

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 23rd June 2020

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Foxton, Powell, Butler, Dykes, Hornsey, Andrew, Tillett, Williams, Stevens, Kenyon, Toynbee, Boulter, Tyler, Wilcox and Williams.

Attending: Steve Kerry Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Tracy Morriss Deputy Town Clerk

At the start of the meeting the Mayor confirmed that the meeting was being held under the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations Sections Four and Five.

C2020/21.06 ACCESS FOR MEMBERS

The Mayor asked all members present to confirm they could see and hear the proceedings.

C2020/21.07 ACCESS FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the meeting was being live streamed and was also being recorded.

C2020/21.08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hunt.

C2020/21.09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

C2020/21.10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public had asked to raise a question.

C2020/21.11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

It was noted that with reference to Minute 2019/20.82 Councillor Powell's declaration of an interest concerning the Hereford Rugby Club was non-pecuniary as he had not been paid for coaching. The draft minute had been amended.

With that amendment it was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Dykes and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Council Meeting of 3rd March and the Extraordinary Council Meeting of 14th May be accepted as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

C2020/21.12 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

The Clerk presented the annual accounts for 2019/20, prepared by the external accountants, and reported a correction on page seven, which was repeated on page eleven. The figure shown for Grant Aid Expenditure for the most recent financial year had been transcribed from the previous financial year. It should read (£260,106). A

corrected set of accounts had been received and would be displayed for public scrutiny and it was this corrected set that was being proposed for adoption by Council.

The Clerk reported that two other points had been raised at Finance and Policy Committee which he could now answer. There was no need to show depreciation in local authority accounts for a parish council and a note of the conventions used and the position on depreciation could be found on page 5. The second issue was a query about the acquisition and disposal of assets. This refers to the purchase of fittings for the Tourist Information Centre and a new hybrid Mayor's car, which were the acquisitions, and the sale for part exchange of the old petrol driven Mayor's car, which was shown as an asset disposal.

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

RESOLVED

That the amended financial statements and annual accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020 be agreed and adopted by Council and signed accordingly by the Town Clerk and the Mayor.

The Clerk then presented his report supporting consideration of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, drawing members' attention to the eight questions they needed to resolve an answer to. In his view, there was sufficient supporting evidence to justify positive answers to all the questions, question nine on the report not being applicable.

There being no questions or comments on this report it was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Wilcox and unanimously

RESOLVED

That questions 1-8 inclusive on page five of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return be answered positively.

That question 9 on page five of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return be answered "not applicable".

That the Mayor and Clerk sign the completed page five.

That the Mayor and Clerk sign the final page (6) of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (headed Accounting Statements 2019/20) as a summary of the accounts of Hereford City Council and that the completed document with supporting accounts and other relevant papers is sent to the external auditors.

That the signed statements and accompanying accounts and other relevant papers be made available to the public for scrutiny in accordance with the statutory inspection rights and that notice of this be published in the prescribed format.

C2020/21.13 2019/20 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Clerk was pleased to present an unqualified internal audit report, that is one with no queries or concerns registered by the auditor or any recommendations for any corrective action. This had been a difficult year to carry out financial work, with changes in personnel, and the disruption of lockdown requiring a complete revision of processes for verifying bills, making payments and presenting reports. Nonetheless the officers and those members involved in verifying either payments or the bank reconciliations had all been diligent and this had led to an unqualified audit. The Finance Committee had also thanked the auditor for producing a thorough and timely report despite the difficulties of not being able to visit the offices.

The Mayor echoed this view and added her thanks to the officers who had worked hard to keep the Council's processes and procedures in good order through the year, and those members who are responsible for approving payments, verifying the bank reconciliations and for scrutinising matters at Finance Committee.

The internal audit report was received and noted by Council.

C2020/21.14 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor stated she was now fourteen months into her term, two months longer than expected when she was elected last May. The unprecedented events of the Coronavirus pandemic had brought hardship to many and disruption to all. The Mayor has signed up to the Shielded Community Team and has been delivering food and essential supplies to various homes, she was aware that several other members and staff had been involved in similar ventures supporting local charities and community groups. All members have been involved in supporting the community in different ways, some by direct action, others by supporting local efforts with advice and proposals for funding. The Mayor had always been proud to be a Herefordian but never more so than now as the community had shown its resilience and care.

The Mayor has sent and received messages of goodwill and support to and from Jaworzno, Dillenburg and Vierzon. She had been at two Zoom meetings with the new High Sheriff Patricia Thomas who – like her – is very keen to focus in her term of office on improving the life chances of young people. She has also been in touch with the new Lord Lieutenant Edward Harley and has circulated the outgoing Lord Lieutenant's letter of thanks. She had written to Lady Darnley expressing the City's thanks for all she has done in her term of office.

The Mayor announced that there is a collection for the Hereford Food Bank at Hampton Dene United Reform Church on 3rd July between 2 and 5 pm.

Finally, Armed Forces Week had been officially recognised with a small flag raising ceremony. It is hoped that restrictions will allow something on larger scale to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VJ Day.

C2020/21.15 DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

Councillor Andrews, in presenting the minutes of Planning Committee for 5th March, 2nd April, 30th April and 28th May reported that the developers for the new university building in Widemarsh had been remarkably unhelpful and challenging to the Planning

Officer. She had forwarded their correspondence to the Clerk. The Clerk added that he felt the developers resented being asked reasonable questions about the lack of detail and some incorrect information in their application and were trying to pressure the officer into not subjecting their application to proper scrutiny. He hoped Herefordshire members would support their officers in doing their jobs according to their statutory duties.

The minutes of Planning Committee for the dates noted above were received for information.

The minutes of Governance and Procedures Committee for 20th March (extraordinary meeting) were received for information.

The minutes of Finance and Policy Committee for 28th April (notes of payments made, no meeting called), 4th June (extraordinary meeting) and 16th June were received for information.

The minutes of Community Development Committee for 30th March (grants delegated decisions), 31st March (delegated decisions) and 9th June were received for information.

The minutes of the Youth Council for 19th March, 23rd April and 21st May were received for information.

C2020/21.16 DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Clerk reminded members that when lockdown was imposed on 20th March there was means for the Council to make a lawful decision other than by delegated authority to him as the Proper Officer, as meetings were banned under the legislation. On 4th April the government had introduced the regulations which permitted online meetings and this had, after a period of testing and training, been taken up by Council. The report was to inform members of the decisions taken under that delegated authority up to 3rd April 2020. It was for information; the decisions did not need to be ratified as they had been taken in accordance with the expressed views of a majority of members.

The report was received for information.

C2020/21.17 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Municipal Charities – It was noted that every meeting called has clashed with another commitment for Cllr Foxton and she would like to step down so another representative can be elected at the next meeting of Council.

Market Towns Forum – Nothing to report.

Enterprise Stakeholders – Nothing to report.

Three Choirs – Councillor Foxton reported that funding was being carried over until next year and that the schedule would continue from then with Worcester hosting the festival in 2021 and Hereford in 2022.

Twinning Association – Nothing to report.

Tourism Group – Nothing to report. It was noted that this group might not need to meet in future depending on how the tourism recovery work with Herefordshire Council and the BID progressed.

Hereford in Bloom – Cllr Boulter reported that work has started on the summer planting for the beds but there won't be any hanging baskets this year due to the number of businesses closed in the Covid 19 pandemic.

New University Working Group – Nothing to report.

Close House – Cllr Boulter reported that no meetings are taking place at Close House but the group are very active online. In answer to a question it was confirmed that they have looked at some other venues to allow for more distanced meetings and have been holding some open air events on Castle Green.

The BID Group – Cllr Stevens reported that he had been elected as Chair of the BID Board. A lot is going on in the city centre with two metre spacing signs ordered and installed. The hospitality recovery group is ongoing and urgently reviewing the guidance and rules for re-opening licensed premises on 4th July, so far there were as many problems as answers and many smaller venues could not operate within the rules and would not therefore open on 4th. The Police were concerned about the prospect of a large number of people coming into the centre to find many venues closed and others restricting numbers and requiring guests to be seated at tables. There were possible public order risks.

Hereford Area Plan – Nothing to report.

Community Land Trust – Councillor Milln reported that the group had reviewed a number of sites and were now in a position to develop specific proposals. Further details would be forthcoming very shortly. Herefordshire Council is reviewing its own public land policies. It was useful to note that CLT developments can be asset locked which means they are not vulnerable to subsequent right to buy claims. Active discussions are going on with Connexus on one site, previously thought not viable for development because of drainage and access issues. The CLT approach may well unlock the site for some development of community benefit. A study of Herefordshire's unused historic buildings is due for release very soon and will be available before the next Trust meeting.

C2020/21.18 TOWN CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk reported that the Hinton Community Centre, where the manager is employed by the Council on a one year contract are in advanced discussions with Herefordshire about an asset transfer which would make them a free standing organisation and with the NHS for an ongoing lease for continuing the very successful use of the Centre as a clinic during the Covid 19 outbreak. The clinic arrangements had worked so well that both patients and clinicians has expressed a strong view that this should continue even when the main hospital site is fully open again. This would provide a stable income stream for the Association.

In response to a question it was noted that Clerk had circulated the proposed temporary road traffic orders from Herefordshire Council for comments. Generally, these were supported and it was noted that St Owen St contra-flow cycle lane and the city wide 20 mph limit proposals were outwith the temporary ones and would be proceeding on their own time scale as permanent projects. However, members expressed a strong view that among the temporary measures the proposed partial closure of Walnut Tree Avenue was unwise and would bring considerable detriment to the local area for no discernible benefit. The Clerk would write to Herefordshire making this point.

C2020/21.19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15th September 2020 at 6 pm

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 6.55 pm

Signed

Date