

**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE 25<sup>TH</sup> February 2014**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Present:** the Right Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors Tawn, Boulter, Nenadich, Michael, Andrews, Kenyon, Toon, Oliver and Chappell.

**Officers Attending :** Steve Kerry, Town Clerk and Lesley Bruton, Finance Officer

**F2013/14.75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Wilcox, Chave and Kay.

**F2013/14.76 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Andrews for Councillor Kay. Councillor Kenyon for Councillor Chave.  
Councillor Nenadich for Councillor Wilcox.

**F2013/14.77 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Clerk advised Councillor Toon that her membership of a NALC Committee did not generate a disclosable interest.

**F2013/14.78 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Chappell and

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> November 2013 be agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly.

**F2013/14.79 ACCOUNTS PAID**

The Finance Officer presented a schedule of payments made since the last meeting of the Committee. In answer to a question it was confirmed that Herefordshire Council always charge for the use of High Town for events.

There being no further questions the report was noted.

**F2013/14.80 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2014**

The Finance Officer presented the report. In answer to questions the following points were noted.

The annual cost to the Council of supporting allotment provision is around £20,000. Discussions with the Society about moving to a long-term lease are ongoing.

The £10,000 allocated and agreed by Council for repairing broken pavements in High Town is unlikely to cover significant additional works such as the flooding outside the Post Office. Councillor Tawn and the Mayor described the previous discussions that have taken place and pointed out that this matter had been resolved in detail at

the last meeting and approved by Council. By doing something visible and positive the Council could begin to challenge the negative perceptions created in the recent Times article which was inaccurate in several aspects. It was noted that Balfour Beatty have all the information about cables and other underground features which will enable them to start work promptly once the eleven week lead in time for preparing the stone is completed.

It was then proposed by Councillor Tawn, seconded by Councillor Toon and

**RESOLVED**

**That the Committee notes the contents of the report.**

**That the Committee notes the expenditure to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.**

**That the Committee approves the recommendations within the report regarding forecasted over and under spends.**

**F2013/14.81 DEVOLUTION OF SERVICES AND ASSET TRANSFERS**

The Town Clerk introduced the report. In discussion the following points were noted.

Although there are several good ideas around for developing the Butter Market none have so far been backed by a developer with sufficient finance to deliver them. As a result the question of transferring the asset has become less of a priority than finding a development plan, with finance, that can secure the long term viability of the asset. Detailed work on party walls, boundaries and access still needs to be done to facilitate that kind of development. It was also noted that upon transfer the City Council would have acquired immediate liability for wants of repair, termination costs on long leases for stall holders and potentially the costs of raising the money for major renovation works. Committee had considered the possibility of a Public Works Loans Board loan but rejected it given the high cost over twenty five years. The Council was now being involved in discussions about the future and Herefordshire Council were approaching this as a partnership issue. However they were also not prepared to put the capital in to create a renovated or significantly altered site. It was also noted that unlike some of the other market towns where cost neutral packages have been offered (or at least some revenue generating assets alongside new costs) only cost generating assets had been offered to the City Council.

The issue of widening the transfer offer to include the outdoor markets had been raised, with little apparent enthusiasm in the response from Herefordshire's cabinet member and senior officers.

The Clerk affirmed that when negotiating with Herefordshire on behalf of the City Council is constrained by the mandates given by members and in the absence of a

agreement to fund repairs from a loan he cannot progress a bid to transfer the Butter Market without unacceptable financial risk.

On the public toilets the view was expressed that the Council should seek outright ownership of the assets, although a short transitional period of licensed operation might be desirable to ensure continuity of service while asset transfer details are resolved. The Clerk will attempt to negotiate a sliding scale of overage in future transfers.

Councillor Toon proposed, Councillor Oliver seconded and it was

**RESOLVED**

**That the Committee approves the awarding of the order for works to Union Street public toilets to the sum of £2,660 to be recovered from Herefordshire Council to Healthmatic**

**That the Committee notes the information in this report.**

**F2013/14.82 SUBSCRIPTION TO HALC/NALC**

The Town Clerk explained that in 2012 the Council resolved to maintain its affiliation. In 2013 officers, acting on that mandate, had renewed the subscription. When discussed as an item of expenditure some members asked for consideration of the renewal for this year to come to Committee before a payment was made.

In discussion it was noted that NALC is the only body talking to the Department of Communities and Local Government on behalf of parish councils and major issues such as the Local Council Tax Support Grant, capping and referenda and clarifying parish council powers remain very much active. It was also noted that with a new Chairman and Chief Executive either in post or due soon, and with City Councillors on the Executive and Larger Councils Committee there were good prospects for considerable progress. An approach regarding capping subscription fees for larger councils was being taken very seriously.

It was suggested that in order to ensure common treatment of all affiliations and subscriptions all of these should come to committee before renewals as a matter of course.

Councillor Toon proposed, Councillor Andrews seconded and it was

**RESOLVED** To continue the affiliation for 2014 and 2015.

**F2013/14.83 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Subscription and affiliation renewals as and when they come up.

**F2013/14.84 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

8<sup>TH</sup> April 2014 at 6 pm.

The Meeting was closed at 7.00 pm

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date .....