

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE 15th October 2013

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present : The Right Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors, Tawn, Michael, Boulter, Nenadich, Chave, Chappell and Oliver

Councillor Kay arrived 7.05 pm

Councillor Chave left 7.15 pm

Non-Member attending : Councillor Boulter

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

F2013/14.42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Toon and Wilcox

F2013/14.43 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Wilcox had notified the Clerk that he wished to appoint Councillor Nenadich as a substitute.

F2013/14.44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

F2013/14.45 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 3rd SEPTEMBER 2013

It was proposed Councillor Chappell seconded Councillor Tawn and

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the 3rd September 2013 be agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chairman.

F2013/14.46 ACCOUNTS PAID

The Finance Officer presented a schedule of payments made since the last meeting of the Committee. It was noted that the meeting for stakeholders regarding the seagull control contract had been arranged after the invoice had been presented. In future years this meeting should be before the payment is due.

The report was noted.

F2013/14.47 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT QUARTER ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2013

The Finance Officer presented the report and drew attention to the need to make decisions on the under and overspends now projected. In answer to a question, the Finance Officer will supply a breakdown of funds as yet unspent in the allocations to individual wards for small street works. It was noted that the cost of postage is high because of a legal requirement to post agendas if we can't give them to members at another meeting. The Council receives a discounted postage rate for using a franking machine discounted franking machine and is reducing postage charges as much as possible. However, there is a rental charge for the machine.

Councillor Nenadich raised the issue of the unpaid invoice raised to the Mayor's Charity Appeal Fund, referring to the previous Mayoral Year, for the use of Liveried Men at the Charity Ball. He felt his was a legitimate call on the Mayor's expenses budget for that year and should now be covered from the Former Mayor's expenses budget. After discussion it was

Proposed Councillor Nenadich and Seconded Councillor Tawn that the item be covered from the Former Mayor's Expenses. On being put to the vote this proposal was rejected.

It was then proposed Councillor Oliver, seconded Councillor Tawn and

Resolved that the invoice stands and the item should be paid by the Mayor's Charity Appeal Fund.

The Mayor and Councillor Kay (who arrived as debate on this item was concluding) asked that their abstentions on these votes be noted.

In further discussion it was noted that income from interest remained low and the budget figure was very unlikely to be achieved. The over spend on community grants will be met from carried forward reserves. It was also noted that the budget for private contractors to support city events should be just about sufficient this year, although it was running close to the budget figure and Community Development Committee had endorsed a recommendation for a larger budget next year, which appeared further down the agenda at this meeting for resolution.

It was then moved by Councillor Tawn, seconded by Councillor Chappell and

Resolved :

That the Committee notes the report.

That the Committee noted the expenditure to 30th September

That the proposals in the report to address over and under spends against the budget are approved.

F2013/14.48 ST JOHN'S AMBULANCE – DONATION FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Town Clerk briefly described the scale of support provided for this event by the St John's Ambulance volunteers.

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

Resolved that the Committee approves a donation of £250-00 to the St John's Ambulance in thanks for their support for Remembrance Day.

F2013/14.49 FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND COUNCIL TAX 2014/15

The Finance Officer introduced the report and explained the high level of uncertainty around a number of substantial items which will affect the budget next year.

It was suggested that there may be more "unknowns" in that the road shows will generate demands for action from us and these cannot at this stage be quantified. The poor state of High Town itself, especially the slate paving areas and the lettering had been a recurring criticism at the High Town road show and some funds could be set aside for the City to make a contribution to sorting this out as part of our forward planning of expenditure.

Members reviewed the list of budget pressures and future issues and affirmed the following decisions:

Salary costs and pensions – this is inevitable growth because of pension commitments, changes required by the actuary, incremental progression of salaries and some reappraisals of new job descriptions agreed by the Governance and Procedures Committee to reflect work already being done and maternity cover.

CCTV – given the level of financial support for CCTV, street pastors and taxi marshalling the Committee did not wish to see an increase in CCTV funding proposed.

City Events, the increase proposed to meet rising expectations and contract costs would be included in budget planning for next year, as would a figure necessary to pay the whole cost of the Events Manager's salary should the part funding from Herefordshire be discontinued – as it is expected to be.

Parks and Open Spaces – no new figure would be added in although specific applications within existing budgets would be considered.

Close House – the full cost of the youth work project covered by Here for the City could not be picked up by the Council. Officers would discuss this with the Close House Director and then Council may consider a specific new grant application, but

would expect to see match funding from other sources before approving a payment about the current £10,000 recurring grant to Close House.

St Michael's Hospice Capital Project Grant – this was approved by Council and would be included in the budget. The large grants to the Courtyard and Women for Women for three years end this year and the combined total is nearly sufficient if left in the budget to cover this item.

Three Choirs – it was noted that this is a commercially very strong event with a substantial income. The Council would make the proposed payment to reserves this year but look to reduce its commitment in the light of the very considerable fund raising capacity of the event organisers.

Allotments – it was noted that the Society have stopped progress on negotiations for leasing the land long term because of the ongoing flood issue at Rockfield Road. The Clerk will seek to re-open these discussions and move the matter on. It was noted that a new local contractor had started at higher cost, but with initial signs of much better performance than from Amey. No increased grant funding was likely to be made available.

Office Rent – it was noted that negotiations about detail of new office space within the Town Hall had not yielded an indicative rent figure, there had been an assumption in this year's budget of an increase which would be held for next year until a true figure was known, probably in December.

The Old House – with other major pressure this was not considered feasible. The Clerk will advise Herefordshire Council that the City does not wish to take over the management of this asset.

Public Conveniences – the figure proposed is not affordable. The Clerk will advise Herefordshire Council that the City continues to be interested in taking over one or two of the busiest toilets and to seek further clarity on actual costs involved.

Butter Market – discussion of this item was held over until more information is received from Herefordshire Council and the Working Party has met.

Local Council Tax Support Scheme – it was noted that so far there is no indication of Herefordshire Council withholding the amounts calculated to relieve pressure on Parish Council although unambiguous confirmation of policy had not been received. This adds a very substantial uncertainty to the process.

High Town street scene improvement, a notional sum of £25,000 to be added to the budget assumptions until a firm figure is obtained from Herefordshire Council.

It was noted that there had been less activity by contractors in support of Hereford in Bloom and the invoice, not yet received, should reflect this and would be checked carefully. This may yield a saving next year if the reduced level of contract work

continues. It was also noted that the Shopmobility grant is reducing as this organisation moves towards becoming fully self-financing.

After discussion it was agreed to maintain the Elections Reserve at the current level.

It was then proposed Councillor Edwards, seconded Councillor Tawn and

Resolved that the responses noted above to the budget pressures identified be agreed and built into the budget planning for the Council.

F2013/14.50 COUNCIL CHAMBER SOUND SYSTEM

The Town Clerk reported that he had received three quotations, two very close to each other with similar specifications at around £11,000 and one for under £4,000 but there were doubts if this solution would be acceptable in a listed building as cables would be visible at many points. The Clerk will discuss this with Herefordshire Council to determine what could be taken forward.

F2013/14.51 ITEM FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Further discussion of the budget including any possible savings from Hereford in Bloom.

Wifi in the Town Hall

Council Chamber sound system

Web site

F2013/14.52 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

26TH November 2013 at 6 pm in the Council Chamber.

Signed

Date

LARGE GRANT APPLICATION - HEREFORD LADS CLUB

The Chairman invited Mr Dan Moon, the Vice-Chairman of the Lads Club to present the application. The application seeks support for the completion of works to new changing rooms. Mr Moon passed around details of plans and specifications of the whole project, which comes to £50,000 – of which he is seeking £9,000 for the City Council. Much of the rest of the funding has been secured, other bids are in and he is hopeful of being able to complete as the existing changing facilities are both dilapidated and far too small for the twenty two teams of boys and girls using the Club's facilities. Refurbishment or extension have been looked into but are not viable. Much of the internal fitting and decoration is being done by volunteers, the grant application is for electrical work which requires a specialist contractor.

In answer to questions it was confirmed that the new rooms will be on the rough ground between the two playing areas and there will be some meeting and catering facilities on site. The main building is damaged beyond repair with a leaky roof. Around £1,500 is expected from the sponsored walk and steel work for the new structure should be completed by mid May. The more funds available the better the facilities will be, for instance a proper flooring that can be kept clean and maintained would be better than concrete, but more expensive. Various options for further funding applications were discussed.

It was noted that although only one quote is shown for the steel work, that is the actual cost. Other quotes were sought and are held on the Club's files and available for inspection if anyone wants to see them. Around twelve people are on the football committee and there is a general committee of twelve overseeing the whole building project. Finally the Club is over seen by trustees. The lack of facilities at present is inhibiting the growth of the Club and may force children to go outside the City to find opportunities to pay football. It is hoped to develop cricket on the site during the summer.

The Chairman thanked Mr Moon for his presentation and he left the meeting.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Mission had been invited to the meeting but that no-one had confirmed attendance and there was no representative.

Councillor Wilcox proposed, Councillor Michael seconded and it was

Resolved to refer this application to a future meeting when a representative could attend.

F2013/14.07 LADS CLUB APPLICATION – RESOLUTION

It was noted that the Club had investigated the option of refurbishment as an alternative to a new building, and had energetically pursued every possible avenue to find funds. The application had been much more organised and impressive than their previous visit to the Committee and the governance of the Club appeared now to be sound. The programme of works is well thought through and achievable because it is being approached in stages as funds allow.

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

Resolved that the Committee recommends to full Council the award of the grant as applied for, in the sum of £9,000

F2013/14.08 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Finance Officer presented a schedule of items paid since the last meeting of the Committee. Councillor Kenyon queried the continuing hiring of a sound system for the Council Chamber. While members felt this should continue as it was a valuable aid the Town Clerk will seek to bring the matter to a conclusion in discussion with Herefordshire Council regarding a permanent solution.

It was noted that all issues appear to have been sorted out on the server and system upgrade.

There being no further questions the schedule was noted.

F2013/14.09 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Next meeting – draft accounts for the year 2012-2013

Further meetings –large grant application regarding street pastors

large grant application from North Tupsley Action Group

possible consideration of more policy issues

NB The grant applications will be taken to Community Development Committee in the light of the recent Council agreement to amend committee remits.

F2013/14.10 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11th June 2013