

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Held in the Committee Room, Town Hall, Tuesday 17th July 2018 at 6 pm

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Sue Boulter and Councillors Butler, Dykes, Edwards, Michael, Stevens, Tawn and Wilcox

In attendance: Steve Kerry (Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer), Lesley Robinson (Administration, Finance and Information Officer)

FP2018/19.23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Lloyd-Hayes and Rone

FP2018/19.24 APPOINTMENT OF SUSBTITUTES

Councillor Butler had been appointed substitute for Councillor Rone. The Chairman, Councillor Stevens reminded the Committee that there was still a vacancy and encouraged Councillor Butler to nominate himself for that at the next Council meeting.

FP2018/19.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were made at this stage in the meeting.

FP2018/19.26 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

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

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 17th July be accepted as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chairman.

FP2018/19.27 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Clerk presented schedules of payments made since the last meeting of the Committee.

It was noted that several members had queried the apparent cost of catering a single event. The Clerk explained that the invoice was for three events and was made up of £2,900 for Mayor-making, £600 for the Annual Parish Meeting buffet and £1,300 for the Twinning Association dinner. Members agreed these were reasonable sums and asked that as with other invoices these should be itemised in the schedule to avoid undue concern.

The driving school fee was for a block of ten lessons for the member of staff for whom this had been approved by Governance and Procedures Committee as staff development.

The invoice shown for Royal British Legion was for Silent Soldiers. The Clerk gave a brief account of the problems within RBL who seemed to have been swamped with orders and changed their system in the middle of the process creating considerable problems with internal communications.

FP2018/19.28 BANK RECONCILIATIONS

The Clerk reported that due to an inconsistency in dates there was a minor discrepancy in the bank reconciliations, of £3.17 in the Council's favour. Accordingly, Councillor Wilcox had not signed the reconciliations for this Committee. The resolved reports for May, June and July would be presented to the next meeting.

FP2018/19.29 QUARTERLEY FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 30TH June 2018

The Clerk explained that with the agenda going out for this meeting seven days in advance, not all transactions had been completed through the Council's accounts by 10th August so a full quarterly report would not be available. The Council's external accountants had reviewed our position and confirmed that with the first three months largely completed expenditure was online with the budget with no significant variances to report. It was too early in the year to predict other than performance in line with budget at this stage.

The Clerk also reported that a major item from last year, the installation of a disabled swing for the Bishop's Meadow/King George V Park play area had now come through. The cost was less than the estimates, and the Clerk asked Committee to pass on its thanks to Spencer Grogan of Herefordshire Council for project managing the installation with other works so effectively. The item had been planned of last year at a cost of up to £26,000 plus VAT, but in fact was £23,846.11 plus VAT of £4,469.22 which will be recovered by the Council. This sum would consume the whole of the year's budget for Parks and Open Spaces, and rather than committing the whole budget so early in the year, the Clerk asked for Committee's approval to fund this from the Council's reserves as had been the intention in 2017/18 Financial Year.

After a brief discussion it was proposed by Councillor Tawn, seconded by Councillor Wilcox and unanimously

RESOLVED That the Committee thanks Spencer Grogan for his support with the project and that the sum of £28,315.33 be authorised to be spent from the reserves to cover the cost of installing a disabled swing and that the VAT of £4,469.22 be recovered in the usual way.

FP2018/19.30 HEREFORD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

The Clerk reported that the Board of the BID were holding an Extraordinary Board Meeting at the same time as this Committee Meeting to discuss some concerns about service delivery and financial performance. The BID's Officer, Mike Truelove, had been invited to this meeting but was required to be at the Board meeting. The Mayor had offered to stand in for Councillor Stevens who is our delegate to the BID but this had not be cleared by the Board before the extraordinary meeting. With the dearth of hard information available it was suggested that the Clerk and the Mayor work out with the BID Board a means by which the Council can continue to be represented at meetings and to improve the flow of communication from the BID to the Council. If necessary this could be an item for the next meeting when a BID spokesperson would be available.

(Postscript, the BID Chairman subsequently attended a meeting of Council and gave a full briefing and answered members' questions.)

FP2018/19.31 KEY PROJECTS UPDATE

The Clerk presented a report concerning progress on the issue of an asset transfer for the Town Hall. It was noted that there had been no significant progress, notably that Herefordshire had not responded clearly to the City Council's requirement that the car park and its revenues be included in any transfer. There were therefore no grounds to review our position on the feasibility study which had been considered at the last meeting and, would be supported if the asset transfer was going ahead.

Although the report is not strictly a confidential one, it was noted that some details of the costs of the feasibility study were commercially sensitive and members were requested not to share these until a final decision is made on the study by all parties involved.

Having identified no case for varying the Council's position it was agreed not to take item 6.3 in the report as it had been covered by the earlier decision and the Clerk would be enabled to use this as a negotiating position without a further mandate.

It was noted that the previous decision hadn't specifically mentioned the car park, although there was no doubt this had been repeatedly stated to Herefordshire Council as a key issue, and therefore there would be merit in affirming the Council's position on that matter.

It was then proposed by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Michael and

RESOLVED That the Committee note the report.

That the Committee affirms that a satisfactory position in writing on the car park ownership and revenue, major works funding, frontage repairs and Herefordshire's future use are essential conditions to further progress on the Town Hall asset transfer project.

FP2018/19.32 MERCHANT TAYLOR'S PAYMENT OF HISTORIC ITEM REGARDING MARKET RENTS

The Clerk presented a brief report on this historic matter, clarifying that the Merchant Taylors now treat the Council's payment as a donation to their educational charitable work. The item had not been billed last year, so £80-00 was payable provided members wished to continue with this tradition. Given the small sum involved the Clerk was seeking a resolution "until further notice" rather than bring this item back as an annual subscription.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Dykes and unanimously

RESOLVED That the recommended payment of £80-00 covering two years be made.

That £40-00 per annum be paid by the City Council to the Merchant Taylor's Company in perpetuity in respect of market rents novated by King Charles II.

FP2018/19.33 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Business Improvement District (unless taken to full Council).

Forward Planning for service reductions by Herefordshire Council and the management of the Town Hall.

FP2018/19.34 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 4th September 2018.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 18:36

Signed

Dated