**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

**City Council Offices Committee Room, Town Hall, Hereford**

**Tuesday 6th June 2017 at 6.00 pm**

**FP2017/18.12 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed by Councillor Boulter, seconded by Councillor Tawn and

**Resolved that Councillor Stevens be elected Chairman of the Committee for the year.**

It was proposed by Councillor Boulter, seconded by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes and

**Resolved that Councillor Tawn be elected as Vice Chairman of the Committee for the year.**

**FP2017/18.13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were noted from Councillors Dykes, Rone, Wilcox.

**FP2017/18.14 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor Hey was substituting for Councillor Dykes

**FP2017/18.15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**FP2017/18.16 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

**Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th April be accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**FP2017/18.17 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Clerk introducedDerek Kemp from DCK Beavers who confirmed that Sandy Leppan the Senior Accountant on the Council contract would shortly be leaving that organisation and would be arranging a handover with the Council next week. Members thanked Sandy for his work in enabling a very smooth transfer following the departure of the Council’s Finance Officer.

In answer to a query the Clerk confirmed that the charge from the Green Dragon Hotel was for the whole Jaworzno delegation. Usually twin town delegations are partly accommodated by friends but with a new relationship this was not possible so the group stayed together.

Members noted the schedule.

**FP2017/18.18 SCHEDULE OF CURRENT INVOICES**

Members noted the schedule.

**FP2017/18.19 BANK RECONCILIATIONS**

The Clerk reminded the Committee that these reconciliations refer to April. Councillor Edwards asked if the cheque shown as still unpaid for United in the Community was the stopped item, which it was believed it is. The Clerk will verify this outside the meeting. A stopped cheque should be deleted from the schedule.

Members noted the schedule.

**FP2017/18.20 KEY PROJECTS**

The Clerk reported that after a lengthy period of silence there was now some progress. Herefordshire’s stock condition survey of the Town Hall is completed, identifying two major areas for repair – scaffolding and boilers. The arch over the side entrance is also now clearly in need of some attention. He would engage an independent surveyor to provide quality assurance, which could include further specialists such as structural engineers. Mechanical and electrical inspections etc. So far, nothing is approved by the Cabinet member and we will need written confirmation of any offer. Before we recommend anything to Council for final approval we will get specialist advice from a solicitor. On planned occupation – Herefordshire Council intend to empty out some of the rooms in wings, and may also consider relocating Birth, Deaths and Marriages, but this seems unlikely. It is important that Committee decides if we take just the historic core of the building or the side offices too.

On the proposed museum, purpose built display cases and alarms, changing locks, etc will cost around £100,000 to be drawn from reserves. We hold around fifteen charters of which four or five are of primary importance and need to be in the Town Hall.

From around 20th June, Rural Concierge will be providing a TIC in the Butter Market and on that day will do a presentation to Council including details of what financial support Council may want to give. The Clerk has spoken informally to staff directly affected and will bring a paper to Governance & Procedures Committee in July.

In discussion the following points were noted. Retaining the wings could provide a useful rental income both during and after Herefordshire Council use them, but there was a risk of the Council being left with vacant offices to maintain. A detailed business case on the pro’s and cons of this needs to be worked up with specialist support.

Although there is space on the ground floor for the silver and charters it would be much less secure than the Mayoress’s Parlour and harder to protect. The ground floor could be developed as a tourist and general information hub.

The new university might be interested in the side offices as either teaching spaces or administrative offices.

The Cathedral offers a specialist facility in the chained library for the safe and secure storage of old documents and rather than placing the charters not on display in the Rotherwas archive it might offer a more accessible facility.

It would be better to place the “spare” charters with the Cathedral to create a unified tourist and historic areas as Rotherwas is too far out of the city to be practical.

It was noted that the person operating the TIC in the Butter Market is due to move to her new larger premises very soon. Unlike the Town Hall the TIC would be open throughout the weekend.

It is essential that we include the car park in the devolved asset as this is the part of the site that generates the revenues to fund running repairs etc.

If Herefordshire Council move Registrars, which is unlikely, the wedding room would be a major revenue earner.

Basic longer term issues like boiler replacement must be included in any lease, with Herefordshire committing funds to known or foreseeable wants of repair.

After discussion it was proposed by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Tawn and

**Resolved that:**

**The Committee agrees in principle, and subject to any external professional advice before any confirmation is given, to explore the possibility of a long lease for the Town Hall premises, noting that this will mean taking on repair and maintenance liabilities for those parts of the building occupied.**

**That the Committee at this stage includes the side offices in their consideration subject to professional advice about their viability as offices, and specifically includes the car park in any further proposals.**

**That the Committee authorises the Town Clerk to employ a Chartered Surveyor, independent of the one used by Herefordshire Council, to review and comment on the stock condition survey, and to investigate any areas of concern, if necessary repeating parts of the survey.**

**That the Committee notes the projected costs of around £100,000 for developing a civic museum in the Mayoress’s Parlour and agrees to continue with this project, subject to further quotes being obtained and the advice of experts at Rotherwas confirming that the storage proposed for the charters will provide for their long term protection, either there or at the Cathedral.**

**That quotes are obtained for the alterations to locks necessary to control the movement of visitors in the museum and for the extension of the intruder alarm for the museum site.**

**That external professional advice be sought regarding the most appropriate fire protection system to be deployed within the Mayoress’s Parlour, either by fire protecting the charter cabinet or the whole room.**

**That the position regarding the TIC and Town Hall hub be noted.**

**That a further detailed report around the staffing implications around the mayoral support team following on from the creation of the museum be considered at the next meeting of Governance & Procedures Committee,**

**FP2017/18.21 COMPLETION OF THE ACCOUNTS FOR 2016-2017**

The Clerk presented the accounts which he believes to be numerically accurate but it had been noted that the name of the Mayor was wrong. This would be corrected before being presented to full Council for ratification, which will then include the Annual Report, which is a summary of key figures and balances, and the Report of the Internal Auditor.

Derek Kemp informed the Committee that the accounts look slightly different as the standard formats have changed. Although two senior Accountants were attending this meeting he confirmed that only one hourly rate was being charged.

The Clerk confirmed that the amount of financial work done by the member of in-house staff is steadily increasing as her training progresses and dependence on the external accountancy support team is reducing.

Members noted and confirmed the accounts.

**FP2017/18.22 WARD BUDGETS**

The Clerk introduced the report and explained the history of ward budgets, which had been introduced to stop one member in particular from constantly demanding committee authorisation for every small item of expenditure on the street scene. As individual members could not make a decision on their own, only in Committee or Council, members had devolved authority to the Clerk to respond to requests for members for items to be bought and installed. Some confusion had arisen recently by attempts to use ward budgets for items outside the scope of the original proposal, but within the Council’s wider legal powers under general power of competence. The report sought answers to questions which would clarify the protocol to be applied in future.

In discussion it was noted that a standard form was a necessary part of the process and that these should be kept readily accessible for all members to see what had been done in other areas and learn from it. In addition, a standard approach would provide a good audit trail. It was also noted that one of the most pressing needs of community groups which cannot be met by external funding is recurring revenue items such as running costs, fees for a bookkeeper etc and that ward budgets could be used to support groups in this way if the rules were amended. Members also felt that restricting ward budgets to street scene and parks’ facilities items duplicated the budgets held for the city-wide street scene etc. An item such as a bench or a park swing was not just for local benefit it was for everyone using the area including visitors, and should be funded from a mainstream pot rather than a ward budget.

After this discussion it was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Nicholls and

**Resolved that:**

**In future, items of street furniture will be funded from the street scene budget and items of park equipment from parks and open spaces, rather than from ward budgets.**

**Ward budgets can be used on voluntary groups for running costs (including fees and wages) or capital items subject to proper applications on the standard form supported by receipts once the money is spent.**

**The Clerk has authority to approve items up to the extent of the allocated ward budget, there is no individual item limit.**

**The standard form must be used for all items of expenditure.**

**Each year the Committee would decide whether unspent funds should be rolled over into the following financial year.**

**FP2017/18.23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Mayor’s charities – noted that this year’s charity appeal has closed and all means disbursed, this would be reported to Council.

Information on Services not being provided by HC – Vital so members have vision of what they can do and help to plan financially.

**FP2017/18.24** **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

18th July 2017 at 6pm.

There was no further business and the meeting was closed at 7.25pm

Signed ……………………………………………………………….

Dated ………………………………………………………………..