

Main matters arising: Town Council Civic Award criteria/ Recording of Town Council meetings/ Use of Part B/ Staffing update

MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT MEETING HELD AT 8.00PM ON WEDNESDAY 30TH JULY 2014 AT THE CIVIC HALL, POYNTON

PRESENT

Chairman: Cllr P Hoyland

Cllrs. L A Clarke. C Gorst

Attending under SO 54: Cllr Mrs J Sewart, substituting for Cllr Mrs J Saunders
Attending under SO 56: Cllrs B Lewis (until 8.55pm) and H Murray (from 8.20pm)

98. Apologies for absence

Cllrs. Mrs J Saunders, A Smith and G Smith

99. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Interests

None declared

100. Minutes of the previous M&E meeting held on 1st July 2014

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the M&E meeting held on 1st July 2014 are approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman (3 – 1 abs)

101. Town Council Civic Awards and Youth Civic Awards

The Clerk had circulated a discussion paper in advance. Cllr Hoyland explained that when considering candidates for 2014 Civic Awards and Youth Civic Awards, the discussion had gone wider, and Members had queried whether the criteria were still valid, namely “In recognition of a sustained and significant contribution to the community of Poynton”.

Cllr Hoyland said that he favoured one award programme only, and was against ‘ad hoc’ awards, while Cllr Mrs Sewart said that awards should not be given to someone for merely doing their job. Cllr Clarke argued that awards should only be granted to those involved in voluntary work, unless, at the Town Council’s discretion, it was felt that someone had given exceptional

service in a paid profession. He also felt that recommended candidates should go to the Town Council, and from a personal view, he felt that no change was needed to the 'adult' award criteria.

Cllr Lewis said that much depended on the wording of individual citations. Cllr Mrs Sewart said that there will always be differing opinions on individuals, but she supported Cllr Clarke in terms of the present criteria, and felt strongly that professionals should not be granted Town Council awards. Cllr Gorst stated that motivation was the key factor, and he was also happy with the current wording of the criteria.

RESOLVED: That the wording of the criteria for Town Council 'adult' Civic Awards remains as is, with an emphasis on those involved in voluntary work; and that those professionals in paid work to be considered on an ad hoc basis, with the Town Council prepared to consider exceptional circumstances (3 – 1 against)

(Cllr Murray arrived at the meeting at 8.20pm)

Turning to Youth Civic Awards, the meeting agreed that the Civic Award criteria was not suitable for these, and approved the Clerk's suggested wording, namely:

"In recognition of having shown leadership, initiative, enthusiasm and commitment to a worthwhile cause, of benefit to their peer group and/or the wider community"

RESOLVED: That the Clerk's suggested wording for criteria for Youth Civic Awards be approved, with effect from the 2015 Award programme (NC)

102. Recording of Town Council meetings

Cllr Hoyland said this had been discussed at the M&E Committee meeting of 15th April 2014, when it was resolved that no recordings should be taken at Town Council meetings, save that used to assist the shorthand assistant when preparing the official record. Cllr Lewis asked if any papers had been circulated for that meeting, to which Cllr Hoyland said 'no' and to which Cllr Lewis replied 'good'.

Cllr Hoyland explained that this issue was again on the agenda since it had transpired at a recent CE hearing in Macclesfield that recordings of Town Council meetings are being made, supposedly for personal reasons, but that these had then been used for evidence.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion on this subject. Cllr Mrs Sewart felt that if recordings are being made we all need to be made aware, and she suggested that the Clerk check the legal position. Cllr Hoyland said that while

CE Cabinet meetings were covered by webcam, of which everyone was clearly aware, the general CE ruling was for no recordings to be made at meetings. Cllr Lewis stated that this issue was for the Town Council to discuss, not M&E, adding that the CE hearing at which recording was admitted was not a Town Council meeting.

Cllr Clarke said that any changes to meeting protocol needed to go to the Town Council, and he asked who had been recording, to which Cllr Murray replied 'Cllr Bartos'. Cllr Clarke said he had no problem with this Committee discussing and researching the issue. He felt that it was good manners to let people know if they are being recorded, but in practical terms it was almost impossible to stop. Cllr Clarke had a concern about recordings being manipulated, or used selectively. If meetings are recorded an official version was needed, and he went on to suggest that the Clerk ask NALC/ChALC regarding the law concerning the recording of meetings.

Cllr Murray said he did not care if meetings were recorded – it was no big deal in his view. He went on to say however that we do need to tell Councillors what has been going on. There followed a discussion on official recordings of meetings as a safeguard, and whether this should be adopted for all Town Council meetings. Cllrs Murray and Lewis then got involved in an exchange about criminal law versus civil law, at which point Cllr Lewis accused Cllr Murray of calling him a rude word. Cllr Clarke said he had heard this too, and said that such 'playground' insults were not helpful, and suggested that Cllr Murray apologise. At this point Cllr Lewis said he would be making an official complaint against Cllr Murray. The latter then asked if he would withdraw the complaint if he, Cllr Murray gave an unreserved apology, to which Cllr Lewis said no, he would proceed anyway.

Moving on, Cllr Clarke again suggested that the Clerk be asked to check the legal implications for and against recording. Cllr Murray said that Cllr Bartos had admitted to recording meetings for the last two years, and said this had been due to language difficulties. Cllr Murray suggested that perhaps only contentious meetings should be recorded, not those that are routine. Cllr Mrs Sewart wondered if it could be announced at the start of meetings that there were to be no recordings made – can we stop people recording? Her personal view was that secret recordings were completely unacceptable and deceitful. Cllr Clarke thought that recordings could not be stopped, and Cllr Lewis agreed.

Cllr Murray made the point that any recordings made of Part B proceedings would be a breach of Part B rules. Cllr Clarke agreed with that point, and said that recordings could end up on the internet, and show the Town Council in a very bad light.

Cllr Gorst supported Cllr Clarke's proposal for some research to be undertaken, and brought back to this Committee, while Cllr Lewis argued for the results to be circulated to all Members. Cllr Hoyland said that the information would ultimately go to all Members anyway.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk seek guidance from NALC or other competent body about the legal implications of recording Town Council proceedings (NC)

Cllr Clarke then asked if anyone had approached Cllr Bartos to confirm whether he has been recording Town Council meetings, and, if so, whether these recordings have been retained. This would be helpful for Members to know.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk write a formal letter to Cllr Bartos, posing the above questions (NC)

(Cllr Lewis left at 8.55pm)

103. Use of Part B

Cllr Hoyland invited Cllr Clarke to give his views on the use of Part B at Council meetings. The latter felt this was over-used, but said he accepted that it was justified when dealing with some issues. The Clerk said he welcomed this challenge from Cllr Clarke, and agreed that with hindsight the next section of the agenda should not be dealt with as a Part B.

RESOLVED: That the next item on the agenda – Staffing Update – should not go to a Part B (NC)

104. Staffing Update

The Clerk reported that he was disappointed by the number of applications for the post of Youth Coordinator. Second interviews had been arranged on 18th August for a shortlist of three candidates, and Members agreed that the panel should only appoint if they felt the candidate was absolutely right for the position.

On workload v. resource the Clerk outlined two suggestions concerning efficiencies – to radically reduce the range of room hire rates, and to make Council Surgeries by appointment only, rather than a drop in as at present. There followed discussion about the merits or otherwise of these suggestions, with Cllrs Clarke and Mrs Sewart in favour of leaving the Surgeries as they are. Cllr Gorst said that room hire rates needed to be fully investigated.

RESOLVED: To take no action on these suggestions until all others have been presented (NC)

The meeting concluded at 9.25pm