**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Members of the Committee :** The Right Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors Tawn, Michael, Baker, Boulter, Hall, Rone, Edwards and Wilcox (one vacancy)

**Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June 2015 at 6 pm**

**Present :** Councillors Len Tawn, Phil Edwards, Matthew Bushkes, Susan Boulter and Brian Wilcox

**Officers attending :** Steve Kerry Town Clerk, Lesley Bruton Finance Officer

**F2015/16.1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were noted from Councillors Michael and Hall.

**F2015/16.2 Substitutions**

Noted that Councillor Michael had nominated Councillor Bushkes as her substitute.

**F2015/16.3 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman**

Councillor Bushkes proposed, Councillor Edwards seconded and it was **Resolved that Councillor Tawn be elected Chairman for the coming year.**

Councillor Tawn proposed, Councillor Bushkes seconded and it was **Resolved that Councillor Edwards be Vice Chairman for the coming year.**

Councillor Tawn reminded all present of the process for sending apologies and appointing substitutes and asked the Clerk to circulate all members to remind them of this. He also thanked the Finance Officer for producing an excellent briefing paper for new members. It was confirmed that this had been included in the members’ pack for all newly elected councillors.

**F2015/15.6 Declarations of Interest**

None were made at the start of the meeting.

**F2015/16.5 Accounts Payable and Bank Reconciliations**

The Finance Officer presented a schedule of payments made since the last meeting. The Chairman reminded members of the standing policy of urging members with questions of detail to put these to the Finance Officer before the meeting and only raise matters of substantial concern or importance at the meeting.

The schedule of payments was accepted with thanks to the Finance Officer for clarity of presentation.

The Finance Officer also presented bank reconciliations for February, March and April 2015 these were noted by the Committee.

**F2015/16.6 ANNUAL RETURN AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Finance Officer presented a draft annual return and statement for consideration before referral to full Council for approval. It was noted that the Council holds substantial reserves and that these are within the existing guidelines. It was also noted that a number of projects which would have committed substantial funds had been delayed waiting for action from Herefordshire Council. Under spends are the result of reasonable projections of expected spending not being fulfilled within the financial year. The position was reported throughout the year via the quarterly budget monitoring reports. The Finance Officer and the Clerk confirmed that discussions are underway on a range of possible service devolutions which would substantially increase the Council’s spending, possibly including parks and gardens grass cutting, public footpaths and rights of way and the adoption of more public toilets. It was confirmed that proposals for the transfer of service would come to this Committee to recommend to full Council. Once transferred the services would be overseen by Community Development Committee.

It was also noted that the income from public toilets, which is entirely the 20 pence charge on the doors, was more than sufficient to cover this year’s costs, however we had not been charged a full year for business rates or water costs and there had been no calls on maintenance budgets. Committee noted that the cleaning arrangements using a volunteer councillor were not a long term sustainable option, especially if the Council took on more units.

It was noted that in other areas voluntary efforts by Councillors, whilst thoroughly commendable, might be concealing the real costs of activities, for example the possible use of a contractor to erect and dismantle the road show.

Noting these points it was proposed by Councillor Tawn, seconded by Councillor Edwards and

**Resolved that Committee notes the outturn position for 2014/2015, approves the carry forward of £11,500 as detailed in paragraph three of the report and that the annual return and statement of accounts be recommended to Council for approval and that the Finance Officer be thanked for delivering these within the deadlines.**

**F2015/16.7** **SUPPORT FOR BUS SERVICES TO SHELTERED HOUSING UNITS**

The Clerk introduced the report and reminded members that the decision to support a minibus service to provide transport from three sheltered housing units to the hospital and Maylords Orchard as a convenient dropping off point for shopping had been taken in September 2014 for a six month trial period. The service had got underway in Iate October. In order to avoid a short break he had authorised payment of a full month’s subsidy to cover the period from the end of that six months to the date of this committee, some three weeks.

It was now for the Committee to consider whether the service provided a valuable service and was cost effective. On that point Councillor Edwards noted that taking the months data submitted with the report as typical of the pattern through the six months there had been 168 return journeys, giving a total over six months of 1,008, representing a cost of about £3 per journey. He felt this was a very reasonable cost for a valued service.

It was noted that although only one person uses the service from Frank Owen Court this is not an additional costs as it is a drop off point on the route anyway not a separate journey.

Councillor Edwards proposed that the service continue for a full year and that the budgeted sum of £6,000 be released to pay for this, but there was no seconder.

Councillor Boulter proposed, Councillor Wilcox seconded and it was

**Resolved that the service be supported at the current rate for a further six months.**

**F2015/16.8** **Items for future meetings**

 For next meeting :

Service transfers including an update on current discussions

 Quarterly financial statement

CCTV funding options and joint working with Market Towns, Police and Herefordshire Council

For a future meeting :

Further review of support for the sheltered housing bus service with six months’ data

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 14th July 2015 at 6 pm

Signed ………………………………………….

Date …………………………………..