.

**Members resolved to put the policies to staff for consultation and consider them again at the next meeting.**

#### **GP2018/19.30 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was moved by Cllr Chappell, seconded by Cllr Stevens and

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the press and public be excluded to enable a confidential staffing matter to be discussed.**

#### **GP2018/19.31 COVERING MATERNITY LEAVE**

Members considered a confidential report from the Town Clerk concerning a member of staff who will be taking maternity leave and the appropriate cover arrangements to apply during that leave.

Cllr Chappell raised that, in line with standard procedures concerning discussion of confidential matters, the member of staff who was affected by this item should not be present and they left the meeting at this point.

The Town Clerk gave a brief overview of his report to members and his recommendations with regards to maternity cover. The Town Clerk made clear to members his reasons why only his recommendation should be considered.

Members considered all the options contained within the report and considered a balanced view on what was the best option for the City Council as well as the members of staff related to in this report.

Cross staff member working should apply to the other members of staff under the same title and they should be trained also on the finance system.

It was proposed that a person is employed on a temporary contract who is proficient/has knowledge of the Omega system to cover maternity leave and to train both other members of staff with regards to the finance system during their time with the City Council to enable future cross cover during

holidays and sickness. It was also suggested that there are many part-time parish clerks/RFO's who may consider additional temporary hours and this knowledge would be a further benefit. The discussion having concluded, the Chair asked if members were happy to go to the vote.

The Chair took the Clerk's recommendations one by one:

3.1 - Unanimously agreed.

3.2 - Unanimously agreed.

3.3 - 2 members voted for 3 members voted against.

3.4 and 3.5 of the Town Clerk's recommendations no longer applies because of the vote on 3.3.

The alternative proposal was put to the vote which the Member repeated followed by the Town Clerk:

4 members voted in favour, 1 member voted against.

**RESOLVED:**

**That a person is employed on a temporary contract who is proficient/has knowledge of the Omega system to cover maternity leave and to train both other members of staff within the Admin, Finance and Information Officer roles with regards to the finance system during their time with the City Council to enable future cross cover during holidays and sickness.**

Cllr Chappell left the room 19.43pm.

**GP2018/19.32 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

On completion of the confidential business, members agreed to readmit the press and public.

**GP2018/19.33 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Social media and website policies (next meeting)
- Receiving consultation responses from staff regarding staff management procedures (next meeting)
- Appraisal feedback and collated report (November meeting)

The Clerk suggested his idea for an open day in the run up to the election about 'if you are interested why don't you consider standing'?

Training - The Clerk mentioned he would send out an email to Councillors and added that it would also be useful for those Councillors who have not yet had their induction.

**GP2018/19.34 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

25<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at 6 pm

There was no further business and the meeting was closed at 7.51pm.

Signed .....

Dated .....