

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE 15th October 2019

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present : The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Polly Andrews, Susan Boulter (6.10), Mark Dykes, Bernard Hunt, Paul Stevens, Brian Wilcox and Rob Williams (6.15).

Also attending : Steve Kerry Town Clerk and the following representatives of the Hereford Twinning Association Geoff Rawcliffe, Deanne Rawcliffe, Christine Iliff, John Iliff.

The Chair, Councillor Brian Wilcox, reminded all present of the fire procedure and that the meeting is being recorded. He also thanked members of the Twinning Association for attending to discuss the item related to twinning on the agenda.

GP2019/20.41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence. Two members apologised for arriving late as a result of very heavy traffic in the Whitecross area.

GP2019/20.42 SUBSTITUTIONS

None

GP2019/20.43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

GP2019/20.44 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 23rd July 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

GP2019/20.45 TWINNING

The Clerk introduced the report explaining that the recent concentration of twinning events and events related to Jaworzno made it timely to review what the Council was committed to doing and how it ought to organise and fund that. Although the option of stopping twinning completely was in the paper this was not a recommendation, it was simply to remind members that this is a discretionary activity and should be carried on because members resolve to carry on with it, not simply assumed.

Members of the Twinning Association then addressed the Committee stating that they had only been approached once about working with Jaworzno and were not resourced at the time to take up that suggestion. This did not mean they wished to be left out of the loop in future developments. They also expressed the view that town hall to town hall communication with Vierzon and Dillenburg had not always involved them fully and that some opportunities had as a result been missed. In terms of financial support the Association itself does not get any money from the Council, the spending of around £8,500 over the last couple of years had been on Council functions. (For clarity it was pointed out that councillors and partners pay for their own fares etc unless they are the official delegate.) The support of the City Council in receiving parties such as the dancers from Vierzon in the Parlour had always been appreciated. On the issue suggested in the paper of having a lead member for

twinning rather than having this fall on the mayor of the day, who may or may not be enthusiastic about it, on balance the Association thought this idea had merit and would probably improve communication between the Mayor's office and the Association.

The benefits of twinning were felt in many families who had built relationships with a number of visits for youngsters especially language students, although a figure of six such visits in the last ten years was less than hoped for. The Association found a lot of support and interest in their events but few new people coming joining and taking part in events. This is common to many voluntary organisations. With Brexit in some form or another happening at some time in the future, they felt preserving the link of friendship which is apolitical and not primarily economic was very important.

The Chair thanked the delegates for their input and they left the meeting.

The Mayor spoke of the positive experience of visiting Dillenburg in the last few weeks and was in favour of less frequent visits on special occasions but making sure that when visits did happen in either direction they were done well and with plenty of information about what was happening. Two former mayors Councillors Andrews and Boulter also spoke of their experiences of twinning visits, both as host and visitor. They had both been impressed by the warmth of the welcome and the enthusiasm in both towns for twinning and developing the links.

Members then considered the options set out in the report and

Councillor Hunt proposed, Councillor Dykes seconded and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That Council should continue with a twinning relationship with Dillenburg and Vierzon and the friendship link with Jaworzno, and welcomes the input of the Twinning Association into that work.

The Mayor proposed, Councillor Hunt seconded and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee supports the appointment of a lead member for twinning and will recommend to Council that a member be appointed to that role.

The Mayor proposed, Councillor Stevens seconded and it was

RESOLVED

That visits be planned to coincide with special occasions and that normally there would be one delegation received and one overseas visit per year. On visits, consorts and partners and other members accompanying the official guest would continue to pay for their own travel.

That when the Council hosts a civic party the costs of the visit will be met by the Council and that when the Twinning Association hosts a visit the Council's contribution is limited to receiving any civic guests that accompany the party.

GP2019/20.46 CAPABILITY PROCEDURE

The Town Clerk introduced the report and highlighted some drafting amendments. These were mainly to emphasise the difference between refusing an instruction to work to a standard which was a disciplinary matter and being unable to achieve a standard required despite best efforts being made which was a performance management matter. It was also noted that reference to following the same process for the conclusion of a capability issue where the member of staff had not delivered a satisfactory standard would follow the process for a disciplinary matter and this included a right of appeal.

There being no further discussion it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That, noting the amendments, this procedure is approved in principle.

That the procedure is circulated to staff and any comments be considered at the next meeting of the Committee and subject to consideration of those comments that the policy will be amended or finally agreed.

GP2019/20.47 DIGNITY AT WORK

The Clerk introduced this report explaining that the title covers the concepts of harassment and bullying which were closely synonymous. The draft policy had been taken from several sources and was compliant with ACAS guidelines and was therefore recommended for adoption. In answer to a question it was noted that there was a paragraph which covered the use of social media of all kinds and cyber bullying. It was also noted that the process for a Councillor expressing concern about the behaviour towards them of a member of staff would be brought to the Town Clerk and dealt with under this procedure. A complaint about a member of council could be initially investigated under this procedure or as a staff grievance but by law any adjudication or action as a result of a complaint must be dealt with through the standards procedures and the work of the Monitoring Officer.

There being no further discussion it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee approves the draft policy and procedure in principle and that it is considered to be in place, subject to a review at the next meeting of any comments raised by staff.

GP2019/20.48 CIVIC UNIFORM

The Clerk introduced the report and said that research among other parish councils that had a civic role indicated that full Mayoral robes etc for ordinary meetings of Council was extremely rare now, indeed there was only one other parish council that he was aware of that still did this. Normally the red robe and full insignia were only worn for Mayor-Making at the Annual Meeting of Council. This is also the case at most principal authorities, if they retain a civic role. Therefore, members were being given the opportunity to decide if the wearing of full robes for ordinary meetings was an

anachronism that should be discontinued or a valuable tradition that should be maintained.

Councillors debated the value of the robes and the tradition as opposed to the discomfort of wearing them and the need to save them for special occasions. The discussion also covered occasions when some former mayors have turned up at events in very informal dress and had not been recognised, and that wearing the robes does cover whatever costume choices have been made. Consideration was given to what the Mayor should wear at Council meetings if not the formal robes and this was incorporated into the resolution below. It was also noted that when full dress is worn at civic occasions it is important that this is done and that all the insignia and clothing is in good order.

It was then proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Stevens and by five votes to two with one abstention it was

RESOLVED

That the Mayor's Handbook be amended to state that the Mayor will wear full uniform and civic insignia, and be accompanied by the Clerk and Sword Bearer in civic uniform and insignia at the Annual Meeting of Council and that reference to this occurring at other meetings of Council be deleted.

GP2019/20.49 MAYORAL CAR

The Clerk introduced the report explaining that it had been written as a response to complaints about the accessibility and comfort of the existing car and to address the resolution passed by Council to recognise the climate emergency. In discussion members made a number of points; that leasing might be a more economical method of acquisition than purchase, that an SUV type vehicle would be more accessible, that there are significant concerns about the public perception of the Council replacing a car with a great deal of mileage left and purchasing only a couple of years after changing the last car and that the current Deputy Mayor has a specific issue from an old back injury which is why he has encountered particular difficulty. Finally it was noted that the case for replacing the car would be stronger if it was a disability related adjustment.

It was proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Council Andrews and with one abstention

RESOLVED

That the matter be deferred until the decision is taken to recognise a Mayor-elect and when that matter is brought forward options including leasing will be reported.

GP2019/20.50 AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The Clerk briefly introduced the report and emphasised the disruption caused to all staff by constant calls for matters relating mainly to either Herefordshire Council or Balfour Beatty. It was then unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Clerk is authorised to draft a suitable message asking people who are calling on a range of common Herefordshire Council topics to redial 01432 260000.

That if such a script can be installed on all City Council phones at a cost of less than £500-00 the Clerk proceeds to order this facility.

GP2019/20.51 ACTION PLAN

The Clerk introduced what is largely an information report for members on the delivery of items listed in the Action Plan discussed in February. The finite and urgent items had all been delivered. Some were by their nature ongoing and would be built into standard practices. In answer to a question it was pointed out that the Council's use of mailing lists is very basic and that we operate on a low level of data management. Staff have been briefed about the importance of not releasing any personal data we hold without the authorisation of the data subject. As our operations become more diverse and complex and as we interact with more people and thereby accumulate more and different data the profile of GDPR as an issue will rise and appropriate training and instruction will be given.

Members noted the report.

GP2019/20.52 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS OF BUSINESS PLAN INITIATIVES

The Clerk introduced the report explaining that there was a more detailed confidential report that went into specific staffing proposals affecting named individuals. The Chair suggested that rather than repeating discussion in two items it would be appropriate to note this report and move into more detailed consideration of the confidential items. Members agreed and did not therefore record any formal resolutions in respect of this report.

GP2019/20.53 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

RESOLVED

That in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1(2) that to enable the discussion of confidential matters the press and public be excluded from the meeting.

GP2019/20.54 Contained within confidential minutes

GP2019/20.55 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Confidential business having been concluded Councillor Wilcox proposed, Councillor Andrews seconded and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the press and public be readmitted for the remainder of the meeting.

GP2019/20.56 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

None were identified.

GP2019/20.57 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 26th November 2019 at 6 pm

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.13 pm

Signed Date