

**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Present :** The Right Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors Kay, Wilcox, Nichols, Oliver, Chappell, Tawn, Toon and Hempton-Smith

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

**F2013/14.19 APOLOGIES :** Councillors Chave and Michael

**F2013/14.20 SUBSTITUTIONS :** The Clerk reported that he had received a nomination from Councillor Chave for Councillor Nichols to substitute for her.

**F2013/14.21 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Toon attempted to raise a point of order that the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Tawn, was barred by statute from being elected to chair a committee. The Clerk confirmed there was no such statute, nor was it prevented in Council Standing Orders.

Councillor Nichols proposed, Councillor Kay seconded and it was

**RESOLVED That Councillor Tawn be elected as Chairman for the year.**

Councillor Hempton-Smith proposed, Councillor Kay seconded and it was

**RESOLVED That Councillor Toon be elected Vice Chairman for the year.**

**F2013/14.22 DECLARATIONS IF INTEREST**

None.

**F2013/14.23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Oliver proposed, Councillor Edwards seconded and it was

**RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> June be agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chairman.**

**F2013/14.24 MATERNITY POLICY**

The Finance Officer presented a draft maternity policy, explaining that this was based on Shropshire Council's policy as it complied fully with current employment law and national conditions of service, and we would be advised of necessary changes should either of these factors alter as Shropshire supply our payroll service. In discussion it was noted that the Council does not yet have paternity and adoption leave policies and these will be researched and presented to Governance and Procedures Committee in due course. As the maternity policy was mainly about pay it was appropriate to bring it to Finance and Policy Cttee as a financial issue. It was

noted that the pregnancy of a member of staff meant that the Council needed to establish its policy in this area without delay. Some consideration was given to changing the wording in places. Councillor Hempton-Smith proposed, Councillor Nichols seconded and it was

**RESOLVED That the policy be approved and recommended to Council for adoption after a period of consultation with staff who's views would be reported to Council.**

**F2013/14.25 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The Finance Officer introduced the report of the Internal Auditor, his final one for the Financial Year 2012-13, which had followed his visit on 5<sup>th</sup> June. In discussion it was noted that there is a fallback position in place to cover the protracted absence of the Finance Officer which has been approved by Committee. The Clerk confirmed that this was the case, and that the Committee did not have to follow every suggestion made by the Auditor in detail, only to satisfy itself that an adequate arrangement had been made. Members specifically asked that the report should be seen as confirmation of the excellent work done by the Finance Officer and that she be congratulated.

It was then proposed by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Nichols and

**RESOLVED That the internal audit report be noted, and the Finance Officer be congratulated on the confirmation of the quality of her work.**

**F2013/14.26 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Finance Officer introduced the report, explaining that after just three months activity there was nothing of significance to report and any variations were detailed in the report. In answer to questions the Finance Officer clarified that the salaries figure for March 2013 had been accrued to the previous financial year, the figure shown for salaries reflects April and May, and that the civic gifts budget had been deleted by Council resolution as part of the budget setting process.

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

**RESOLVED**

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

**That the Committee notes the expenditure to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013.**

**That the Committee notes the over and underspends as reported.**

**F2013/14.27 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Town Clerk introduced the item and explained that the Council reviews Financial Regulations every year, to introduce anyone new to the Committee to them and to capture any necessary amendments. Neither the Auditor nor the Council officers proposed any changes this year and it was suggested that the regulations remain

unchanged. In answer to a question it was confirmed that Councillor Nichols is the member who signs the bank reconciliation and this is not an annual election to a position, it is a decision to allocate a role and will continue unless Committee decides to change it or Councillor Nichols declines to continue. It was also confirmed that risk management comes within the purview of Governance and Procedures Committee, and will be reported on at the next meeting.

**F2013/14.28 ACCOUNTS PAID**

Presented for information of members. In answer to a question it was confirmed that the absence of a payment for the Jubilee commemorative benches for the south side of the river in King George's Park was because they had not yet been installed by the contractors.

**The report was noted.**

**F2013/14.29 HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM**

The Clerk introduced his report, explaining that the Council normally sends one member and one officer to relevant conferences, but as this as a unique event of a national professional conference focussing on Hereford and being held here it was felt that three councillors should attend. Councillors Andrews, Tawn and Kay were suggested as they are the Chairman of Planning Committee, the leading member involved in forming a Business Improvement District proposal and the Chairman and Council nominee on the City Tourism Group. They would thus each have a particular interest in elements of the conference. The Clerk would also attend and produce a composite report for Council. Since writing the report it had been suggested that the Chairman of the Guild of Guides, Ms Jean O'Donnell should be supported in attending, and as she is retired the Council might wish to fund this. The Clerk suggested that this could be done by adding to the recommendations at the end of his report if Members wished to do so.

It was proposed by Councillor Nichols, seconded by Councillor Oliver and

**RESOLVED That the Council funds the attendance of Ms Jean O'Donnell at the conference at a cost of £65-00.**

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

**RESOLVED**

**That the Council supports the Historic Towns Forum conference in Hereford on 31<sup>st</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> August and books four place at a cost of £356-00.**

**That three places be taken by Councillors Tawn, Andrews and Kay, unless any of these are unable to attend in which case other Councillors with a specific interest in the topics under discussion may substitute.**

**That the fourth place be taken by the Town Clerk who will report back on the content and outcome of the conference to the next available meeting of Council.**

**F2013/14.30 LOANS POLICY**

The Town Clerk introduced the item, explaining that this had arisen because of the unusual circumstance of an organisation applying for grant, where it had become clear that apart from a short period of cash flow difficulty because of changes in personal budgeting for people with special needs the activity was self-financing. Thus the group could repay the grant over some time, making the money available to the Council to award to someone else. In this rare situation the Council could legally consider a loan as an alternative to a grant and this policy was to set a framework to guide officers in reaching loan agreements. In answer to questions the following points were confirmed.

Where there is a doubt about the future of an organisation - perhaps where a takeover, privatisation or merger was contemplated, no loan would be given. Where necessary commitments regarding future funding would be checked with providers to ensure they were robust. Any loan would be interest free.

Any organisation coming to Community Development Committee for a grant already has to meet stringent criteria. There was no relaxation of these for a loan it was purely to capture the opportunity of seeking repayment of a grant where this is viable.

The Council will not pro-actively offer loans nor will seek applications for loans. They will only be considered for groups where a grant would otherwise be made and where repayment is a realistic option.

It was agreed to add a paragraph to the loan terms to give the Town Clerk authority to seek external legal advice on the details of proposed agreement where he felt it was necessary to do so.

After considerable discussion it was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Nichols and

**RESOLVED That the question now be put.**

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

**RESOLVED**

**That an additional paragraph be added (2.14) The Town Clerk will seek external legal advice if required.**

**That the Committee endorses the loan policy proposed above and mandates officers to apply it whenever Community Development Committee agree in principle to make a loan rather than a grant.**

**F2013/14.31 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Policy on displaying city artefacts and supporting exhibitions

Wifi installation

(It was noted that the seagull contract is being considered by Community Development Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> July)

**F2012/13.32 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1(2), it was proposed by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Tawn and

RESOLVED That the press and public be excluded

The following item is minuted as confidential and details of the discussion are only available to members of the Council.

**F2013/14.33 DONATION**

*CONFIDENTIAL*

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Date of next meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 at 6 PM