

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 4th June 2020 at 2 pm

(The meeting scheduled for 10th March was cancelled due to the Covid 19 outbreak and an information note circulated to members.)

This meeting was held using Zoom for remote access under the terms of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Boulter, Butler, Dykes, Hornsey, Stevens, Toynbee and Wilcox.

In attendance: Steve Kerry Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Tracy Morriss Deputy Town Clerk, Becci O'Reilly Contracts, Committees and Events Officer.

FP2020/21.01 ACCESS TO THE MEETING

After a brief delay to establish a connection with Councillor Butler the Deputy Clerk verified that all members of the Committee noted above were able to participate.

FP2020/21.02 PUBLIC ACCESS

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the meeting was being live streamed from Zoom to Facebook to offer public access in accordance with the regulations.

FP2020/21.03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

FP2020/21.04 SUBSTITUTIONS

None

FP2020/21.05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

FP2020/21.06 APPLICATION FOR FURTHER FUNDING FROM HEREFORD CITY ROTARY CLUB FOR ONGOING PROVISION OF FOOD PARCELS

The Chair, Councillor Stevens, reminded the meeting that this matter had been referred to the Committee after a lengthy debate at Council. Since then the Clerk had collated a report which had been circulated.

The Clerk introduced the report and added that earlier in the day responses to some questions raised with Herefordshire Council's Director Steven Vickers to queries from the Deputy Clerk had been received. These had been in line with the statements made by other officers but updated the information available. The Clerk read the questions and answers which confirmed that;

Information is provided to Rotary from the Childrens' and Public Health Divisions of Herefordshire Council on the number of families entitled to free school meals in the City and feel that Rotary support has been well received and is needed by the groups.

The Council cannot say if families have received food packages from other sources but think it is better if they have, rather than some families in need receiving nothing. There are families who may not claim free school meals even if entitled because of a perceived stigma, which is not attached to the anonymous Rotary deliveries. The summer holidays and uncertainty about whether the government will continue to support the voucher system and the precarious nature of the next few months for many families regarding employment are areas of concern.

Hereford has the largest concentration of families on free school meals in the county.

Councillor Stevens thanked the officers for collating the information both in the report and the follow up questions.

The Mayor stated that councillors had asked for enough reliable information to make a fair decision on, and we now had it. It is clear that there is ongoing or increasing need, and that Rotary are effective in meeting part of that. It is a successful scheme and we should support it.

Councillor Wilcox stated that he was impressed by the change in having a detailed report and that it was a pity Council had not had this before. He congratulated the Clerk and Deputy in pulling the information together. He had enquired of schools and was concerned that Rotary are relying on a professional judgement of schools, but is not sure if schools are making a judgement or simply passing requests on. He wanted the schools to make some sort of assessment.

The Mayor replied that schools make regular telephone welfare checks and are in a position to have good insight into the circumstances of the families. The Clerk added that the voucher system was based on a very detailed assessment but was only done twice a year. The second assessment due in June this year was cancelled so the most recent one was January. That system was not designed to deal with rapidly changing situations and that the report did make it clear that there was no formal means test for the Rotary provision, but nor was there for any other emergency food provider service.

There being no further questions it was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Butler and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee accepts that there is now sufficient corroborated evidence upon which to safely ground a decision.

That no more applications from any source for donations be treated as emergency matters and that all applications for ongoing or new financial support on any matter related to the Covid 19 outbreak from external organisations be channelled through the grants procedure and considered by the Community Development Committee.

That the final decision of the Committee under authority delegated to it by Council is to award £10,000 to Rotary to enable their food provision to continue until the end of August.

That with this further donation, Rotary continue to publicise the Council's funding of the packages by inserts together with any wider publicity thanking donors during or at the end of the scheme.

That Rotary be asked to provide a detailed report at the end of the project to confirm how the Council funds have been used.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2.15 pm.

Signed

Date