**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**PLANNING & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HEREFORD**

**on Thursday 8th September 2016**

**Present:**  Councillors Boulter, Dykes, Griffiths, Mansell, Michael, Nicholls, and Lloyd-Hayes

**OFFICERS ATTENDING:** Steve Kerry, Town Clerk; Mr John Bothamley representing Hereford Civic Society

**P194 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

None

**P195 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES:**

None.

**P196 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

None

**P197 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE:**

It was noted that Councillor Stevens should be deleted from the listed members shown on the agenda as he was no longer a member of the committee. With that alteration it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Highways Committee held on 17th August were approved as a true record of the meeting.

**P198 DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

**It was Resolved that the participation of those City Councillors who are also members of the County of Herefordshire District Council in both the debate and any subsequent vote on matters contained in this agenda is on the basis that the views expressed are preliminary views taking account of the information currently available to the City Council and that District Councillors reserve their final views on all applications until they are in full possession of all relevant information both for and against.**

**P199 POLICY ISSUES**

The Clerk referred to the ongoing concerns regarding violations of planning rules, and environmental health standards regarding Victoria House and a perception of inaction by Herefordshire Council. He had asked for consistency and enforcement to be an issue at the next Area Plan meeting, due on 14th September. In response Herefordshire’s Director Richard Gabb had asked for examples of concerns and this had been one of them. A retrospective planning application for the car wash was due by 31st August, after nearly two years of unlawful operation. There is no news as to whether this has been received.

The Clerk drew members attention to a planning application for a front porch on 26 Whitehorse Street which has been refused despite another property in the same terrace, no 30, having a near identical porch already. The planning officer had stated he had not looked at no 30, only at no 26, although his argument for refusal was that the porch was out of keeping with the architecture of the whole terrace which is listed. The Clerk advised him that no 30 did not have planning permission, but that the planning officer does not see any need to raise this as an enforcement issue, despite turning down the neighbouring application. It was also noted that the same planning officer and advised a resident in Westfaling Street that their application to rebuild an existing conservatory to the same height and footprint but out of more durable material was suitable for prior authorisation without formal planning process. He had now recanted that view and in effect refused his own decision. This has also been raised as an issue of consistency. In discussions several members noted that they had also had somewhat puzzling conversations with this particular officer who appears to be operating somewhat idiosyncratically in some cases.

**P200 APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION**

 It was **Resolved**

**That the applications noted in the attached table, and the licensing matters attached with the responses of the City Council be agreed and forwarded to the Planning Authority by the Clerk.**

The Mayor apologised that he had to leave the meeting for another engagement at this point.

**P.201 CORRESPONDENCE**

**P201.1 Eastern River Crossing**

The Clerk reported that a meeting with a civil engineer was taking place on Friday in the Mayor’s Parlour to discuss firming up the idea with some drawings and the beginnings of a case statement.

**P202.2 Traffic Regulation Orders**

Members thanked the Clerk for this letter on this matter which they felt had put the Council’s position very clearly. The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by Richard Ball of Herefordshire Council who would be drafting a reply, which would suggest there had been some misunderstanding in that the Council would still have a safety driven programme of TRO’s which it would fund. The extra charges were for work over and above that programme. The Clerk pointed out that this was not what BBLP had presented, nor was it what the toolkit document said, and suggested that in future the Council should own responsibility for communicating with parishes as to its policies and not allow BBLP to speak for them. Nonetheless, some retreat from the position as stated by BBLP was now apparent, and was to be welcomed.

The Clerk would be speaking at Herefordshire’s planning committee on 14th September regarding the proposals for Blueschool House which the committee had found unacceptable. The Clerk outlined the heads of his presentation as :

Breach of undertakings given under the ESG masterplan which should have been given more weight as a local planning commitment. As the most local policy it should be pre-eminent in the committee’s evaluation.

The Council is not proposing to honour its legal obligation to protect and enhance the appearance of a conservation officer and the claim that colouring the structure in a somewhat garish tone does that is unsupportable.

The plans are technically very poor with several elements not properly covered. The application is unfit for presentation to committee.

The report notes the importance of the development to the Council’s accommodation strategy which is not a planning consideration and has no place in the report. It is indicative of a level of political pressure being applied to the planning process, its officers and the committee.

If the Committee is to be seen as an impartial body exercising a quasi-judicial function it is important it is not unduly favourable to applications from the Council itself. Standards for the conservation area and standards of technical details required in a planning application cannot be applied inconsistently or be subject to favouritism.

The Council made a commitment to the local community in the ESG masterplan. If it values its public reputation it should honour or that undertaking.

This approach as endorsed by the Committee.

**P193 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was note that Thursday was a more convenient date for meetings for most members. It was therefore resolved to move the committee’s regular meetings to Thursdays. The next meeting will therefore be Thursday 29th September 2016.

There being no other business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:10 pm.

Signed ……………………………………………………………………

Date ……………………………………………………………………....