

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF GOVERNANCE AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

Hereford City Council Committee Room, Town Hall, Hereford

Tuesday 30th October 2018

At the start of the meeting the Chair reminded all present of the fire evacuation procedure.

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Sue Boulter and Councillors Chappell, Dykes, Griffiths, Lloyd-Hayes, Michael, Stevens, Tawn and Wilcox

In attendance: Steve Kerry Town Clerk, Tracy Morris Deputy Town Clerk, Lesley Robinson Administration, Finance and Information Officer

GP2018/19.45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hey.

GP2018/19.46 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Dykes was substituting for Councillor Hey

GP2018/19.47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

GP2018/19.48 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 25th September 2018 were agreed as a correct record after the following amendments. Councillor Chappell to be recorded as having sent his apologies and on page 2 the word “sued” to read “used”.

GP2018/19.49 BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY

The Town Clerk introduced the report which is the first of a series of updated or new policies and procedures other than the major staffing items which are ongoing and being worked through as the Committee directed in consultation with Unison before coming back to Committee. Business continuity for the Council is at present relatively straightforward, if and when we take over the management of the Town Hall it becomes much more of an issue. There had been a meeting with Herefordshire’s business continuity adviser to small businesses to verify the Council’s approach. The report was an account of what has been done with some suggestions for further work to be followed up.

In answer to questions from members it was agreed that the Clerk’s off site list of emergency contacts would be shared with the Deputy Clerk to enable better coverage of key contacts in an emergency. The situation with intruder alarms was unsatisfactory and would be explored with the current and potentially other suppliers to improve coverage.

It was proposed by Councillor Michael, seconded by Councillor Tawn and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the report and approves the measures taken to support business continuity.

That the Committee authorises the Clerk to obtain quotes for extending the intruder alarm coverage of the building and to make a further report to Finance and Policy Committee when this is done.

That the Committee notes that if the Council takes over the management of the Town Hall the business continuity issues will increase substantially and will need to be reviewed in preparation for that change.

GP2018/19.50 PAY AWARD

It was proposed by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes, seconded by Councillor Michael and

RESOLVED

That for the duration of discussion of this item, the press and public be excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1060 s1(2) as it was possible that the consideration of this item might involve the disclosure of personal information from which members of staff could be identified.

The Clerk introduced the report explaining that it was an audit requirement that a competent committee of the Council was advised of the effect of the recent pay award agreed at the National Joint Council. For as long as the City Council remained committed to the NJC rates and conditions of service it was bound in contract to implement any agreed variations to those terms. The Council had the option of giving notice to staff that it intended to withdraw from NJC terms if it wished to do so, but would have to negotiate a comprehensive service conditions and pay agreement locally. In the past, Council had resolved not to do this and to continue with the NJC terms which were the current contractual terms.

The 2018 award had been agreed and the revised values for each spinal column point on which a member of staff at the City Council is paid, and the number on each point was shown. The Clerk corrected the reported incremental progression but confirmed that the current rates were accurate as shown.

In answer to a question the Clerk confirmed that it was not possible at this stage to state exactly what the pay costs would be in 2019 as the actuarial report from Worcestershire (the Council's pension provider through our Admitted Body status within the Local Government Pension Scheme) and the application of the revised spinal points set for 2019 was not certain. Neither issue was likely to cause a significant adjustment but the precise budgeting of staffing costs would be resolved at Finance and Policy Committee when this further information was known.

It was proposed by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes, seconded by Councillor Michael and

RESOLVED That the Committee notes the revised values applicable to staff following the 2018 pay award and approves continuing pay staff within the NJC scales as shown in the report.

GP2018/19.51 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Clerk introduced the report which summarised the Council's practice of dealing separately with financial and non-financial risks, in accordance with the remits of the two committees responsible, and the practice now of bringing that process to a conclusion with a single report to Council. The purpose of this document was to standardise the assessment of risk so that numerical assessments would be comparable across all areas of activity and also to set as policy the Council's appetite for risk. The level of 9 as shown in the report meant that

the Council could would undertake activities with a measured level of risk rather than being entirely risk averse. If a proposal was assessed at a higher than that level additional risk mitigation would be applied to get the level down to the acceptable maximum.

In answer to questions it was confirmed that the Council does retain an office log book for accidents and dangerous occurrences and this will be kept with other key procedures and policies. After discussion it was decided that the Clerk will carry out a specific additional risk assessment regarding the receptionist and will if appropriate purchase a suitable personal alarm for them. It was also noted that there may be a case of an incident alarm for the Council Chamber linked to the Police and that the decision by Herefordshire Council to provide only one custodian on the site for out of office hours meetings meant that there were periods when the main doors were open and the desk was unstaffed.

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

RESOLVED

That the risk management policy be approved.

That the level of risk is reviewed annually at the Council Meeting after the budget is set, with each relevant committee receiving a report on risks within their remit.

That the Committee recommends this policy to Council and seeks endorsement of the maximum acceptable level of risk as 9 expressed in the assessment process set out above.

GP2018/19.52 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The Clerk introduced the report, adding that it was based on a template provided by the social media specialist who had done the recent member's training event. He drew specific attention to Paragraph 4 of the report where there were two options suggested, one for limited personal use and the other for an outright ban. Members considered the subjective nature of terms such as "reasonable" or "excessive" and reflected on the experience of discovering that an employee who has since the left the Council had stored a great deal of data relating to their private voluntary work on a Council machine. On balance it was felt necessary to amend the policy to impose a complete ban on personal use and storage of personal data by the employees or members on any facilities provided by the Council. Use of personal equipment during breaks is permitted. It was also noted in discussion that Twitter needs to be handled carefully and that the Council officer who covers this is very circumspect in his responses.

Members considered, and were in favour, of creating ward and role specific email addresses for members to use as part of the Council network provided from the server. Thus a member would have a ward identity which would pass on to their successor in the event of a resignation and by-election. Likewise committee chairs would have email addresses which would go with the role not the individual elected year to year into that role.

It was noted that the need introduce a policy meant that it would be served on staff and members when agreed by the Committee with a review at the February meeting, the result of which would be reported to full Council. While that was taking place the policy would be agreed by the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes, seconded by Councillor Wilcox and

RESOLVED

That subject to an amendment to paragraph 4 to ban all personal use of Council facilities and systems, the social media policy be adopted by the committee and served on staff and members.

That staff and members be invited to comment on the policy as agreed and that a review takes place at the meeting of the Committee on 5th February 2019 and thereafter a final policy is recommended to Council for adoption and periodic review.

GP2018/19.53 WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Town Clerk introduced the report and explained that a draft of this had been sent to the Unison branch secretary for comments and his suggestions had been incorporated into the draft now in front of the Committee. It was noted that paragraph 5.1 gives anyone wishing to whistle blow a variety of approved routes, and paragraph 7.1 gives the contact details of a charity that assist people in this situation to frame and report their concerns appropriately. In the context of the report under paragraph 5.1 the reference to the Audit Commission should be amended to read "The Council's External Auditor" and that the independent person for code of conduct complaints regarding councillors, the Police and recognised trades unions should be added to the list of approved routes for raising a concern. Given the range of people with whom contact could be made it would be possible to ensure that whoever investigates a complaint is independent of the matter being raised to ensure the fair application of the policy.

The Mayor left the meeting at this point to attend a civic engagement.

It was also confirmed that if whistle blowing reveals misconduct by a member of staff this would be dealt with as a disciplinary issue, if it reveals misconduct by a member of the Council it would be referred to the Monitoring Officer to consider under the Code of Conduct for members.

It was proposed by Councillor Michael, seconded by Councillor Griffiths and

RESOLVED

That the Committee approves the policy and agrees to review any comments, proposals or suggestions from staff, trades unions or other members of the Council at its meeting on 5th February 2019.

GP2018/19.54 SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA ITEM - EQUALITIES POLICY

Councillor Lloyd-Hayes confirmed that all members had received the supplementary agenda with this item at least three working days before the meeting and that it was therefore appropriate for it to be considered.

The Clerk introduced the report and explained that a commitment to equalities was a useful policy to underscore statements about harassment, dignity at work, equality in recruitment and other areas. The Council requires organisations submitting grant applications to demonstrate that they have adequate equalities policies and it was only right that the Council was up to date in this regard. Whilst there was very little risk of the Council being exposed to a claim of direct discrimination but there was a risk of a challenge around the use of terms which whilst perfectly acceptable many years ago had increasingly become anachronistic.

After some discussion members noted that the primary way of resolving how a postholder or consort should be addressed was to establish what term they were most comfortable with. In documents, terms which reflect the Council's commitment to equality should be used.

It was proposed by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes, seconded by Councillor Michael and

RESOLVED

That the Committee confirms this policy as stated in paragraph seven of the report and recommends it to Council for adoption.

That the Committee recommends to Council that the policy be reviewed every three years.

GP2018/19.55 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Appraisal feedback and collated report (due for 18th December)

Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and Procedures (also due 18th December)

It would not be necessary to have further consideration of displaying the whistle blowing contacts on a notice and on the website now that the policies had been agreed.

GP2018/19.56 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 18TH December 2018 at 6 pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.20 pm