

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 29 MARCH 2021
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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 29 MARCH 2021 AT 1400 HOURS, AS AN ON-LINE MEETING

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Ward in the Chair;

Councillors Robert Alden, Fred Grindrod, Shabrana Hussain, Brigid Jones, Gareth Moore, Carl Rice, Martin Straker Welds and Mike Ward.

NOTICE OF RECORDING

- 3086 The Chairman advised that the meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.civico.net/birmingham) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs at the meeting except where there are confidential or exempt items.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3087 Members were reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting. If a pecuniary interest was declared a Member must not speak or take part in that agenda item. Any declarations would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

APOLOGIES

- 3088 No apologies were submitted.

MINUTES

- 3089 That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.
- That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 12 March 2021 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The following report of the City Solicitor was submitted:-

(See document No 1)

Rose Poulter, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, made introductory comments relating to the report during which she made reference to the current Covid situation and the new working methods and noted that following on from the boundary changes in 2018 each Birmingham Councillor represented approximately 11,300 citizens which was higher than other comparable authorities. She added that the proposed increase was also addressing the fact that allowances had fallen behind in previous years.

During the ensuing debate Members thanked Members of the Panel for the work they had undertaken. The following points were made:-

- The response to feedback from female Councillors around maternity and parental leave was welcomed.
- It was recognised by the Panel that Councillors received an allowance not a salary so there were no pension contributions
- It was noted that all Councillors had taken their allowance in the current year in full.
- It was important for people to understand the scale of Birmingham with Councillors representing roughly 40% more citizens than the next nearest authority, Leeds.
- Mental Health of Councillors was important particularly in the past year and it was pleasing that the Panel was going to look at that issue next year.
- Despite pay freezes in other public sector organisations it was important to acknowledge that the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel should be agreed otherwise there was no point in having the Panel.

Rose Poulter clarified that Members of the Panel did receive a small remuneration. She continued that regrettably the Panel would not be looking at the issue of mental health of Councillors as that was for the City Council to address which is why it was mentioned in the report.

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RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be received; and

- (ii) that the following motion be recommended to the City Council:

“The recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel on Page 5 of its Annual Report be accepted and implemented with effect from 25 May 2021.”

APPOINTMENT OF A WORKING GROUP

The Chair advised that it was proposed to appoint of a cross party and officer Working Group to develop criteria for the bestowing Honorary Freeman of the City titles and Freedom of the City privileges and to develop a criteria for considering requests for the use of the Coat of Arms. He explained that he had received in recent months a couple of requests Freedom of City and he had discovered that the criteria for bestowing such titles was very open and did not set a high enough bar. He proposed that the working group would be on a 3-1-1 basis for Councillors and would report back to the Committee with its recommendations before onward transmission to the City Council within the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

Therefore it was-

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RESOLVED:-

That a cross party and officer Working Group to develop criteria for the bestowing Honorary Freeman of the City titles and Freedom of the City privileges and to develop a criteria for considering requests for the use of the Coat of Arms be established on a 3-1-1 basis for Councillors and the working Group report back to this Committee with its recommendations within the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

PETITIONS UPDATE

The following report of the City Solicitor was submitted:-

(See document No 2)

It was-

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RESOLVED:-

That the quarterly report be noted.

CITY COUNCIL AND CBM FORWARD PLAN

The following City Council and CBM Forward Plan was submitted:-

(See document No 3)

Referring to the City Council Resolutions Tracker, the Chair indicated that the item from January 2019 relating to documents relating to GMB payments had been outstanding for some time. He explained that he had had a meeting with the Deputy Monitoring Officer who was now drafting a note/report which would be circulated in due course.

Councillor Robert Alden welcomed the Chair's update. He continued by referring to the motion that was passed by City Council relating to staff paternity leave but was no longer on the tracker and hoped that it could be looked at again as part of next year's budgeting process. The Chair indicated that he had no objection to that suggestion.

It was-

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RESOLVED:-

That the City Council and CBM Forward Plan be noted.

COUNCIL AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The following draft agenda was submitted:-

(See document No 4)

The Chair noted that previous discussions had suggested that 'Motions' be reintroduced at the April City Council agenda but he was recommending that that does not happen and they be left off the agenda due to purdah and resume in June. Councillors Robert Alden and Mike Ward agreed with that proposal. Councillor Carl Rice commented on the relevance of Motions.

It was noted that Councillor Carl Rice would be presenting the Scrutiny business report

Members of the Committee were content for the meeting to finish at 1915 hours.

The Chair indicated that he would wish to add an additional item to the agenda relating to the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive and following discussion it was agreed to:-

- Allocate 15 minutes to the item relating to the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive.

- That there be a private agenda item relating to the Chief Executive item.
- Should the item relating to the Chief Executive not be required then authority be given to revert back to the original City Council agenda, including the change below, without the need to return to the Committee.
- Increase the time allocated for agenda item No. 10 to 30 minutes.

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RESOLVED:-

- (i) That, subject to the above changes, the draft agenda be noted;
- (ii) That, if the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive item is not required then the City Council agenda as originally submitted as amended in the forgoing preamble should be used.

APPOINTMENTS

Following nominations from Councillor Martin Straker Welds it was-

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RESOLVED:-

- (i) That Councillor Julie Johnson (Lab) be appointed to the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place of former Councillor Lucy Seymour-Smith (Lab) for the period ending with the next Annual Meeting of the Council;
- (ii) That Councillor Peter Griffiths (Lab) be appointed to the Joint Scrutiny Committee for the Supervisory Board of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership in place of former Councillor Lucy Seymour-Smith (Lab) for the period ending with the next Annual Meeting of the Council

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair was of the opinion that the following matter could be considered as a matter of urgency in view of need to expedite consideration thereof and instruct officer if necessary:-

A. Virtual Council Meetings

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In response to a query from Councillor Carl Rice relating to the return to meeting at the Council House, the Chair noted that the regulations relating to the holding of virtual meetings were ending on 6 May 2021 and Central Government had not seen fit to extend them. Whilst the Local Government

Association was challenging that in the courts at the current time meetings would have resume face to face from 7 May.

Councillor Mike Ward hoped the Government would reverse its decision because notwithstanding the tragic deaths in the last year caused by the pandemic, one of the more positive things had been how new ways of working had been introduced and felt that that should continue. Councillor Brigid Jones agreed with the comments made, indicating Local Government working practices had been modernised overnight and had helped Councillors who were parents and those that worked to be efficient with their time by not travelling to the Council House for meetings. She felt the Governments decision was not correct at a time when only half the population had been vaccinated against Covid and it was putting people's health and wellbeing at risk.

B. Implementation of The Real Living Wage 2021/2022 (Living Wage Foundation)

The following report of the Assistant Director OD was submitted:-

(See document No 5)

It was-

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RESOLVED:-

- (i) That it be agreed to increase the Real Living Wage supplement so that, with effect from 1st April 2021, all Council employees are paid a minimum of £9.50 per hour;
 - (ii) that it be agreed that the full year costs of Schools' staff from 2021/22 be the subject of consultation with the Schools Forum;
 - (iii) that it be agreed that the full year costs of the other Council employees from 2021/22 are met from existing service budgetary provision, including any corporate provision for inflation;
 - (iv) that future increases be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer and Head of HR, providing these are in line with the Real Living Wage rate.
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AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

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RESOLVED:-

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1432 hours.

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CHAIR