

# **NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW AUTHORITY**

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**26<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Civic and Ceremonial Aspects – North Northamptonshire Council – report of the Civic Functions Task and Finish Group</b>
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### **List of Appendices**

None

### **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. To consider the recommendations of the Civic Functions Task and Finish Group on future civic and ceremonial arrangements for the new Council.

### **1. Executive Summary**

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- 1.2. This report summarises the conclusions of the Task and Finish Group and addresses the form that civic leadership should take across the area of North Northamptonshire, making recommendations for the look and feel for these from 2021. It proposes that the traditional Mayoral leadership should be vested in town councils and that the new Council should be presided over by a chairman, supported by a deputy, and invested with a modest level of insignia and regalia to add gravitas, without detracting from the historic civic traditions of our major towns.

### **2. Recommendations**

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- 2.1 It is recommended by the Task and Finish Group that this Committee approves the following proposals: -

#### 2.1.1 The Council's constitution should allow for:

- a) The annual election of a chairman (chair/chairperson) to preside at Council meetings and to represent the Council at those local and national civic, royal, and community events as may be appropriate,
- b) The annual election of a deputy chairman (chair/chairperson) to substitute for the chairman, with a view to that person assuming the office of chairman in the following year, subject to the Council's approval.
- c) That the office of chairman and deputy chairman be invested with a chain of office, and the office of chairman be invested with a robe of office, to be worn as appropriate at meetings and events

- d) That dedicated accommodation be provided in due course within the Council's corporate headquarters to act as a reception facility for the chairman to use
- e) That the Chief Executive be asked to identify a member of staff to act as secretary to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman during their year of office
- f) That the Council does not seek to establish a coat of arms for the new Council, but uses its adopted logo on all civic material, including the chains of office
- g) That each Chairman be entitled to appoint a chaplain or chaplains to assist him in their year of office
- h) That an allowance be provided to support the Chairman and defray their expenses during their year of office, composed of a personal allowance (to be determined by the Independent Review Panel) and a hospitality and events budget.

2.2 These recommendations are made with the following principles in mind: -

- They ensure a level of dignity and presence for the office of chairman without competing with the civic traditions of local mayors
- They are reasonably cost effective
- They allow the council to establish its own civic presence and identity over time

### **3. Report Background**

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- 3.1 This task and finish group was charged with considering the form of civic leadership across North Northamptonshire in future. The area of North Northamptonshire is characterised by a significant number of towns and communities with a long tradition of civic pride and historic precedent. The creation of new Town Councils in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough means that each of those will inherit the Mayoralty currently enjoyed by the outgoing Borough Councils. Furthermore, across the current East Northamptonshire district there are several towns with long histories and Mayoral traditions which have endured at parish levels since 1974.
- 3.2 It is therefore not expected that the new Council will want to seek to establish a "North Northamptonshire" mayoral presence; this would conflict with those enjoyed by the towns, cause confusion and inevitably be less well regarded than the historic mayoralties already in place.
- 3.3 The new Council will still need to have someone to preside over it and to provide some civic leadership, as there will be civic roles which fall to the new Council to perform. Therefore, it is proposed that
  - a) The Council has an office entitled chairman (or chair, or chairperson, depending on the preference of the person holding that office). This person shall be elected annually, at the Council's annual meeting and should normally expect to be in office for a year
  - b) They are supported by a Deputy Chairman, who can substitute for the Chairman, and who would normally be expected to succeed the chairman in the following year.

- c) Certain insignia, and support arrangements are approved, as set out in the recommendations and discussed below.

#### **4. Issues and Choices**

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- 4.1 Locally, the existing arrangements which are closest to the proposed structures are at the County Council and at East Northamptonshire Council, which both operate a chairman model. So, experience of their work volumes and arrangements have been used to draft the following commentary.
- 4.2 For the office of chairman to function effectively, it needs to feature the following attributes
- Insignia to indicate the office held and demonstrate its position
  - Accommodation from which to provide space for events, meetings and an office
  - Secretarial and other assistance to support the chairman and deputy chairman in their work
- 4.3 It is common for office holders to be provided with a chain of office; in most cases, this is available to the chairman, deputy and their consorts. It is likely that chains currently used by East Northamptonshire Council could be re-purposed for the new council to use, with a change made to the insignia on them to reflect the change of council. This would be a cost-effective route. The agreement of ENC and of Rushden Town Council would need to be sought. (before 1974, the chains belonged to Rushden UDC). It is assumed that all other Mayoral insignia in use by Borough Councils will be transferred to successor Town Councils. The Task and Finish Group considered that there was merit in providing a robe or the chairman to wear at meetings and events, this could be sourced from an existing Council's assets or acquired relatively cheaply. A proposal was made for robes to be designed by fashion/art and design students at either Tresham College or the University of Northampton as an inexpensive way of producing a distinctive, characterful and locally relevant piece of clothing. There will be a cost associated with changing the insignia on the chains of office to ones which reflect the new Council; see also para 4.9 below.
- 4.4 Council chambers are often used for civic events, where these happen within Council offices, but is usual to provide some dedicated office space for the chairman to use for smaller events, for meetings and for hospitality and for their own use. It should be possible to identify space within the new Council's estate or corporate HQ for this purpose. At NCC, the chairman has approximately 20 engagements a year plus royal visits, and at ENC approximately 90 engagements, so it is unlikely that the new Council chairman's workload will differ significantly from this.
- 4.5 It is common for civic leaders to enjoy the support of a "chaplain" or sometimes two chaplains - this is generally provided gratis by a faith leader chosen by the chairman. This tradition can be maintained into the unitary if so desired.
- 4.6 Secretarial support is usually provided to a chairman, to arrange meetings and events, keep a diary, provide advice and support both to the chairman and to those doing business with the chairman. At NCC, this consumes approximately 1 day a week of time and at ENC about 1.5 days. Some out

of hours support for events takes place as well. It should therefore be possible to identify a member of staff within the Council's establishment who could take on this role alongside other duties.

- 4.7 It is not proposed that the Chairman is provided with either a car or driver because of the expense; at NCC and ENC, the chairman provides their own transport, with use of a hire car or taxi for some evening events.
- 4.8 In terms of an allowance, at NCC, this is £12072 and at ENC it is £5100. This is intended to cover costs incurred, for example, clothing, hospitality, purchasing tickets for events and charities, gifts and sundry expenses. On top of that, mileage and subsistence claims can be made. The Vice chairman's allowance at NCC is £2219 and at ENC it is £850. Allowances for the Chairman can be divided into two distinct elements – a personal allowance to defray items such as clothing, transport and subsistence, and a hospitality and events budget to meet the direct costs. The first would be taxable, the second would be a spending budget. The Task and Finish Group agreed this was an appropriate arrangement and proposed that the Independent Review Panel examining Members' allowances should make recommendations on the amounts.
- 4.9 There is separately the issue of whether the Council should seek to adopt a coat of arms in addition to its logo, to denote its civic position in the community and more widely. The College of Arms has asked if this is a route we wish to follow. On the basis on inquiries for other coat of arm changes made recently, it is expected that the cost of creating a coat of arms will be from £13000-£20,000 including the cost of fees to the college of arms, graphic design costs, printing and casting the insignia. The Task and Finish Group proposes that the Council's agreed logo should be used and that this can be reproduced within the insignia used on the chains of office. See the points in para 4.3. above as well.
- 4.10 Most districts and Boroughs have over time, appointed honorary alderman and bestowed freedom of their Boroughs on individuals. Those appointments will novate over to the new North Northamptonshire Council, which can continue to create honorary aldermen or bestow freedom of the district on people in future. Outgoing Councils can also do that between now and vesting day.

## **5. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **5.1 Resources and Financial**

- 5.1.1 The cost of two chains office and a robe could potentially be met by re-purposing existing chains and robes, at a small cost arising from the change of insignia.
- 5.1.2 Given the likely workload arising from the office, it is thought that the secretarial support can be absorbed within an existing job description within the democratic services team or the chief executive's office.
- 5.1.3 An allowance can be included within the overall budget for members' allowances.

- 5.1.4 There should be no direct additional costs associated with the appointment of a chaplain, or the identification of office accommodation.
- 5.1.5 The creation of a coat of arms would cost approximately £13000-£20000 in fees to the college of arms, additional graphic design, printing and casting costs to make new insignia. Replacing the insignia on a re-used chain of office will cost approximately £2000.
- 5.1.6 The additional costs identified are one off in nature and would need to be incorporated into the first year's budget for the new council. They would be funded from existing revenue budget provision or use of reserves.

## **5.2 Legal**

- 5.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals. The law requires that the Council must have a chairman, and a deputy chairman, however styled, to preside at its meetings.

## **5.3 Risk**

- 5.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

## **5.4 Consultation**

- 5.4.1 The task and finish group has not carried out any specific consultation on these proposals.

## **5.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

- 5.5.1 None to date

## **5.6 Climate Impact**

- 5.6.1 None.

## **5.7 Community Impact**

- 5.7.1 The proposals will create a level of civic leadership and a focal point for the new Council with the community, without competing with the various mayoralties within the district.

## **6. Background Papers**

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- 6.1 Letter from College of Arms 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- 6.2 Email exchange with NCC and ENC staff