

Governance and Policies Panel Meeting

11 August, 2020

Notes
Pages 1 - 3

Present:
Councillors

Coles	Taylor
I Fradgley	Vos
Mayor Jackson (ex-officio)	
How (non-voting)	Town Clerk
Rolfe	Administrative Clerk

1) Election of Chairman and Deputy Chairman

It was agreed that the Mayor would act as Chairman for this meeting and that a Deputy Chairman would not be necessary as it is expected that this would be the one and only meeting of this panel, before it is superseded by the new Committee Structure.

2) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Alcock and Taylor and were accepted for the reasons given.

3) Declarations of Interest

None.

4) Notes

The notes from the meeting held on 20 January, 2020 were approved as a correct record and there were no matters arising.

5) New Committee Structure - Heritage & Events -v- Community Services

At the Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial and Events Committee Meeting held on 21 July, 2020 it was recommended by the members that items 4.8 – 4.14 (Town Hall), items 4.15 - 4.17

(Cemetery) of the Heritage and Events Terms of Reference be transferred to Community Services, and item 4.18 (Town Centre Strategic Partnership) to be transferred to the Planning Consultative Committee.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was AGREED that items 4.8 – 4.14 of the Heritage and Events Terms of Reference should remain within the remit of that committee. However, it was suggested that the wording of 4.14 should be amended from:

4.14 To approve pro-bono use of the Town Hall

to:

4.14 To approve dates for pro-bono use of the Town Hall to enable the Community Services Committee to engage with organisations within the community seeking to hire the Town Hall on a pro-bono basis

It was also AGREED that items 4.15 – 4.17 should be transferred to the Community Services Terms of Reference.

These amendments would be proposed at an Additional General Purposes Committee meeting (date tbc) and then finally debated at the Town Council meeting scheduled for 29 September, 2020.

6) Joint Press Statements

This agenda item arose from confusion over lack of consultation with members when a recent press statement was released that included a quote on behalf of the Town Council.

It was explained that often the Town Clerk or Mayor is called by the press asking for a statement before they go to print. The deadline for this is sometimes as short as 30 minutes and it would therefore be impossible for all members to be consulted in time.

It was AGREED that as the Town Clerk is the Town Council's Proper Officer, it is understood as part of her remit that she often has to comment on behalf of the Council.

Upon discussion it was also AGREED that the following amendments be made to the Press Liaison Policy:

Item 2.4 to be amended to add the following:

2.4 *Where Councillors wish to express a personal opinion, they must make it clear, at some point, that it is just that - a personal opinion. At no time shall the personal views of either members or officers of the Town Council be given in such a way which could be interpreted as a view of the Council as a whole.*

Members should also be aware that when speaking personally, they have no Council indemnity, and must therefore ensure that their comments would not give rise to litigious action.

The following is to be added under Best Practice:

An agenda item named 'Press Statements' should be requested as an agenda item at meetings of outside bodies so that those present will know, albeit not necessarily agree, with the content of any subsequent press release on the subject in question.

These changes will be taken to the Town Council meeting on 29 September, 2020 for approval and adoption.

7) Date of the Next Meeting

It is thought that if the new Committee Structure is adopted at the September's Town Council meeting, this panel would be disbanded so no new meeting date was arranged.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 4:37pm.