

KINGSWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting: Finance and Administration Committee

Date: 24th September 2024

Author: Town Clerk

Item for Consideration: To consider if the council wishes to expand its Civic Responsibilities

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report is for councillors to consider if they want to discuss in further detail increasing the civic responsibilities of the council within Kingswood, that might lead to the creation of the role of Mayor, and procuring civic insignia that distinguishes that role, as well as funding activities associated with this role. The council adopted a Corporate Plan with clear objectives about galvanizing local civic pride and establishing a programme of local events, working with local stakeholders, and for the council to become a community enabler and leader. So, this report is for councillors to consider if the time is right to expand the role of the council, and to consider if it would like to include this as a project to develop into 2025/26 and include it in the budget setting process, by asking the Clerk to undertake further research to receive quotes for the necessary civic insignia and develop the necessary protocols and policies. It might also be an opportunity to ask the residents if they would support this, by way of a local survey.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Being a new council, KTC does not have any tradition to rely on and instead needs to find its way within the local community. However, it has been suggested recently, informally, that either the council has a mayor, or that the role of the Chairman become more civic facing.

2.2 The current Chair has no ceremonial role, and duties are limited to managing meetings. They also have a closer working relationship with the staff. All councillors are considered equal and would get involved in civic events such as Remembrance Day and walk in the procession for other civic events.

2.3 Section 245 (6) of the Local Government Act 1972 gives a Town Council the power to style the Chairman of a Town Council as 'Town Mayor'. A Town Mayor has the same rights and duties as a Town Council Chairman. The office and leadership role of Town Mayor must be always respected by all members of the Council. It would be normal for a council to distinguish this role with the investment into a chain of office and councillor robes. In addition, there might be an allowance for the mayor that covers incidental costs associated with the role. Furthermore, there is an additional demand on staff time, to manage invitations, respond to enquiries, additional budget and finance processing, as well as a need to manage their activity through effective communications on the website, in print and on social media.

2.4 It would be necessary for the council to develop a protocol for civic activity and some examples are given below:

- Mayor's inauguration and Civic celebration/Civic Service in a place of worship
- Hosting of council functions
- Attending external functions
- Representing the council on official royal visits
- Representing the council in response to media interest

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- Choosing to support a local charity
- Sending of Christmas cards
- Presenting cheques to Community Grant Scheme recipients
- Mayor's allowance as recompense for the expenses of maintaining the dignity of office: clothing, donations to charity, collections, one off events.
- Civic Insignia and robes

2.5 To manage the Civic Duties will require additional resources, in terms of staff time and budget, and currently they are not known. Many town councils with a mayor will have an officer supporting this function, who will manage their diary, travel arrangements, arrange events, process payments etc. If KTC wished to choose this option, it would need to employ some additional support. The clerk is not aware of arrangements in other local towns, not that this is a factor in what Kingswood does but might help in deciding whether to proceed.

3.0 Recommendation

To consider the implications of creating a more ceremonial for the role of Chair/Mayor, the implication on budget and staff resources, and whether it is the wish of councillors to discuss in further detail at a council meeting.