

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**SUTTON COLDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**STEERING GROUP MEETING**

**TUESDAY 16th FEBRUARY 2016**

**AT**

**1800 HOURS**

**THE BOWLS ROOM**

**MERE GREEN COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**PRESENT:-**

Group Chairman: Cllr Anne Underwood  
Group Vice Chairman: Ken Rushton  
Group Members: Eilizabeth Allison, Cllr David Barrie, Cllr Lyn Collin,  
Cllr Maureen Cornish, Paul Long, Cllr Ewan Mackey,  
Cllr David Pears, Cllr Rob Pocock, Stephen Smallwood,  
and Cllr Ken Wood

**IN ATTENDANCE:-**

Robert Connelly – Head of Electoral Services, BCC  
Beverly Edmead – Community Governance Manager, BCC  
Stuart Evans – Head of Service, Legal and Democratic Services  
Gary Ladbrooke – District Lead, Sutton Coldfield, BCC  
Ifor Jones – Service Director, Localisation, BCC  
Olive O’Sullivan – Project Officer, BCC

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(There were 15 residents present)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Meirion Jenkins and Claire Spencer.

**2. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Referring to his comments on page 6 of the Notes and his comments, Cllr Pocock advised of the correction to the sentence which should have been recorded as 'all means within its power' and not 'modus' as stated.

Referring to her comments on page 11, Elizabeth Allison advised of a correction to the sentence, which should have been recorded as 'legislation which governed the use of the Flag' and not 'prohibited' as recorded.

Notwithstanding the amendments, the Notes of the previous meeting, having been circulated to the Steering Group were agreed.

**Action: All to Note**

**2. BUILDING BLOCKS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Copies of the following documents were circulated to Group Members:-

- (i) Pre –Election Period, including Purdah
- (ii) Options for the conduct of business between 8 March 2016 and 5 May 2016
- (iii) Draft Agenda for First Meeting of the Interim Parish Council on 8 March 2016
- (iv) Code of Conduct for Parish Council
- (v) Standing Orders for Parish Council (several examples were included)
- (vi) Financial Regulations for Parish Council

Stuart Evans, Head of Service, Legal and Democratic Services briefly outlined the guidance for the Pre- Election period and advised that meetings should only be held if there was urgent business to discuss. He further advised that an 'in principal' agreement' to adopt the Royal status, Leader/ mayoral and wider governance arrangements, including Committees should be made at the Interim Parish Council

meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March, with the formal decision taken at the AGM following the election of the Parish Councillors.

Mr Evans added that support arrangements would still continue to be provided from the City Council as the Principal Authority until the AGM; this would include information, advice and guidance with any amendments to the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as necessary.

Paul Long felt it was vital that the Interim Parish Council should have their own Membership with NALC and WALC to enable access to advice, support and information, and sought further clarity regarding the Councillor representation on Interim Parish Council.

Olive O'Sullivan advised that once established, the Parish Council would be expected to make its own membership arrangements with NALC and WALC, and that in the meantime, Shrewsbury Town Council has given permission for the use of their Standing Orders.

The Chairman referred to the Councillor arrangements for the Interim Parish Council agreed by the City Council and confirmed that Cllr Jenkins remained the Interim Parish Council Member representative for Four Oaks Ward.

Whilst welcoming the use of Shrewsbury Town Council's Standing Orders, Cllr Pears suggested that once established, the Parish Council should give consideration to the time allocated for the length of its Committee meetings, and felt that the current practice of 2hrs should be sufficient to conduct council business.

Cllr Pocock felt it was essential that public questions should be included as one of the first items on the Parish Council meeting agenda, and that consideration should be given to this.

Responding to the comments made, Stuart Evans advised that it would be for the

Parish Council to agree/amend/approve the final arrangements at its AGM following the elections.

The Chairman requested that all comments/suggested amendments to the Standing Orders/Code of Conduct were submitted to Olive and Stuart as soon as possible so that these were ready for consideration at the next meeting.

### **Update on the Election Process**

Robert Connelly briefly advised of the timetable for the elections.

Public meetings/information for candidates would take place as follows:-

26 February 2016, 1-2pm, Council Chamber, Council House, Birmingham

3 March 2016, 4 – 5pm, Council Chamber, Council House, Birmingham.

The closing date for candidate registration was 7 April 2016 (4pm)

Robert further advised that it was not a requirement for polling cards to be issued for parish council elections; however, a decision would need to be taken by the Steering Group/Interim Parish Council on the issuing of polling cards for the Electorate and the associated costs, which was approximately 26p per card.

In response to questions from Group Members, Robert explained that current legislation did not allow for parish council election details to be added to the polling cards issued for Local and Parliamentary or Police & Crime Commissioner Elections. Polling cards were not enveloped as this would increase the cost. Group members agreed that the issue of polling cards for the parish council election was essential as there were genuine concerns that some residents may still be unaware that the parish council election would be taking place.

**Action: Robert Connelly agreed to explore all options and associated costs and to provide further details in due course.**

### **3. ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

Cllr Collin briefly advised that a database of youth organisations and schools in

Sutton Coldfield had been compiled, and expressions of interests would be invited from young people. In the meantime, invitations had been sent to Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls, Bishop Vesey and Arthur Terry schools inviting each them to select 4 pupils to attend the Civic Event at the Council House on 1 March 2016.

Group Members welcomed the update and involvement of young people, and felt there should be an 'in-principal' agreement for a Youth Council once the Parish Council was elected.

**Action: All to Note**

#### **4. INTERIM PARISH CLERK ARRANGEMENTS**

Ifor briefly advised that the Interim Parish Clerk had been appointed and would be in place ahead of the Interim Parish Council meeting on 8 March 2016.

The Interim Parish Clerk would also facilitate an information event on Parish Councils and the role of a Parish Councillor on 2 March 2016. Details of the event would be made available in the next few days.

Group Members were reminded that the Interim Parish Clerk should not be contacted with individual requests and that any requests/suggestions must be agreed by the Group.

Ifor advised that the appointment of the permanent Parish Clerk would have to be made by the Parish Council.

**Action: All to Note**

#### **5. SUTTON COLDFIELD TOWN HALL -UPDATE**

Ifor confirmed that the business case evaluation had been completed and a full report and recommendations would be submitted to the Deputy Leader within the next two weeks for a final decision. Details of the findings and evaluation remained

a matter between SCART and the City Council.

Ifor further confirmed that a report would be submitted to the Interim Parish Council meeting on 8 March for consideration regarding how the City Council and Parish Council could move forward on the sustainability of the Town Hall. In the Meantime, a further three months funding had been agreed by the City Council to enable the Town Hall to remain operational whilst a long-term strategy was being considered. External expert advice would also be provided to the Interim Parish Council.

Group Members welcomed the update, and commended the efforts of SCART and everyone involved in trying to secure the future of the Town Hall. It was acknowledged that significant capital investment would be needed for structural and visual improvements to the building, and that the condition of the building would have deteriorated since the estimated repair costs of approx. £1.4m given two years ago.

Accepting an invitation from the Chairman, Richard Mason, SCART Chairman added that every effort would continue to be made to ensure that Town Hall had a viable, sustainable future and that much needed capital investment secured.

**Action: All to Note.**

**6. PROPOSALS RE INTERIM BANKING AND INSURANCE**  
**ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTERIM PARISH COUNCIL**

Ifor briefly advised that an agreement had been secured with the Council's Strategic Director Governance and Resources to utilise the City Council's banking arrangements and financial systems to enable the Parish Council sufficient time to make its own arrangements as well as avoiding costly interim arrangements.

Arrangements would also need to be made for the insurance of the mayoral robes/chains as well as for Parish Councillors and its employees.

Responding to Group Members questions, Ifor advised the banking arrangements, financial systems and budgetary lines and responsibilities would be clearly demarcated, and fully auditable, and undertook to obtain further advice regarding the procurement of banking and auditing arrangements for consideration by the Parish Council.

Ifor added that a paper would be presented to Group Members at the next meeting.

**Action: All to Note.**

**7. UPDATE ON SUMMER FLORAL PROJECT**

Cllr Barrie briefly advised that following a meeting and discussions with Darren Share (Head of Parks), it was agreed that the floral schemes should be similar to those previously funded through the Ward Community Chest Funding allocation, with the addition of 20 stand-alone features around the District.

The locations of these would be identified by the Darren's team, discussed and agreed with each Ward representative. This would need to be agreed by the end of March to enable the schemes to be completed later in the year.

Ifor confirmed that a report with details of the final arrangements would be submitted at the next meeting.

**Action: All to Note**

**8. UPDATE ON CIVIC CEREMONY ON THE PRESENTATION OF CIVIC REGALIA**

The Chairman reminded Group Members of the event, which would take place in Drawing Room, Council House, Birmingham on 1 March at 12pm, prior to City Council.

The event would be hosted by the Lord Mayor, and the Leader of the Council will

also be present.

**Action: All to Note**

**9. UPDATE ON PUBLIC MEETING RE PARISH COUNCILS**

The Chairman advised that a public meeting/information event would take place 2 March 2016 at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall.

The programme was being finalised and it would be opportunity for interested residents to learn more about Parish Councils and the role of a Parish Councillor prior to the elections on 5 May 2016.

The Interim Parish Clerk will facilitate the event and further details would follow in due course.

**Action: All to Note**

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman briefly advised of the following:-

Boundary Commission Review

A letter had been sent to the Boundary Commission on behalf of the Steering Group as requested at the last meeting.

A reply had been received, which had acknowledged the comments made by the Group.

Use of Royal Title

A letter had been sent to the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP; however a reply had not yet been received.

Premises for the Parish Council

It was suggested that a list of suitable premises for the Parish Council, staff and visitors should be identified for discussion at the next meeting.

Visits would have to be made to each suggested premises to assess its suitability.



Date of the Parish Council AGM

Tuesday 17 May 2016 was suggested as a possible date.

Financial Spend to date

If confirmed no costs had been incurred prior to the appointment of the Interim Parish Clerk.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Group Members were reminded that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 8 February 2016, 6pm – 7.30pm, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall.

**Action: All to Note**

The meeting closed at 1935hrs