

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUTTON COLDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

STEERING GROUP MEETING

TUESDAY 19th JANUARY 2016

AT

1800 HOURS

THE VESEY LOUNGE

SUTTON COLDFIELD TOWN HALL

PRESENT:-

Group Chairman: Cllr Anne Underwood
Group Vice Chairman: Ken Rushton
Group Members: Eilizabeth Allison, Cllr David Barrie, Cllr Lyn Collin,
Paul Long, Cllr Meirion Jenkins, Cllr David Pears,
Cllr Rob Pocock, Stephen Smallwood, Cllr Claire
Spencer, Cllr Margaret Waddington and Cllr Ken Wood

IN ATTENDANCE:-

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

(There were 20 residents present)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Maureen Cornish, Ewan Mackey and Stephanie Patrick (YMCA).

Apologies for lateness were submitted on behalf of Cllrs David Barrie and Claire Spencer.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the calendar year, and advised residents present that time had been set aside at the end of the formal meeting for Questions and Answers.

YMCA

The Chairman advised that notification and apologies had been received from the YMCA confirming their withdrawal from the Steering Group due to time commitments. The Chairman further advised that representation from young peoples' groups/organisations would still be sought, and taken forward by the Interim Parish Council.

2. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

Matters Arising

Engagement Framework - Website

Further work on this would be progressed by the Interim Parish Clerk; the website presentation at the last meeting would be used as the framework.

In the meantime, a Parish Council webpage had been created on the City Council website, and could be accessed via the following link:-

www.birmingham.gov.uk/sutton-coldfield-parish-council

Reorganisation Order

If confirmed this had been formally approved and sealed. The Secretary of State

and other appropriate bodies had been notified of the Order, a copy of which was circulated to Group Members.

The Membership of the Interim Parish Council was laid out in the Order, and the Parish of Sutton Coldfield would come into being on 1 March 2016 with the Interim Parish Council established on that date.

Group Members welcomed the news.

Away Day Notes

Group Members were reminded of the previous agreement made that the Away Day priorities, together with the feedback from the Be Heard consultation and Peoples' Panel discussion would form the basis for producing a strategic and plan for the Parish Council. This work would now be taken forward by the Interim Parish Clerk as Helen Ball was no longer available to assist due to personal reasons.

Group Members asked that their best wishes be conveyed to Helen.

Display of Mayoral Chains Of Office at NALC Event

The Chairman briefly advised these were currently being repaired, and so would not be available for display at the NALC event at the Town Hall on 27 January.

However, it was hoped that the Leader of the City Council would be available to attend for part of the day, and was a clear indication of the civic importance of the Parish Council.

Councillor Pears thanked the Chairman and Ifor for their work thus far in ensuring the appropriate arrangements had been put in place in readiness for the Interim Parish Council on 1 March 2016.

Action: All to Note

3. REORGANISATION ORDER

A copy of the report submitted to Council Business Management Committee was circulated to Group Members for information.

(Document No. 1)

Action: All to Note

4. PARISH COUNCIL – CIVIC REGALIA

A copy of the report submitted to Council Business Management Committee held earlier in the day, was circulated to Group Members for information.

(Document No. 2)

Ifor briefly advised that an agreement was made at CBM for the handover of the Sutton Coldfield Civic regalia to the Sutton Coldfield Parish Council by the Lord Mayor and Leader of the City Council. A special ceremony would be held in the Council Chamber (Birmingham) on 1 March 2016; an invitation to the ceremony would be extended to the Steering Group in due course.

Ifor further advised that the insurance and safekeeping would be the responsibility of the Interim Parish Council from 1 March 2016.

Paul Long briefly advised the Group of a recent visit made to Holy Trinity Church to look at the old Town Flag, and suggested that consideration should also be given to the commissioning of a Town Flag for the Parish Council.

The Chairman advised of the quite lengthy and bureaucratic process that would have to be undertaken, including obtaining the appropriate permissions from The Heraldry Society, and that this should be a decision for the Parish Council to make.

Action: All to Note

5. SUTTON COLDFIELD TOWN HALL – INFORMATION UPDATE

Ifor briefly advised that the business proposal had been submitted to the City Council by Sutton Coldfield Arts and Recreation Trust (SCART). This was due to

evaluated by Officers early next week; a report recommending the way forward would then be submitted to the Deputy Leader (Cllr Ian Ward) for a final decision to be made.

Ifor further advised that he had would no longer be part of the Officer Evaluation Panel in order to avoid a direct conflict of interest in his current role as the Enabling Officer.

He suggested that discussions could be held with the Interim Parish Council to explore:-

- A co-commissioning arrangement of the SCART proposal **or**
- Other potential options for a sustainable offer to be presented to the Interim Parish Council meeting on 8th March; these could include an independent evaluation being carried out and the Interim Parish Clerk advised accordingly. Partnership arrangements could also be considered.

Cllr Pears cautiously welcomed the proposal, and expressed concerns at the tight timescale involved. Paul Long expressed his support for the SCART proposal, and that of many residents who wanted the Town Hall to be retained.

Whilst acknowledging Group Members comments, the Chairman advised that the proposal for the Town Hall must be financially viable; failure to do so could leave the Parish Council with a building that was unsustainable and liable for expensive running/repair costs.

Ifor advised that the Best Value approach would need to be considered as part of the discussion process, and that in his role as enabler, would seek to find a pathway in which this could be achieved.

Cllr Pocock felt that Ifor's role as enabler should be supported by the Steering Group, however its remit did not allow for any decisions to be made on the future of the Town Hall, and suggested the following statement be considered by the Group:-

“This Steering Group further expresses its firm beliefs that the future Sutton Coldfield Town Council should use all modus within its power to sustain the long term commercial future of Sutton Coldfield Town Hall as a civic venue and cultural Centre for the people of our Town and beyond”.

Ifor suggested an addition to the statement to include “and that the Service Director Localisation makes the necessary arrangements to commission the services of the Interim Parish Clerk to provide independent advice to achieve this”.

Group Members voted in favour of the statement.

Action: All to Note

6. INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PARISH CLERK

Ifor confirmed that following the last meeting, discussions with a firm of Consultants had taken place. A specialist firm had been identified as the most suitable to provide the services of an Interim Parish Clerk and the necessary arrangements currently being made to procure their services within the next few weeks.

Ifor advised of the programme of works for the consultants, which would be carried out over the following three phases:-

Phase 1: present until 1 March. Specific tasks would include:-

- evaluating the SCART Business Plan and producing a report for the Parish Council regarding Sutton Coldfield Town Hall
- representing the Interim Parish Council in the discussions/negotiations with the Principal Authority.
- Secure any legal and financial advice required by the Steering Group
- Work with City Council Officers to prepare the Agenda and associated reports for the first Interim Parish Council meeting on 8th March to enable all key decisions to establish the Parish Council are made.

- Facilitating a pre-election event in Sutton Coldfield to introduce the Parish Council and to provide information to prospective candidates.

Phase 2: 1st March to 5th May. Specific tasks would include:-

- developing as much of the governance and financial management structure as practical/possible
- implementation of Parish Council website
- progress recruitment of any permanent staff
- establish a Parish Council Office
- develop an outline strategy and proposals for first year actions

Phase 3: from the election of the Parish Council to the handover to permanent Parish Clerk. Specific duties and activities would include:-

- to provide a training package/summer school for Councillors, Committee Chairmen etc.
- agree strategic direction with Council and implement quick wins
- complete the Governance structure/support the Parish Council in the recruitment and development of a qualified permanent Town Clerk and core administrative staff

Ifor further advised of the approximate costs for each phase - £5k for Phase 1; £5-£7k for Phase 2, and £15-£20k for Phase 3; officers would continue to ensure that the best possible service and costs were obtained.

Councillor Spencer stressed the importance of ensuring the Interim Parish Clerk was appropriately experienced and skilled, given the enormity of the tasks ahead. Paul Long felt that the Parish Council should decide its own training arrangements for Councillors and other options should be explored.

In response to Group Members questions, Ifor confirmed that the Parish Council would be able to procure/commission its own services.

There was no obligation or requirement to use any of the support services provided by the City Council via Service Birmingham or Acivico.

The Chairman thanked Ifor for the information update.

Action: All to Note

7. BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSALS

Robert Connelly, Head of Electoral Services briefly advised of the consultation process currently being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The consultation closing date for comments, representations and alternative submissions regarding the proposals was 8 February 2016.

Robert further advised that the number of City and Parish Councillors in each ward could change if the ward boundaries were redrawn, however the overall number of 24 Parish Councillors for Sutton Coldfield Parish Council would remain the same.

Paul Long expressed concerns regarding the proposals and consultation, and felt that there was confusion regarding the City Council submissions for Sutton Coldfield and the warding arrangements for the Parish Council. He suggested that representation was made to the Boundary Commission from the Steering Group that the closing date be extended to allow for further consultation on the parish council ward boundaries.

Robert advised that the Steering Group could make its own submissions, however it was unlikely that the closing date would be extended. He further advised that the review was for all city wards including Sutton Coldfield and that each political group had made their own representations and submissions. In addition, the Leader and Chief Executive had hoped to meet with the Boundary Commission to discuss the matter further.

Councillor Pocock felt that a supplementary review for the Parish Council ward boundaries should be carried out by the Boundary Commission once the citywide review had been concluded.

The Chairman proposed that a letter was sent to the Boundary Commission on behalf of the Steering Group outlining the concerns raised.

Action: Letter to be sent to the Boundary Commission on behalf of the Steering Group outlining the concerns as mentioned above.

8. ELECTIONS TO PARISH COUNCIL - PROCESS

Robert Connelly advised of the date for the Local Elections, Police and Crime Commissioner and Parish Council Elections, with the pre-election period (Purdah) commencing on 23 March 2016.

The timetable would be published within the next week or so, and details would be sent to all political and independent groups.

Robert advised of the following:-

- Candidates wanting to stand in the Parish Council elections must have lived or have an existing business in Sutton Coldfield District for 12 months or more.
- Candidates must be registered on the electoral register.
- No declaration of political allegiance was necessary, however where a candidate was standing for a political party, this must be clearly indicated.
- All political parties must be appropriately registered.
- Candidates standing for the Parish Council elections require a proposer and seconder only
- Candidates standing independently were able to so do; further advice and information for all candidates could be obtained from the Elections Office.
- The count for the Parish Council would take place on Saturday 7 May after the Local Election and PCC count on Thursday and Friday respectively.

The Chairman advised that a public meeting would be held on 2nd March 2016 to provide information on the role of Parish Councils and how to become a Parish Councillor. Further details would be provided in due course.

The Chairman thanked Robert Connelly for his attendance and information update.

Action: All to Note

9. FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman drew Group Members attention to the Forward Plan timetable attached.

(See Document No. 2)

Ifor advised that consideration would need to be given to the floral displays and arrangements identified as a key priority by residents. Paul Long expressed concerns that the floral service currently provided by the City Council would significantly reduce once the Parish Council was established, and felt that the use of the City's Nurseries Service should no longer be considered as the service could be provided by local companies.

Ifor briefly advised of the procurement process that would need to be followed until the Parish Council had been established and its councillors elected. The Parish Council would then be able to make its own arrangements for the future procurement of services. Ifor suggested that a small working group be set up with Olive to look at the specification as well as identify/determine the locations for the floral arrangements given the short timescales for the ordering and planting.

Councillor Barrie suggested that the specification and locations already identified when floral displays were funded through Community Chest would be a very useful starting point and agreed to lead the working group. Councillors Pocock and Waddington also offered their support to the group.

In response to Paul's request for community involvement with the floral arrangements, the Chairman advised that many local traders and businesses were already involved with providing floral arrangements, and welcomed the opportunity for the wider community to get involved once the Parish Council had been established.

Action:

(i) All to Note

(ii) Councillors Barrie, Pocock and Waddington to lead the working group with Olive to scope options to bring before the Steering Group.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Elizabeth Allison briefly advised of the legislation which prohibited the use of the Flag for the former Sutton Coldfield Borough Council.

The Chairman suggested that the issue be explored further by the Parish Council.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Group Members were reminded that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 16 February 2016, 6pm, the Bowls Room, Mere Green Community Centre.

Action: All to Note

The meeting closed at 1938hrs