

4th April 2023

Minutes of the proceedings of the **EXTRAORDINARY CIVIC COMMITTEE** meeting held on this day in **the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Wokingham** from 18:30 to 19:20pm.

PRESENT

Chair: Cllr David Lee (Chair),
Councillors: J Ainslie, R Bishop-Firth (Vice-Chair), D King, Cllr T Lack, T Lloyd,
K Malvern, P Lucey.

IN ATTENDANCE

Civic Officer
Mayor's Attendant
Cllr Maria Gee (Mayor)
Cllr Lynn Forbes

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr M Ferrai.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OR PUBLIC (Agenda Item 3)

No questions were received.

MAYOR'S CHAIN AND BADGE OF OFFICE (Agenda Item 4)

The committee received the Civic Officer's reports offering an update about the Mayoral chain and badge of office, and they continued a discussion on this topic from the previous civic meeting.

The Civic Officer gave a verbal summary of why the reports had been put together, for members, which included the following:

- WTC is the custodian of this item, and it is responsible for its preservation for our future generations.
- The oldest elements, including the badge, are 131 years old.
- It was last valued in August 2022 at a significantly higher amount from the last valuation in 2011. The valuer brought to WTC's attention the importance that it should place on its preservation.
- It feels prudent for WTC to ensure it considers how it is worn (if worn) and used in the future, so that it is conserved for historical purposes and for our future generations. This requires decisions to be made about its ongoing use and the best way forward so that the life of this distinctive and valuable piece in our collection is pro-longed.

CHAIR'S INITIALS _____



The Civic Officer explained the following challenges:

- It is extremely heavy for our Mayors to wear, particularly our female Mayors
- The badge often catches on Mayor's clothing
- It is showing more and more signs of wear, and more frequent repairs are needing to be made, particularly to the badge
- Each time the chain is sent away, the process of taking shields and adding new ones may be weakening the chain. The fewer times it needs to be sent away would be preferable too, to reduce risk.
- Keeping the chain and badge in regular use, without making any changes no longer feels like an option as its maintenance could become more and more expensive and it could in the long term become irreparable.

Members discussed the following options again which were presented in the reports:

- adding a velvet collar to the chain and badge to add protection
- considering if the process of adding new shields for each Mayor should be continued
- reducing how often it is worn and for the Mayor to wear the Mayoress/Consort chain and badge when the robe is not worn
- purchasing a new chain and badge

It was proposed by Cllr D Lee and seconded by Cllr R Bishop-Firth and it was

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that at some point in the near future, consideration should be given to purchasing a new Mayoral chain and Badge of Office and the existing one should be retired and suitably displayed so it is preserved for historical purposes and future generations. It was recognised that if it was continued to be used as regularly as it currently is, it could require more and more repairs and become more costly for the Council over time and the item may not last the same number of years.

Members agreed the following in the meantime:

- To retain the visibility of this piece but to reduce how much it is worn, the Mayor should wear it on special occasions only, mostly with the robe. On other occasions, the Mayor will wear the badge and chain traditionally worn by the Mayoress/Consort. This pre-dates the Mayor's chain and badge and was purchased privately in honour of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 and worn during that year by the first Mayor of Wokingham, Alderman Thomas Manley Wescott. Despite this being older in age, and as valuable, it is lighter and easier to wear, and much less problematic to maintain.
- The Mayor's Partner should wear the silver chain originally purchased for a Mayor's Partner to wear if male.
- A new badge and ribbon should be purchased for our Mini-Mayors to wear.
- A velvet backing is not required for the Mayoral chain and badge of office.
- No further shields would be made and added to the existing chain except for the two remaining shields for Mayors who have served up until this time.

CHAIR'S INITIALS _____



- Going forward, new shields for the current chain could either be made and added to the display case in the parlour or, different shields added/engraved to a new chain if purchased.

ACTION: Civic Officer

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE _____

CHAIR'S INITIALS _____

