

**NORTHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL
CIVIC MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2021 at 12:00 noon
in the Farmer Room at Northampton Guildhall**

PRESENT: Councillors Marriott (Chair), Lane, Meredith (Deputy Mayor)

Officers: Mr S Carter (Town Clerk) Ms L Hawkins (Civic and Mayoral Officer)

Cllr Meredith announced to the Committee the unexpected death of Hereditary Freeman and local historian Mr Mike Ingram.

All present observed a minute's silence in memory of Mr Ingram.

8. APOLOGIES

Councillors Ashraf and G Eales

9. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None

10. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as an accurate record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

11. OPERATION LONDON BRIDGE

Members were sent the NTC protocol and Town/Parish Guidance prior to the meeting.

Members were talked through the plans day by day and discussed the invite list to the Mayor's Proclamation; Members, Former Mayor's and Mayoress', Aldermen, Hereditary Freeman and Honorary Freedom of the Borough recipients.

It was mentioned that the robes need to be looked at as the velvet is thinning. The Civic and Mayoralty Officer would get a quote for full replacement and also for repair

It was advised that every incoming Mayor would have a briefing session where they would be advised in detail of the protocol and also taken through what could be the wording for the proclamation.

Overall, the committee were happy with the arrangements, though a few points needed confirming with WNC such as where flowers would be laid. It was confirmed that the Civic and Mayoralty Officer would forward the updated Town Council protocol to Simon Anthony of WNC Emergency Planning and Daniel Moody of NALC for their information and comment.

NOTED

12. PROTOCOL FOR THE ELECTION OF THE TOWN MAYOR

The Deputy Mayor advised that he would like a Civic Reception for his term. The Civic and Mayoralty Officer advised that she would report what the costings will potentially be in the next Civic Matters Committee meeting for a decision to be made then.

The Northampton Borough Council election point process for choosing Mayors was shared with committee members. Those present favoured this process for choosing the Mayor but agreed that they would need to discuss further with their respective groups.

It agreed that a final decision would be made for a Town Council process at the January, or February Civic Matters Sub-Committee meeting.

It was noted that Cllr Meredith's nomination had come from the Conservative Party.

The Civic and Mayoralty Officer would research how surrounding Councils and Parishes elect their chairs. From the Clerk's experience it was done on length of service and who wanted to take on the role.

NOTED

13. SUPPORT FOR FREEMEN AND FREEWOMEN

Members were provided with a report laying out the costs for the support of the Freeman Trustees. This equated to £1,582.00 per annum.

The Civic and Mayoralty Officer advised that Freeman Trustee support was not in her job specification and out of hours' meetings had been claimed as TOIL, though it was a role she had fulfilled when at NBC and was happy to continue.

The Committee members agreed that as the Town Council had adopted the civic traditions of the town and that the officer commitment was relatively small in terms of the support for the Freeman and Freewomen. In addition, they played an important role in the civic history and traditions and the Town Council should continue to give its support. It was noted that the costs were primarily officer hours and some printing.

RECOMMENDED: That the Council formally support the Freeman and Freewomen with administrative and meeting support.

14. MAYORAL DRIVER

The Civic and Mayoralty Officer advised that this needed to be looked at as there had been times when a driver had not been available to drive the Mayor to events. It had been suggested that the Council look to employ a driver combined with another role, she advised that it would be very difficult to source a suitable candidate if an admin role and driver role were to be incorporated due to the flexibility required for the driving work. The Clerk advised that it would also likely cost more than it currently did.

The Civic and Mayoralty officer also raised the issues of Chains being worn. The driver also acted as security and assistance to the Mayor when wearing the chain. Without a driver the chain was not usually worn. Members advised that the public wished to see the Mayor with chains and the car for prestige at their engagements.

The reason for that there was a struggle for drivers was that it was not a simple role, it did require an element of knowledge of protocol. The two most experienced drivers now had limited availability due to taking up school runs due to the lack of engagements during the pandemic. It was noted that now usually

there was no driver availability from 9:00 – 10:30 and from 14:00 – 17:30. The shortage of drivers nationally let alone locally had further compounded the problem.

It was agreed that the Civic Mayoralty Officer would contact local driving businesses to see further availability for driver's/taxi firms and that this would be looked at again at a future meeting as more detail was required. She would also continue to liaise with the two regular drivers and the employment of a driver would be looked at in greater detail.

Due to there being no other business the meeting was concluded at 13.10

The next meeting has been arranged for Monday 31st January at midday

Signed.....Chair