

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE 28th January 2020

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Andrews, Dykes, Stevens and Williams

In attendance: Steve Kerry, Town Clerk

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair Councillor Stevens reminded all present that the meeting was being recorded and reiterated the fire procedures.

GP2019/20.69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Boulter, Powell and Wilcox

GP2019/20.70 SUBSTITUTIONS

None

GP2019/20.71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

GP2019/20.72 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

There being no corrections required, the minutes of the meeting of 26th November 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Vice Chair.

GP2019/20.73 NON-FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

The Clerk introduced the non-financial elements of the Council's risk assessment, describing the standards against which risks are measured year on year to allow for comparison and spotting of trends. There had not been any significant movement in the Council's risk level which remained low as would be expected for a parish council.

If approved, this report would be added to an appraisal of the financial risks faced by the Council which had already been agreed by Finance and Policy Committee and a single council-wide report would be presented to the council meeting on 3rd March. This timetable of assessing financial risks as part of the budget setting process, and completing the non-financial assessment as soon as possible after that, would be followed in future years. This would meet an internal audit recommendation that risk be assessed annually.

The risk assessment for non-financial risks was approved.

GP2019/20.74 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Clerk presented a table of the numerous policies and procedures reviewed by the Committee in the latter part of 2019, and the review dates for those procedures. He also reported that Hoople had been asked to provide their sickness management and maternity procedures for Herefordshire Council for comparison with those used at the City Council (which come from our payroll provider Shropshire Council) which were believed to be up to date. However, it would be prudent to check if there were

any differences that ought to be incorporated. The grievance procedure had been reviewed in 2012 after a lengthy dispute with a now former member of staff and had been tested again since then and found to be competent. Members had been given the opportunity to review this before the meeting and no suggestions for amendments had been forthcoming. The Clerk therefore recommended that it be accepted as it stands, with the review date proposed in the timetable.

The Mayor asked if the recent training for officers and members had been incorporated into a mental health awareness policy and suggested that it would be useful to do this. This would probably be best done as a discreet policy about mental health and wellbeing at work rather than as part of sickness management which was a separate issue. This view was endorsed by the members of the Committee.

It was then agreed without a vote that

The policies and procedures stand as reported with the review dates noted.

That a further report is produced detailing any changes required to sickness management or maternity when the comparison with Hoople documents is completed.

That a new mental health and welfare at work policy be drawn up using source material from Services for Independent Living who have provided the Council's training in this area.

GP2019/20.75 MAYORAL CAR

The Clerk explained the background to this report and that there were two drivers for reviewing the present provision. Firstly, the Council had declared that it recognised the climate change emergency but was still using a large petrol driven car for many short journeys. Secondly, the present car was a low coupe style vehicle and a number of people had experienced difficulty getting in and out of it. Further a person of even slightly above average height would find it difficult to sit normally and comfortably in the back seat, and a tall person would have difficulty sitting comfortably in the front. On both environmental and comfort grounds, therefore it was appropriate to consider options. A previous meeting of the Committee had postponed a decision on this until the recognition of a Mayor-elect and Deputy Mayor-elect by Council which had happened on 21st January, and to allow for market testing of options. The Mayor's Officer had conducted research of hybrid cars with higher SUV style body shapes available from local suppliers and the outcome of this research was presented to Committee. This had shown that leasing was a cost-effective solution compared to outright purchasing, especially when the cost of servicing was factored into the calculation.

The Mayor noted that Car One, which was slightly more expensive, was a true hybrid and would run on electric power until the battery charge was low or the use of higher speed meant the petrol engine would start. Car Two was a soft hybrid which meant the electric drive would supplement the petrol engine and reduce fuel use, but that there would be more use of petrol power in the journeys normally undertaken in the mayoral car. If the purpose of the change was primarily to address environmental

concerns, and the cost difference was marginal, it would be better to revise the recommendation in the report and confirm a preference for Car One.

After discussion it was accepted that the primary consideration should be environmental impact, both cars being offered by local dealers in accordance with the Preston model of local procurement wherever possible.

It was proposed by the Mayor seconded by Councillor Williams and

RESOLVED That the Council enter into a lease for Car One unless some deleterious element in the lease becomes apparent, and that in that case the search for a true hybrid vehicle on acceptable terms continues. A soft hybrid was not an acceptable solution.

GP2019/20.76 APPRAISAL UPDATE

The Clerk reported that during the review of policies and procedures last year it was noted that his own appraisal had been conducted at different times in the year and in a somewhat ad hoc way by various members. The lack of consistency had undermined the effectiveness of the process. The lack of a business plan from which to draw appraisal targets had led to the decision to bring a plan forward in the October/November committee cycle, and then to carry out his appraisal using a template adapted from Hoople's standard for larger organisations. This had led to a more focussed appraisal than had previously been the case. The Clerk had then used the same template to complete appraisals in November and early December for all office staff, although one had been off sick and the meeting had been postponed to enable the appraisal to take place when they were recovered. Even though their appraisal would thus be late, they would be appraised again in November 2021 so they would be on the same timescale as everyone else in future.

The Clerk's appraisal has featured elements of work and leadership style and team working as well as specific individual targets, and this too had been mirrored in the appraisals of the other staff. This had led to the identification of some development issues which had been addressed partly through the provision of mental health awareness training to enable staff to identify building issues of stress in themselves and their colleagues. Attention has also been given to team working outside normal job descriptions when necessary. This element had been tested in delivering a Freedom Ceremony in the unexpected absence due to sickness of the officer who would normally have taken the key role in organising and delivering the civic ceremonial. The end result had been a very successful occasion, with frantic efforts behind the scenes to keep everything on track.

No specific ideas or proposals to be reported to members had arisen from the appraisals so far, and the appraisal of the member of staff who had been absent during the cycle had now been arranged for early February.

Several members noted that they had seen evidence of an improved atmosphere in the office, particularly with more flexible working and mutual support for colleagues.

The report was noted.

GP2019/20.77 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Clerk reported that Ben Corbet, the new Tourist Information Centre Manager, had arrived in post and that it would be necessary soon to conclude the previous discussions of how to support this role. In addition, Community Development Committee next week was considering a report suggesting a significantly larger programme of events than had been in mind when this role was added to the Committees and Contracts Officer job description. The officer in post had a strong background in events so this element was covered, however there was a need to review resourcing in committee and contract administration. Neither of these issues could wait until the next scheduled meeting of the Committee in May.

Councillor Williams asked, and members agreed, that consideration of the TIC staffing level should include the option of creating an apprenticeship.

Items noted for consideration before May –

Staffing and volunteer arrangements for the Tourist Information Centre

Support for committee and contract administration

Item noted for consideration at a future meeting –

Training needs analysis for members and officers

GP2019/20.78 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is Tuesday 5th May 2020 at 6 pm

In view of the items noted above an additional meeting will be held on Tuesday 25th February 2020 at 6 pm.

There being no further business the Vice Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.35 pm.

Signed

Date