

## HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

### FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013

#### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present** The Right Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors Chappell, Michael, Nicholls, Oliver and Tawn

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

**F2013/14.34 APOLOGIES** Councillors Chave, Toon and Wilcox

**F2013/14.35 SUBSTITUTIONS** Councillor Chave had nominated Councillor Nicholls as substitute

**F2013/14.36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Tawn declared a non disclosable and non-pecuniary interest in item seven, Update on Asset Transfers and Service Devolution as it related to his already declared business interests in one topic referred to in the report. The appropriate entry was made in the register of interests.

**F2013/14.37 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013 were confirmed as an accurate record and duly signed by the Chairman.

**F2013/14.38 ACCOUNTS PAID**

The Finance Officer presented the schedule of payments made since the last meeting. In answer to a question it was confirmed that the invoice from Kinsey Builders had been for work done on the fencing to deliver the Bartonsham Permissive Path and a large element of that would be reimbursed by the Church Commissioners. The Finance Officer will supply details to Councillor Oliver of exactly how much is to be reimbursed.

It was moved by Councillor Michael, seconded Councillor Nicholls and

**AGREED that the schedule of payments be noted.**

**F2013/14.39 UPDATE ON ASSET TRANSFERS AND SERVICE DEVOLUTION**

The Town Clerk reported on informal discussions which had taken place with officers of Herefordshire Council on a number of possible transfers of assets to the City. It was noted that the supporting information to enable decisions had not been available at that meeting, which was to identify areas of possible interest where future work might be worthwhile. Herefordshire's officers were anxious to avoid spending a lot of time on proposals which were unlikely ever to be acceptable. A number of areas had been dismissed, and some others identified as possible future

developments. These had included parks and open spaces, public toilets, the Old House Museum and the Butter Market. The Clerk reminded members that the Committee had previously agreed a report setting out the questions that would need to be resolved in detail before a proposal was put to Council and invited the Committee to add or change anything in that report so that there was a clear mandate for officers and members in continuing detailed discussions.

In discussion it was noted that the Council cannot take decisions without clarity on current and future costs. This had been logged at the meeting in mid July and it was a matter of some concern that while a Cabinet report was being written seeking to record an agreement between the two Councils in principle, no further factual information had been presented. County Council members present undertook to use their good offices to seek to obtain information, noting that the Clerk had raised this in the ongoing correspondence with officers at Herefordshire.

It was noted that the Butter Market has been the subject of discussions, plans and a design competition over some years but no real progress has been made. This cannot continue, and the previous Cabinet Member had indicated that Butter Market refurbishment was a vital part of the jigsaw for regeneration in the City following on from the construction of the new retail site on the old cattle market. Despite this no funds had been secured beyond design fees. There was some uncertainty about the continued commitment of capital funding by Herefordshire Council towards basic repairs which needed to be clarified urgently. Continuing uncertainty and lack of commitment to clear programmes was seriously detrimental to business confidence.

It was also noted that, in common with other market towns, the City was not being offered a balanced proposal for some cost generators and some revenue earners. The illustration of the proposal of the cemetery being transferred but not the crematorium was an example of this. Herefordshire is seeking to defray costs, not achieve a cost neutral devolution or localisation of services.

Whilst noting the points about the Butter Market and the Old House, members felt that priority should also be given to retaining adequate toilet provision in the City and were severely critical of the abrupt decision to close a number of units. The lack of follow up to the invitation to the City Council to be part of a root and branch review of the service was noted with dismay.

It was proposed by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Chappell and

#### **RESOLVED**

**That in order to support members in pressuring officers at Herefordshire for the details and data needed to move these issues forward, the Clerk would forward his notes of the meeting in July and key subsequent emails.**

**That the template previously agreed for information necessary to support decisions in this area be confirmed.**

**That officers of Herefordshire Council be invited to the next meeting of this Committee to discuss detailed proposals around toilets, the Butter Market and the Old House Museum and that any presentation to Council on 17<sup>th</sup> September be for general information and not an attempt to reach a final decision.**

**F2013/14.40 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

For next meeting :

Quarterly Financial Report,

Further consideration of asset transfers and devolution,

Website,

Sound system for Council Chamber,

Wifi Installation in the Town Hall

Schedule of payments

**F2013/14.41 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013 at 6 pm