**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING 17th March 2015**

**PRESENT :** Councillors Edwards, Boulter, Chappell, Chave and Wilcox

**Members not attending :** Councillors Kay, Oliver and Toon

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

**F2014/15.92 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from The Mayor and Councillor Michael.

**F2014/15.93 SUBSTITUTIONS**

None

**F2014/15.94 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**F2014/15.95 MINUTES**

The Chairman thanked the Finance Officer for producing the minutes as the Town Clerk had not been at the last meeting. A clarification regarding Councillor Chave’s query on the United in the Community grant payment was noted and subject to that being recorded in the minutes it was

**RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 17th January be agreed as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.**

**F2014/15.96 ACCOUNTS PAID**

The Finance Officer presented the schedule of payments made since the last meeting of the Committee. In answer to a query it was confirmed that the payment to Balfour Beatty for watering flowers cannot be compared to previous Hereford in Bloom costs as this is the first year when the City Council has paid for watering only as In Bloom have received sponsorship for flower beds and planters from other sources.

The schedule of payments was noted.

**F2014/15.97 BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Finance Officer presented bank reconciliations for the current and deposit accounts which were noted.

The Finance Officer confirmed that she is content that the systems to monitor payments and bank reconciliations are working well and had been recognised as effective in the recent internal audit report.

**F2014/15.98 UPDATE ON CURRENT BUSINESS**

The Town Clerk reported on matters currently underway but not yet ready for formal report to Committee.

Loans – this had arisen from discussions at Community Development Committee regarding a group who had a short term cash flow problem and sought a grant but might have been able to take a loan instead. A protocol for making loans as an alternative to a grant had been agreed but never used, although it had not been publicised as the Committee did not wish loans to become a standard practice, only an occasional alternative to a grant in very specific circumstances. It was agreed that this would remain on the list of items for future meetings and to be discussed at both this Committee and Community Development in due course.

Lengthsman – a grant had been received to engage a consultant to progress this in February on a very short time scale. No-one had been forthcoming who could take the work on in that time and the funding body “Localities” had been advised that we would be seeking an extension. They had not formally replied to this and the money was being held in our accounts and could be repaid on demand if necessary. Meanwhile Herefordshire Council had confirmed possession of a lot of relevant information that would be available to us and an officer who had recently returned from sick leave was now following this up to see what could be done in house. The Clerk expected being able to report to members on options and costs for taking on public rights of way and footpaths for maintenance and grass cutting in parks shortly after the new administration takes office.

Business Improvement District –following the successful ballot the BID Management Board were seeking to employ a delivery manager. Once that person was in post discussions could begin about the City’s role in enhancing High Town and other areas within the BID.

High Town paving - following intervention from the Chairman of the Committee in his Herefordshire Council role, a meeting of officers was due to take place on 18th March to identify the detail of proposed works and when and how the lettering would be fixed. This might lead to an alternative proposal for the Council’s contribution of £10,000 which would be referred to the next meeting.

CCTV – Community Development Committee had agreed a £1,000 sum to cover the running costs of a new camera for Great Western Way, but had raised the wider issues of funding going forward. As part of discussion with Herefordshire officers would raise the issue of the long term security of funding for CCTV, expectations of increased parish contributions and possible savings from deploying volunteers and more advanced technology to replace cable with wireless linkage. The possibility of including views on CCTV would be considered as part of the city plan survey now being developed.

Herefordshire Council financial discussions – the Clerk reported that Herefordshire were not willing to go beyond their public statements and published budgets and have a more open discussion about their financial pressures and possible interim measures to contain overspending. This was not surprising. However, the incremental effects of discussions about CCTV, High Town works and the lengthsman scheme was leading to an opening up if information on specific areas of service and would in time create in stages the wider discussions sought.

Dial-a-ride Minibus – It was noted that his had taken some time to set up but was now delivering the services as planned, and passenger numbers were being collected. The review of this would be an item for the next committee meeting.

**F2014/15.99 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

In addition to those items listed above the following items would be on the agenda for the next meeting, which would be the first after the election of new members to committee :

Appointment of Chairman (first business) and Vice Chairman

Presentation of statement of accounts for recommendation to Council

It was also agreed that in addition to the proposed members’ training events being prepared by officers, the Finance Officer would prepare an induction briefing for the committee on its functions and methods of operation.

**F2014/15.100 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Before confirming the date of the next meeting, the Chairman thanked officers and members for their contributions through the year and said it had been a pleasure and a privilege to chair the Committee over the last year.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 2nd June 2015 at 6 pm in the meeting room in the City Council offices.

Signed …………………………………………………..

Date ………………………………………………………..