

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL**Meeting of the Civics Committee
Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams
At 6.00pm on Thursday 4 February 2021****PRESENT**

Councillors Ms G Burgess (Mayor), J Dean (Deputy Mayor), P Gillam, P Nutting & K Roberts

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) and Carol Pullen (Mayor's Secretary).

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms Mackenzie

01/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received

02/20 SUPPORT FOR THE MAYOR**(i) Mayor's Officer**

The Committee considered the future Role of Mayor's Officer; the previous incumbent had retired in early May but the post had not been filled due to the fact the pandemic had placed significant restrictions on the Mayoral role and it did not warrant the post being filled immediately. The reductions in salary payments had helped to offset the overall budget deficit resulting from the pandemic. It was the intention to recruit in line for the start of the Municipal year when it was hoped that lockdown measures will have lifted somewhat and the Mayor would be needed for more civic activities. The Job Description was being reviewed to give more clarity on the role.

Members queried whether the Mayor Officer Role could accommodate some of the secretariat work. This would free up time for the Town Clerk & Mayor's Secretary who had assumed a greater role as Committee Clerk.

All past Mayors felt the Mayor's Officer role was valuable as it ensured a consistent approach to the Mayoralty, particularly as Mayors only usually did a one-year term.

(ii) Mayor's Car

The Town Clerk reported that the Mayor's Car was the oldest vehicle in the Council Fleet yet did remain in relatively good condition with good service and MOT history. At the time of lockdown in March 2020 staff had started to explore a replacement looking at electric and hybrid alternatives. This will be picked up again once lockdown was lifted and trialling cars was easier.

All past members felt that the continuation of a Mayoral Car was crucial to the role given the Mayor of Shrewsbury had one of the busiest diaries of any civic leader in the county. They were keen to see a choice of vehicle that reflected the distinguished role that the Mayor of Shrewsbury held. The Deputy Mayor was keen to explore possibilities of a car share arrangement on the understanding that the Mayor could use it as and when he/she needed it.

(iii) Mayor's Allowance

The Town Clerk reiterated the fact that the allowance was there for the discharge of any expenses of being a Mayor; this being clearly detailed in the Mayor's Handbook. It was not classed as a salary; otherwise it would be paid through payroll and be subject to HMRC deductions.

(ii) Website

The Council website was currently being upgraded and the intention was that the website would be the first port of call for anyone wishing to book the Mayor for an event. Further functionality was being looked at so that the invitation with associated detail could populate the Mayor's diary directly.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the Town Clerk proceed with the recruitment of a Mayor's Officer in time for the start of the new Municipal Year, incorporating some of the suggestions from the Committee;**
- (ii) That Officers explore replacement of the Mayor's Car with a suitable electric/hybrid alternative;**
- (iii) That the Mayoral Allowance continue with the same figure and arrangements**

03/20 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE MAYORALTY

Members had a general discussion on the Mayoralty. The role of Mayor of Shrewsbury within the County of Shropshire was a special one as it was seen as an ambassador not only for Shrewsbury but the county as a whole.

There continued to be a number of invitations for the Mayor to attend events outside of the town boundary; these were often historic and reflected the fact that the rural hinterland around Shrewsbury still do look to the town for leadership. In these occasions, out of courtesy permission is still sought from the chairman of the parish where the event is taking place.

The Mayor reported on a number of engagements she did between the 2nd and 3rd lockdown. Her attendance had been welcomed and people had been pleased that she had made the efforts to visit. It was felt that the Mayor would need to play a significant role in lifting community spirit post lockdown and promoting Shrewsbury as a wonderful place to live, work and visit.