

**Sutton Coldfield Parish Council
Interim Parish Council Meeting
15th March 2016**

Agenda Item-17

Office Accommodation and Initial Staffing

Under this item there are proposals to move forward to procure Town Council office accommodation and to immediately recruit a member of staff to undertake necessary administrative tasks.

Accommodation

1. The Parish/Town Council will require suitable office accommodation to be available for occupation as soon as possible after the Council comes into being. In the longer term there may be a possibility to include the Town Council office in the specification for a refurbished Sutton Coldfield Town Hall however even if this plan were to materialise it could be a number of years before this option is available.
2. The immediate criteria for a Town Council Office would be as follows
 - Located in a visible Town Centre Location
 - Accessible to the Public
 - Will be perceived as a neutral location
 - Sufficient space for up to 4 staff
 - Sufficiently flexible to accommodate some change as the Town Council grows
 - Capable of providing a separate office/ meeting space for the Clerk to hold meetings in private.
 - Ideally would provide a facility to display Public Notices in close proximity to meet the requirements of various statutes
 - Toilet facilities
 - Available on a minimum 3 to 5 year lease.
3. A number of options have so far been put forward and considered.
 - Former Sutton Coldfield Registrars Offices
 - 1st floor office accommodation in Sutton Coldfield Masonic Hall
 - Two retail premises in the High Street
 - One retail premises in Birmingham Road
4. Having reviewed the accommodation against the criteria
 - The Former Registrars office would unfortunately not meet several of them including accessibility, visibility, flexibility and availability for a minimum term.

- The Masonic Hall premises would not currently meet the neutrality, accessibility and visibility criteria; notwithstanding that this was a Municipal building known as the Town hall before 1903.
 - On the face of it the retail premises available would appear to meet most of the criteria although detailed viewings of the properties have not yet been conducted to assess final suitability. On the basis of a review of particulars the property on Birmingham Road would appear to be the most promising.
 - Retail premises have the advantage of providing a location that will continually remind the community of the presence of the Council and provide ready accessibility for those who wish to contact council staff. They also provide flexible locations that can be fitted out to meet changing needs, including the possibility of providing temporary support for community initiatives. Flexible lease arrangements are also readily available.
5. **It is recommended** that The Interim Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman is authorised to conduct further investigations, with a view to obtaining suitable retail based accommodation for the Council. Once identified, to negotiate an appropriate lease and make arrangements for the property to be fitted out for occupation.

Staffing

6. The Parish/Town Council's staffing requirements will be mainly dependent on the functions and services that the Council chooses to undertake. However there is an underlying administrative workload which will apply irrespective of the Council's functions and which will start to accrue immediately on the creation of the Council.
7. Provision has been made in the budget for up to three administrative staff in the first year. Not all of these recruitments need to be made immediately and it would be sensible to wait until the precise committee and governance structure is identified before moving forward with all these. However it is proposed that an immediate administrator recruitment should be undertaken to resource the following tasks
- To provide an office hours presence in the Town Council Office and respond to enquiries.
 - To undertake bookkeeping, receipts and payments, budget monitoring and operate the Financial Management system once installed.
 - Provide administrative services to support and minute Council meetings.
 - Provide diary management and secretarial services to the Chairman
 - Provide administrative support to the Town Clerk.
8. A job description and grading proposal is attached

9. **It is recommended** that we would proceed to recruit to this position immediately and that the Clerk is authorised in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman take action to fill the post.