

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 19th January 2020

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Kenyon (Chair), Boulter, Foxton, Hornsey, Oliver, Powell, Stevens, Tillett, Tyler and Wilcox.

Attending Steve Kerry Town Clerk, Becci O'Reilly Committees, Events and Contracts Officer, Katie Bott Operations Manager Friends of Castle Green, Martin Flowers Board Member Friends of Castle Green.

This meeting was held under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations Sections Four and Five

CD2020/21.82 CONFIRMATION THAT ALL MEMBERS CAN TAKE PART IN THE PROCEEDINGS

At the start of the meeting the Chair confirmed that all members could see and hear and be seen and heard. At this point Councillor Foxton was still entering the meeting and Councillor Oliver was having some difficulty establishing a connection. With a quorum of members present the meeting started and the above Councillors duly joined as they resolved their access issues.

CD2020/21.83 CONFIRMATION OF PUBLIC ACCESS

It was confirmed that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded.

CD2020/21.84 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

CD2020/21.85 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

CD2020/21.86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Boulter declared a non-disclosable non-pecuniary interest in the item on allotments as she is now a plot holder and a member of the Hereford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (HALGS).

CD2020/21.87 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

It proposed by Councillor Boulter, seconded by Councillor Foxton and unanimously

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meetings of 2nd November 2020 (Grants) and 3rd November (main agenda) be accepted as a true record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

CD2020/21.88 GRANT COMPLETION FORM – FRIENDS OF CASTLE GREEN

The grant completion form in respect of the £2,480 grant for a community equipment store to be refurbished agreed in March 2018 was presented.

There being no questions or points raised by members the report was accepted.

CD2020/21.89 LARGE GRANT APPLICATION – FRIENDS OF CASTLE GREEN

The Chair formally welcomed Martin Flowers and Katie Bott to the meeting and invited them to add any further information they wished to present in support of their application. It was reported that the grant referred to from Marches Renewable Energy Trust had been approved at just below £40,000, but the application to the Church Street Charitable Trust had been unsuccessful. There is therefore still a shortfall and the City's support will be needed to complete this project.

Two members spoke to indicate their strong support for the innovative scheme for a renewable energy source to provide heating.

A number of questions were asked and the answers are set out below.

The scheme is more expensive in terms of up-front cost than other solutions but will yield savings (which will rise sharply as occupancy improves as Covid rules are relaxed) year on year in running costs and is environmentally sound. It is not brand new technology per se, it has been used in Austria to heat ski lodges from streams and is used in farms, usually relying on ground water. What is new is to use the River Wye and to install it in a high profile public building in the City. The system is expected to have a life of 20-25 years although the only part likely to need much maintenance or replacement are the pumps. There is a full guarantee on products for two years.

An electricity supply will be required for the pumps and the option of solar power has been considered for that. A larger solar heating system was not considered when it became clear it would require full listed building consent to make the external alterations necessary. It had been confirmed that no consent was required for this scheme as it did not alter the external aspects of the building or site.

The system could cope with seasonal variations in river flow and river temperature. All that was required was a temperature inversion to operate the heat exchanger and a minimum flow. The river completely drying out or freezing solid would stop the system but these were highly unlikely occurrences. Flooding will not affect the system.

The position with Stronger Towns Fund money was clarified. The Friends had been advised of the position of pursuing funding in advance of the main STF awards for projects which were ready to start and £50,000 had been awarded. This money must be spent by 31st March 2020 and the Friends were grateful for the Council bringing this application forward ahead of the scheduled grants meeting in February so it could go to Council for approval if the Committee so recommends. They did believe if the funds were awarded at Council next week they would be able to complete in time to retain the STF funding.

If funds are agreed work will start the next day. There is a considerable urgency about this project partly to retain funds and partly to replace an old and dysfunctional boiler system.

There being no further questions the Chair explained to the Friends that the decision the night is on a recommendation to Council for large grant. The Committee's grant awarding is limited to £3,000 per application but it can recommend higher awards to Council. It was confirmed that the item is on the Council agenda and ready to go to members as soon as the Committee makes a recommendation.

It was then proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Tyler, and, with one abstention,

RESOLVED That the Committee recommends to Council that a large grant of £7,000 be made to the Friends of Castle Green in support of their Renewable Heating for the Pavilion project.

CD2020/21.90 SEAGULL UPDATE DEFRA POLICY

The Clerk reported that despite considerable lobbying nationally there had been no indication of any change in DEFRA policy and that the ban on removing nests and eggs to control seagull reproduction was therefore still in force. He would be discussing with Herefordshire Council any other means of control that would be legal; the most important factor is interrupting the supply of waste food on the streets which encourages birds to congregate in city centres. It was noted that in some areas post deliveries had been interrupted by attacks on staff by gulls defending nesting sites.

The oral report was noted.

CD2020/21.91 STRONGER TOWNS FUND UPDATE

The Clerk advised that a fuller report would be made to Council next week on all the schemes going forward under the STF banner as soon as Herefordshire supplied the data. The news regarding the two bids put forward by the City Council was one success and one rejection. The scheme for an electric bus service had been approved for the short list, and as the only project proposed which addressed the issue of connectivity (a key STF theme) stood a very good chance of attracting government funding. The Clerk was grateful for the extensive support from the Rail and Bus Users Forum on the bid and the advice of Ivan Annibal of Rose Regeneration in working up a joint bid for this group and the Council. The bid for a community arts hub in the Town Hall had not been successful and attracted notably less help from the consultants. It had not been joined with the Broad Street museum bid from Herefordshire Council which was disappointing as that bid had been successful and the two would have been stronger together. It was possible that this issue could be re-visited once the future ownership of the Town Hall is resolved, possibly via Heritage Lottery or Arts Council funding.

The Mayor, who represents the City Council on the STF Board, added that the list of approved projects was no longer unduly dominated by Herefordshire Council's projects, which had been a criticism of earlier proposed rankings. The list was better balanced now and would be discussed at Council as the STF Board were keen to get stakeholders to formally support it before it was submitted to the government.

Councillor Kenyon thanked the Mayor and Deputy for the hours of work they had put in supporting the Council's bids and members also noted that one out of two was a pretty good outcome for an exercise such as this.

The oral report was noted.

CD2020/21.92 ALLOTMENTS LEASE AND CONTRACTS UPDATE

The Clerk introduced the report and emphasised that the delay in progressing the lease could only be resolved with co-operation from Herefordshire Council's legal

service. This made it very difficult to set a meaningful deadline. Despite this, the delay did not preclude progress on the other matters in the report.

The dichotomy between the allotments' agreement and the new HALGS constitution needed to be resolved and there was a proposal for a meeting with the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk with the trustees of HALGS to work out a way of doing that. There was a risk of reputational injury and possibly of vicarious liability under equalities legislation or other provisions of HALGS acted in a way which was deemed unreasonable and the Council was providing the bulk of their funding from public revenues. The exact extent of the risk was interested but was nonetheless something the Council need to be aware of and to control.

The extension agreed at the last meeting to the pest control contract was in place and appears to be working to everyone's satisfaction.

The grounds maintenance contract re-award could not proceed when non-essential journeys and meetings were prohibited under Covid rules. Each potential contractor would have to visit each site and if there were three bidders that was 27 site meetings, none of which could be deemed essential when there was a contract currently in place. During the enforced delay it was appropriate to consider alternative ways of providing grass cutting and hedge pruning in order to reduce costs both for the Council now and for HALGS in future once the lease arrangements are in place.

The report did not say what the solutions would be either on the constitution or the grounds maintenance issue simply that there was a need of a joint discussion. It was noted that in view of Councillor Boulter's declared interest as a plot holder it would be inappropriate for her to be involved with the Chair in this matter and another councillor would be nominated to form the working group on this matter. HALGS had not been given a copy of this report for comment as it did not propose solutions, only to discuss matters with them and their views would be considered at that point.

Members commented that there seemed to be some merit in asking HALGS to take a more hands on approach to grounds maintenance to increase the local control of standards and to reduce costs. The suggestion of digging up the grassed areas and replacing them with some form of hard surface had high capital costs and was contrary to the Council's position on greening the City. Other options would have to be considered.

At the same time there might be merit in discussing HALGS taking over the pest control contract and paying the contractor directly but as this was working well there may equally be merit in leaving the current arrangement in place.

It was noted that some hedges are large and require a professional contractor whereas others could be managed locally by HALGS members along with the grass cutting and one option would be for the Council to fund equipment and HALGS members to contribute time.

It was also noted that the financial position was currently very much weighted in favour of HALGS and was the most generous in the country as far as anyone knew. There might be a case for some rebalancing of this, possibly as a gradual process.

It was then proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Tillett and

RESOLVED

That the Chair and Councillor Wilcox, with the Clerk, meet with the HALGS trustees to discuss how the new constitution of HALGS and the existing Allotments Agreement can be brought into line and the expectations that the Council will take responsibility for the equitable delivery of services it substantially funds be upheld.

That the resolution of the extension of the pest control contract is noted.

That at the same meeting referred to in recommendation 6.1, discussion also take place about finding a more cost effective way of delivering grass cutting on the sites.

That at the same meeting the possibility of delivering local hedge cutting through HALGS members supporting their own sites is also discussed.

Having declared an interest Councillor Boulter took no part in the discussion of this item and abstained from the vote.

CD2020/21.93 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- Parks and open spaces
- City centre refurbishment
- Museum upgrades
- Cycle track (including STF decisions)
- Wider STF matters

CD2020/21.94 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 8th February 2021 10 am (Grants items)
- 30th March 2021 6 pm (Other agenda items)

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7:02 pm

Signed

Date