**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE 26th July 2016**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Present :** The Right Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors Paul Stevens, Phil Edwards, Marcelle Lloyd-Hayes, Len Tawn, Jim Kenyon, Mark Dykes and Sue Boulter

**In attendance :** Steve Kerry, Town Clerk and Lesley Bruton Finance Officer

Before the meeting Councillor Stevens advised members that he had been on an excellent short course at HALC for chairmen of committees and councils and that as a result he asked members not to talk to each other while others were speaking, and not to propose resolutions until there had been a reasonable opportunity for all views to be heard.

**FP2016/17.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bushkes, Michael, Rone and Wilcox

**FP2016/17.25 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Bushkes nominated Councillor Lloyd-Hayes as substitute.

**FP2016/17.26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**FP2016/17.27 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Edwards proposed, the Mayor seconded and it was

**RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 7th June 2016 be agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chairman.**

**FP2016/17.28 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The Town Clerk commented that the Council had again received a clean bill of health from the internal auditor and that although this had become something members might expect it was a tribute to the ongoing quality of work undertaken by the Finance Officer who would shortly be leaving the Council to take up the post of Town Clerk at Tenbury Wells. Members joined the Clerk in thanking the Finance Officer for the consistent quality of her work over the years she has been with the Council, which has been reflected in positive audit reports.

 The unqualified audit report was noted with appreciation by the Committee.

**FP2016/17.29 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The schedule of items paid since the last meeting was noted with no questions being raised.

**FP2016/17.30 BANK RECONCILIATIONS**

The bank reconciliations for May and June were accepted with no questions being raised.

**FP2016/17.31 QUARTERLY REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

 The Finance Officer presented the report.

Councillor Tawn queried whether the expenditure on a computer for the parlour should be charged to the equipment budget to absorb the overspend or to the Mayor’s expenses. After discussion in which the Finance Officer advised that either course would be acceptable in accounting terms as long as the overspend was accounted for within a budget it was proposed by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes, seconded by Councillor Edwards and

**RESOLVED That the money spent on a computer for the Mayor’s Parlour be held against the equipment budget.**

In answer to Councillor Edwards’ question it was confirmed that the City Council will only pay one charge for the Saxon Gate election after the debacle which required a by-election to be called.

In answer to a further question from Councillor Edwards it was confirmed that the Council has a new web site which is functioning well, now that the problems encountered by a previous temporary member of staff have been resolved. In the absence of permanent staff due to sickness and maternity leave an external agent was providing a weekly update and refreshment. This would be reviewed as part of a paper to Governance and Procedures Committee on staffing.

The Clerk undertook to investigate whether the system used can reveal data on how many hits the web site is getting and on what pages.

Councillor Edwards proposed, Councillor Lloyd-Hayes seconded and it was

**RESOLVED That the expenditure on drinks at Mayor-making be charged to Mayor’s Expenses so as to leave sufficient in the Mayoral Installation budget to cover the anticipated cost of Junior Mayor-making.**

Councillor Stevens proposed, Councillor Tawn seconded and it was

**RESOLVED**

**That the Committee notes the contents of the report.**

**That the Committee notes the expenditure to 30th June 2016.**

**That the Committee notes the actions resolved above regarding forecasted over and under spends.**

**FP2016/17.32 TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE AND TOWN HALL UPDATE**

The Town Clerk presented a brief report on progress with a tourist information centre (TIC) in 4 St Peter’s Street, and with an alternative proposal to locate it in the Town Hal, which is linked to discussions about the provision of reception and the future management of that building. He advised the Committee that it is necessary for members to indicate their preference between the options as it is highly likely that in the next few weeks he will be pressed for answers by external providers and must be in a position to know the wishes of Council.

 All members took part in the discussion in which the following points were made.

The use of the Town Hall space would enable fuller control of the service and be cheaper both to set up and operate.

There was a clear link between providing a TIC and solving the problem of reception at the Town Hall.

The Town Hall space was much smaller than No 4 and would not enable the development of other facilities such as a retail outlet, office space for external rental etc.

Whichever facility is developed there is a possibility which needs to be followed up of tourist information satellite facilities in the revamped Butter Market, the Library and at the Courtyard theatre.

Also, whichever facility is developed there is the possibility of a mobile phone or tablet application giving tourist information and guiding visitors.

Some large cities and tourist destinations do not have a traditional TIC, notably Stratford-upon-Avon and Sheffield. Is a large traditional facility justified in Hereford?

It may be possible to offset rental for the Town Hall facility by an offer to Herefordshire to take over the reception service at no cost, provided the costs are compatible, this was noted as an area for further negotiation rather than a detailed decision at this stage.

It was proposed by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes and on being put to the vote by five in favour with two abstentions it was

**RESOLVED That the City Council seeks agreement to a TIC in the Town Hall using the space currently used by the temporary library, at no charge, with the City Council taking over the responsibility for reception on the ground floor, and that we formally withdraw our interest in 4 St Peter’s Street.**

**FP2016/17.33 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

\*Indicates an item for the next meeting

 Cover arrangements for the post of Finance Officer\*

 Schedule of payments and bank reconciliations\*

 City of Culture funding options\*

 Update on the Town Hall and TIC issues\*

 Devolution of services and assets

Revised staffing budget (to follow deliberations of Governance and Procedures Committee)

 Funding for river slipway to assist the Fire and Rescue Service to effect river rescues.

**FP2016/17.34 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

6th September 2016 at 6 pm