

**HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL**

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

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

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Stevens, Wilcox, Edwards, Tawn, Mansell, Dykes, Lloyd-Hayes, Hey.

**IN ATTENDANCE** Councillor Butler (attending but not elected to this Committee); Steve Kerry, Town Clerk

The Chairman, Councillor Stevens, welcomed Councillor Butler to his first meeting following his election to fill the Bobblestock vacancy.

**FP2018/19.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were noted from Councillor Boulter

**FP2018/19.02 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES**

The Clerk confirmed that Councillor Boulter had nominated Councillor Mansell as her substitute.

**FP2018/19.03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**FP2018/19.04 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Clerk presented a schedule of payments made since the last meeting. In answer to a question the Clerk confirmed that the payment of £5,500 to John Finch was for equipment bought on the Council's behalf not for the annual service and support contract which was agreed at the last meeting for £2,900.

The schedule was noted.

**FP2018/19.05 BANK RECONCILIATIONS**

The Clerk presented the reconciliations on accounts closing on 28<sup>th</sup> February, which had been signed by the appointed member, Cllr Wilcox.

The reconciliations were noted.

**FP2018/19.06 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 20th February were presented and Councillor Edwards raised a concern about possible ambiguity in the phrasing of one part of minute FP2017/18.92 Ward Budgets. After discussion it was agreed to amend the line "There will be no retrospective payments" to read "No payments will be made unless they have been previously authorised by a grant awarded by Committee or under a delegated decision of the Clerk."

It was then proposed by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes, seconded by Councillor Hey and

**RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> February, as amended, be accepted as a true record of the meeting and be signed by the Chairman.**

#### **FP2018/19.07 BACS PAYMENTS PROCEDURES**

The Clerk introduced the report and explained that this had been looked at some years ago when costs were higher than they are now. The purpose of the report was to see if members wished to re-open that discussion with the Council's bank as BACS offered some advantages in terms of security of transactions, and speed. The issue of fitting a BACS procedure into legislation written in 1972 had been addressed by professional bodies and the Council's Internal Auditor had confirmed that in his view the proposed process for verifying payments was robust and fit for purpose.

In discussion it was noted that either by a feature of an automatic system or manually it would be helpful for each transaction to have an individual reference number and these would be sequential, in addition to any numbering of batches. This would be included in any discussions with the bank. The checking of the batches of payments made against the bank statements could be included as part of the reconciliation process. Councillor Wilcox confirmed he would be happy to include this in his verification of the bank statements for reconciliation.

It was then proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes and

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Clerk is authorised to discuss with the bank how to set up a system for making payments through BACS, including the sequential numbering of individual transactions as noted above.**

**That once the full details, including costs, of the system are known the Clerk reports to full Council seeking approval for variations to financial regulations as necessary to implement the BACS process.**

#### **FP2018/19.08 INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Clerk introduced the report and confirmed that the previous meeting had agreed to consider any additional transfers of reserves to the CCLA account (Local Authorities Property Fund) when the closing balances were known. This should be on the agenda for the 5<sup>th</sup> June meeting. In answer to a question it was confirmed that the guidelines referred to in the report are not themselves statutory. However, the obligation to manage resource prudently is a statutory duty and it is accepted by auditors and the government that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants guidelines define good and prudent practice. It was also noted that with the prolonged works required on the front of the Town Hall before an asset transfer could be completed it was likely that funds set aside this year for transfer costs would be surplus and could be considered for transfer to CCLA.

It was then proposed by Councillor Tawn, seconded by Councillor Mansell and

**RESOLVED That the Committee recommends the above strategy to Council for adoption.**

#### **FP2018/19.09 BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS**

The Clerk introduced the report and explained he had been asked to produce it to enable members to have a good understanding of the contracts, grants, service level

agreements and collaborative or partnership ventures the Council is engaged in, and how these are monitored through the Committee system, or by Council.

The Clerk added that he had not included leasing of office equipment as these were fixed term both in duration and price and were agreed from time to time by Committee with no further work. He had also not included the arrangements for gulls as the contract is held by Herefordshire Council as part of a multi-agency approach including the BID introducing gull proof sacks for food waste, persuasion and enforcement through Herefordshire Council's waste management and environmental health services and publicity, all backing up the work of the contractor in removing nests and eggs. It was noted that some information about key contacts for this work should be available at the Town Hall.

Councillor Stevens thanked the Clerk for producing a very informative and helpful report.

It was noted in discussion that the future of the Council's relationship with Jaworzno was on the agenda for the next full Council meeting, which could also include a discussion of twinning more generally. Council had already agreed to review Three Choirs after this year's festival. The issue of the Council's use of Chubb for the security alarms in the Parlour and museum area had been included in the discussion about developing the new museum, but the wider issue of security for the whole building, and a possible tendering for a wider coverage alarm and response contract would be part of the asset transfer process.

The Clerk also reported that following a challenge to the cost by the cheque signatories he had notified Auditel of members' wishes not to renew the servicing contract for the Council Chamber sound system. He had raised the purchase order as he had in three previous years and some work had been done. He had proposed to Auditel that the Council pay for that work but terminate the relationship as members did not support further payments. He had not yet received a response to that offer.

In answer to a number of questions about CCTV, members were reminded of the standing invitation from the service manager Debbie Turner (nee Stringer) of Herefordshire Council for members to come and see the system control room and the quality of pictures that can be sorted and used for evidence.

It was then proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes and

**RESOLVED That the report be noted.**

#### **FP2017/18.10 KEY PROJECT UPDATES**

The Clerk reported orally and members contributed from their own activities in some areas.

There is now a regular slot for guests at the Warner's hotel to come in parties to the Town Hall to see the silver collection and charters. Roger Stokes had been able to recruit some members of the Guild of Guides to act as museum guides, but they won't be available until the Weeping Window exhibition is finished at the Cathedral. The military museum had proved very successful on the ground floor. It was also

noted that the persistent damp problem in the Mayor's Parlour seems to have been resolved, at last, but that there is still an issue with damp in the ground floor museum area which needs further work.

There is no confirmation yet of the outcome of Herefordshire Council's grant applications for major works to the front of the building. A number of long term possibilities for the building post asset transfer were discussed but no final decisions were made and a further report will be produced.

Great Places were drawing together interested parties on the City Walls and a meeting had been held with one more to come. Herefordshire Council had begun the long-awaited repairs of the worst sections and Rural Media had come up with an ambitious plan for a tourist centre and a "walls experience" for virtual tourism.

**FP2018/19.11 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Closure of accounts for next the meeting.

Tourism development strategy, with the BID to be invited, for the next meeting

Options and a blueprint for the future development of the Town Hall post asset transfer, with risks and cost and staffing implications, for the September meeting.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm

Signed .....

Dated .....