

# Governance and Policies Panel Meeting

20 January, 2020

Notes  
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Present:  
Councillors

Alcock	Vos
I Fradgley	Town Clerk
Jackson	Deputy Town Clerk

## 13) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Dowling, Fojtik, and Mayor Rolfe (ex-officio) and accepted for the reasons given.

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Fojtik, the Deputy Chairman, Councillor Jackson, chaired the meeting.

## 14) Declarations of Interest

Councillor I Fradgley – personal interest agenda item 11 noted as 23.

## 15) Notes

The notes from the meeting held on 12 November, 2019 were approved as a correct record and there were no matters arising.

## 16) Proposed Town Council Flag Flying Policy

The Town Clerk advised that this had been one of the most difficult, thought provoking and time consuming policies that she had ever had to compile. Primarily this was due to trying to ensure the Town Council does not, unwittingly, offend or provoke bad feeling by flying, and as importantly, not flying, a flag that is requested to be flown by an outside body which does not appear as part of the national flag flying protocol.

This issue gave rise to quite considerable debate and it was AGREED that subject to **amending** the ‘catch all’ caveat, outlined

below, the Policy will be RECOMMENDED to the Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial & Events Committee:

8. Ad-hoc Situations not covered by the Policy

If, for any reason, it is necessary for the Town Council to purchase a flag or an additional national flag, permission is granted to **proceed with the purchase** using Council funds. **Additionally if it necessary to react quickly to a mark a local, national or international unforeseen event, the Town Clerk, under delegated authority, may approve the flying of an appropriate flag, providing it does not conflict with national flag flying protocol for that day.**

17) Generic Flag Pole for the Town

The five flag poles on Waterside adjacent to the Swan Fountain are owned by the District Council. In the past, flags were flown from the poles during the Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations to portray the five RSC productions that season. This no longer occurs and generally it is rare for a flag to be flown from this location.

The District Council is the authority that grants consent for flags to be flown in the town which require planning permission. As these five flag poles belong to them, the District Council could, potentially, designate the middle flag pole as the 'town's people flag pole'. Any organisation that has an occasion when it would be appropriate for their flag to be flown, could apply to the District Council for permission to use this particular flag pole for a designated period of time.

If the District Council were to instigate such an initiative, it would negate the problem of local authorities having to rigidly observe national flag flying protocol on government buildings and then come into conflict with organisations wishing to denote, by flying a flag, an occasion pertinent to them on that day.

The Town Clerk was requested to explore this further with the District Council.

18) Terms of Reference – Climate Change Emergency Panel

These were approved and RECOMMENDED for approval and adoption by the CCE Panel.

## 19) Complaints Procedure

It was recognised that although there were policies in place to manage Councillors' behaviour – Code of Conduct, and that of members of staff – Disciplinary, Grievance & Capability Policy, there were no procedures to follow if someone made a general complaint about the Council and their procedures, bearing in mind that the Ombudsman has not jurisdiction over parish and town council conduct.

The Town Clerk presented a proposed Complaints Procedure which had been compiled using best practice templates from the Society of Local Council Clerks and the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils.

Notwithstanding the minor amendments, shown below, which provide greater clarity, the Procedure was RECOMMENDED for approval and adoption by Council:

### 1.3.3 Complaints Committee – Paragraph 2

**Amended** to: ...will instigate a Complaints Committee (Mayor, Deputy Mayor and **Senior Councillor**) rather than Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chairman of the HR Committee.

### 1.3.4 Appeals – Paragraph 1

**Amended** to include: The membership of the Appeal Panel **will be made up of independent and impartial members which** will not include any member of the Complaints Committee, nor any Councillor involved in the original complaint, **nor those who have a personal, close association with anyone involved.**

## 20) Letter to Stratford Churches Together and Interfaith Forum

Following the recommendations of the Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial & Events Committee regarding the change from Mayor's Chaplain to Council's Chaplain, the Town Clerk has compiled the proposed letter which she discussed with the current Mayor's Chaplain some of whose comments were taken into account in the final version.

Approval of content was sought, particularly from the Deputy Mayor who will be the first to experience the potential change, and with very minor amendment the letter was unanimously approved and will be sent forthwith:

Paragraph 3 page 1

**Amended** to include: The Chaplain's responsibilities have evolved to encompass visiting those **who are or were formerly associated with the Council**, who are lonely...

It was considered that the title 'Chaplain' evoked an incumbent of religious belief. Further thought with regard to title should be given in due course.

21) Grant Applications

It was AGREED that the Grant Application process, particularly the application forms, should be reviewed in order to ensure that the procedure is robust in safeguarding and proactively using not insubstantial amounts of public money.

The Deputy Mayor, also the Council's representative on the Town Trust, will discuss this issue with the Trust's Grants Committee to ascertain their procedures and best practice and report to the Deputy Town Clerk who will review the whole process and bring a RECOMMENDATION to the G&P Panel in due course.

22) No Dogs Policy in the Town Hall

It was AGREED that the existing 'No Dogs' policy should be revised to **include**:

1.3 No animals are allowed in the Town Hall with the exception of Assistance Dogs other than **for a one-off special event** or in exceptional circumstances and with the consent of the Town Clerk.

It was considered that this would suffice in the interim but the Town Clerk should undertake a complete review regarding legislation relating to assistance dogs and dogs in public spaces/building and return the matter to the G&P Panel and ultimately the General Purposes Committee for further scrutiny in due course.

23) Review of Chairman's Actions - Interest

The Chairman of the Planning Consultative Committee raised concern that since he became a district councillor he has been much more involved with Bridgetown residents regarding the planning applications in their ward which affect them - both from

giving them advice about planning and submitting his own comments to SDC. This has happened a couple of times recently and Councillor I Fradgley is aware of potentially two other applications on the horizon.

The Chairman is troubled with the current situation, for when such applications come to Chairman's Actions, he is unsure of his position as there may be a possibility that he may have been influenced by the residents which would result in one of the two decision makers having an interest. One Councillor should not be put in a position to make a lone decision whether to refer the application to Committee or make 'no representation'.

The Planning Consultant suggested that there should be the Chairman/Deputy Chairman and one other member taking decisions at Chairman's Action. However, in order to be completely transparent in the Council's planning decision making process, it was unanimously AGREED that the RECOMMENDATION would be that all applications in which members of Chairman's Actions have an interest will automatically be referred to Committee.

*The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 5:32pm.*