**Town Clerk’s Correspondence items for Council 20-10-15**

**Hereford in Bloom**

I have been at two meetings, with another one to come, about HiB. Key progress to date has been to establish that the be all and end all is not a gold award for the whole city. With funds limited. Volunteers are thin on the ground and contractors less able to provide benefits in kind some contraction is inevitable. This may well mean not biding for an award for the whole city, especially with imminent High Town refurbishment works which will move planters etc over the next two years. Instead a more sensible plan is to use our well-developed neighbourhood schemes which many local groups have already undertaken and got awards for to make a renewed effort to collet “In your Neighbourhood Awards.” These are nationally recognised marks of excellence and reward good starts, significant progress and final outstanding achievement giving on going encouragement to those who are working in their areas to beautify them.

HiB have acquired a water bowser, or at least the offer of one, for around £2,000 and have volunteers willing to use it. This will save substantially on the increased cost of watering and a proposal for how else the city council might deploy the £20,000 set aside in next year’s budget for watering payments to contractors is planned for Committee. (The alternative remains to re-allocate the money or take a saving within the budget setting process).

**Planning Issues**

Progress with Herefordshire in engaging upon the Area Plan has not been satisfactory and as soon as the new Assistant Director with responsibility for this function is officially in post I will raise this with him. We also have concerns about a somewhat tepid response to a brace of urgent enforcement issues around the Victoria House site.

I attended a seminar on trends in planning policy last week and a detailed feedback report is with Planning Cttee., any other members wanting one please let me know.

**Public Toilets**

I am pleased to report that our new contactor has stated doing a daily clean. The price is substantially less than the previous bid received, and is well below the ceiling agreed by Finance Cttee. Cllr Kenyon is relieved.

**Governance Review**

Herefordshire Council may carry out a governance review which could look at parish boundaries, numbers of councillors etc. In the past proposals or suggestions of splitting the city into two councils have been floated and strongly resisted. We have also not sought to expand the city boundaries to absorb areas such as Belmont Rural. One issue that has been considered in the past is the possibility of using the review to lobby for more councillors for the city, noting that the ward areas for parish councillors are normally far smaller than for county members but with a few exceptions in the city are co-terminous. For information, there are parish councils of 18 members serving communities of 10,000 citizens, which makes Hereford a very small council indeed for 57,000. Members wishing to see this reviewed should contact me and if there is interest I will prepare a paper for next Council, otherwise I will seek to defend the status quo should it be challenged by anyone else.

**In Bloom**

After many, perhaps too many, emails I would just like to confirm to members that there is a meeting on Friday this week, for one member each from the In Bloom committee, both councils, Balfour Beatty and the BID to see if we can find a more sustainable model for funding. I will be reporting the outcome to Finance and Policy Cttee in due course.

Steve Kerry

Town Clerk