

# HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

TUESDAY 30 JULY 2013

**PRESENT:** The Right Worshipful, the Mayor, Cllr Edwards and Cllrs Boulter, Kay, Kenyon, Nenadich, Nicholls, Oliver, Powell, Preece, Tawn and Toon.

**ALSO PRESENT:** The Town Clerk, Finance Officer and Civic and Community Development Officer.

**C2013/2014.39      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Members received apologies for absence from Cllrs Andrews, Chappell, Chave, Davies, Michael and Wilcox.

**C2013/2014.40      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest made by Members under the Herefordshire Code of Conduct pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 in respect of items on the agenda were received.

**C2013/2014.41      PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

**C2013/2014.42      MINUTES**

Cllr Oliver had sent his apologies for the last meeting but they had not been recorded and requested the minutes be amended to include his name, that having been done he proposed to approve and sign the minutes of the Meeting of the City Council held on the 25 June 2013. This was seconded by Cllr Tawn and unanimously agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

**The minutes having been amended to include Cllr Oliver having sent his apologies are approved and initialed, sign and dated as a true and accurate account of the Meeting of the City Council held on the 25 June 2013.**

**C2013/2014.43      MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The only item was that the Mayor reported the cancellation of the last meeting of the Market Towns Forum due to the non-attendance of the Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council. It was noted that no explanation had been given for this, and that the message had been conveyed by a PA rather than by Mr Neill himself.

**C2013/2014.44 A NEW FUTURE – DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY CONSULTATION**

The Town Clerk explained the background to the consultation and reminded Council of some of the comments that had been made regarding NALC in the past which he would reflect in the Council's response unless members wished to change it now.

Councillor Toon added that over the last 18 months she had reported to HALC the views of Council that services needed to be improved nationally, that lobbying needed reinforcing rather than being cut back by the ending of the contract with a professional scrutiny and lobbying service and that the question of the constitution, did a branch join a county association or the national one was over due for resolution.

Discussion continued about value for money, reporting back and the expectations of members regarding consultation before major decisions are taken by the NALC Executive. Members were reminded that all of them can access NALC publicity material directly.

It was then unanimously

**Resolved that the Clerk send a summary of comments recorded to both HALC and NALC.**

**C2013/2014.45 STANDARDS**

The Clerk reminded members that the function of the Society of Local Council Clerks is not principally to represent clerks but to train, inform and develop them so that they may better serve their Councils. The alleged tension between SLCC serving the clerk and NALC serving the Member is a canard.

The most important points were the legal duty to complete registration promptly, maintain it accurately and for members to reiterate their declarations and withdraw from any discussion of any item in which they had a disclosable pecuniary interest. A new register for recording declarations a Committee and Council meetings was now in use and the terms "prejudicial" and "personal" had been removed as they referred to the previous legislative framework.

A member queried the use of a ring binder as register, suggesting that pages might be removed or lost accidentally. The Clerk pointed out that all declarations were recorded in the minutes, which were the legal record of business. The ring binder was to assist in dealing with enquiries by keeping all declaration information in one place. There was no statutory obligation to keep it, it was simply convenient to do so.

The Clerk's report was noted.

**C2013/2014.46 MATERNITY POLICY**

The Clerk explained that the proposed policy, which had been considered by Finance and Policy Committee had been taken from Shropshire Council, was fully compliant with current law and expressed the local application of

national conditions of service to which the Council had repeatedly stated it would continue to subscribe.

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

**Resolved to adopt the Maternity Policy as recommended by Finance and Policy Committee.**

#### **C2013/2014.47 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Clerk reported that it was a recommendation from the Internal Auditor that the Council review its financial regulations every year to determine if any changes were necessary. Neither the Auditor, the Finance Officer nor the Clerk were recommending any changes this year, and this view had been endorsed by the Finance and Policy Committee.

In response to a question concerning adequate arrangements for covering financial duties in the prolonged absence of the Finance Officer, the Clerk reminded members that his had been considered in detail by Finance and Policy Committee. Both a short-term and a longer-term policy had been agreed and that while Council should always consider the recommendations and observations of the Auditor it was not obliged to follow every suggestion in detail. His proposal of training up a second officer to be able to move across to fill the Finance Officer's post was expensive and impractical.

In a response to a question the Clerk undertook to produce a statement for members of how responsibilities for ordering goods and services and approving payments were divided among officers.

The report was noted and no changes were made to Financial Regulations.

#### **C2013/2014.48 LOAN POLICY**

The Clerk introduced the report which had been considered by Finance and Policy Committee and stood recommended to Council with one change. This was to add a paragraph authorising the Clerk to seek external legal advice if he felt it as necessary on any particular loan agreement.

It was proposed by Councillor Tawn, seconded by Councillor Kenyon and

**Resolved that the Loans Policy as recommended by Finance and Policy Committee, including the additional paragraph on legal advice, be accepted.**

#### **C2013/2014.49 HIRE OF PA SYSTEM FOR FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The Clerk presented an updated report since this was last considered, and confirmed that the suggestion that Herefordshire Council had a spare system that could be installed in the Chamber had proved wrong. The Council's options were to work without a sound system, to continue to hire or to purchase. The Clerk's recommendation was to purchase. In this case the Council could go for a cabled system that would have to be set out and recovered for each meeting, or a wireless system that could be included in

the room hire by Herefordshire Council and a fee charged by the City for its use. He recommended the latter option.

In discussion a number of points were made :

Both members of the public and of the Council have different levels of hearing and the acoustics of the Chamber are not ideal, especially given the layout of the chairs. Some speakers are better than others at projecting voices, it not just a matter of volume. The principal of equal access to meetings for people with disabilities demands that the Council facilitates everyone being able to hear. Several members had noted that since we started using a system they had been able to hear every word in the Chamber for the first time. It was remiss of Herefordshire Council not to have equipped the Chamber properly themselves, but in their current financial malaise there would not do so now.

Councillor Wilcox proposed, Councillor Toon seconded and it was

**Resolved to invest in a wireless system for the Council Chamber.**

#### **C2013/2014.50**

##### **DRAFT MINUTES**

Members noted that the draft minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on the 17 July 2013 were not yet ready and would be reported to the next meeting of Council.

Draft minutes of the Meeting of the Community Development Committee held on the 23 July 2013, were noted.

Draft minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held on the 16 July 2013 were noted.

#### **C2013/2014.51**

##### **REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF OUTSIDE BODIES**

**a) Municipal Charities (Cllrs Polly Andrews, Aubrey Oliver and Anna Toon)**

The next meeting in due in September.

**b) Here for the City (Cllrs Alex Hempton-Smith & Anna Toon)**

No meetings to report

**c) Herefordshire Market Towns Forum (Cllrs Polly Andrews, Charles Nicholls & Brian Wilcox)**

As noted in Mayor's correspondence earlier, the last meeting had been cancelled due to the abrupt cancellation of attendance by the Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council. Some discussion followed of the potential clash of roles between the Market Towns Forum and the Urban Forum.

**d) HALC Executive Committee (Cllrs Alex Hempton-Smith, Jim Kenyon & Anna Toon)**

Further discussion took place of the role of the Urban Forum at the

last meeting, and of the complimentary Rural Forum, both groups of County Councillors with some questions rising over liaison, or lack of it, with parish representatives.

**e) SAM (Cllrs Alex Hempton-Smith & Anna Toon)**

Noted that Herefordshire Housing were offering, in addition providing work under the lengthsman scheme, to bid for property and grounds maintenance work for parishes and other clients.

**f) The Enterprise Zone Stakeholder Group (Cllr Tawn)**

Councillor Tawn reported that notification of the last meeting had reached him while he was travelling to Scotland, which had precluded his attendance. He had received the minutes and the dates of the next two meetings. He suggested, and it was acknowledged as good practice, that all representatives of external bodies should forward minutes to the Clerk for circulation with the agenda for each Council Meeting.

**g) Three Choirs Festival (Cllrs Liz Chave & Jason Kay)**

Noted that the festival is underway in Gloucester. Preparations well in hand for Hereford in 2015 with new ideas, a bigger and better spread of events and much more impact on the local community – which is something Hereford does better than either of the others already.

**h) Hereford Twinning Association (The Mayor)**

No meeting have taken place.

**i) Hereford City Tourism Group (Cllr Chave with Cllr Tawn as reserve)**

No member present had been able to attend. The Clerk gave a brief update, noting that the Group were keen to develop information hubs at several points around the City rather than a traditional TIC.

**j) Hereford in Bloom (Cllr Kenyon)**

The judges have visited for 2013 and this appears to have gone well. There was particular praise for the new community schemes which have sprung up since last year as an alternative to investing heavily in one area of the City. The Mayor added that he and the Mayoress had attended the event in High Town and many people had commented that the flowers were the best ever. In response to a question it was confirmed that the “meadow” around the bull statue could not be permanent.

**C2013/2014.52**

**TOWN CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Clerk gave a brief overview of the joint NALC and LGA conference he had attended on General Power of Competence, including the possibility of awarding grants to groups run by under-18's on which he had sought more information.

The clerk reported on a rather disappointing meeting concerning asset transfers with representatives of Herefordshire Council at which it was noted that the principle of offering balanced packages of services and

buildings had been lost, and what now seemed to be taking place was an attempt to relieve Herefordshire Council of costs without any regard for the impact on local taxation by the parishes. Some possible areas for further research had been identified and the next meeting should be in a position to make some informed decisions.

Further to earlier discussion, the Clerk confirmed that some County Associations within NALC had set themselves up as companies and were offering services to non member parishes for a fee. This meant that parishes could receive the advice and support of the County Secretary etc but were not constitutionally part of the Association at either county or national level. This would be the subject of debate within NALC’s strategic review as it appeared to be an expression of appreciation of local service and criticism of national.

Members who were nominated by the City to serve on the NALC Executive were asked to sign their forms so the Clerk could forward them with the Mayor’s counter-signature.

Finally, the Clerk confirmed that first David Sort Memorial Dinner would be on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at St Peter’s Church, with Dr Jesse Norman MP as guest speaker.

**C2013/2014.53**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted the date of the next meeting is 17 SEPTEMBER 2013.

There being no further business the Mayor called the meeting to a close at 7.10pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

