

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING 9th March 2021

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Andrews, Boulter, Dykes, Foxton, Hornsey, Kenyon, Milln, Oliver*, Powell, Stevens**, Tillett, Toynbee, Tyler*, Wilcox and Williams

*Cllrs Oliver and Tyler were slightly late due to connection issues but were content for the meeting to begin.

**Cllr Stevens had intermittent connection problems and his votes were noted by phone or on audio transmission when necessary.

Attending: Steve Kerry Town Clerk, Becci O'Reilly Committees, Events and Contracts Officer

The Mayor confirmed that the meeting was being held under the Local Authorities and Police and crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 Sections Four and Five

C2020/21.81 CONFIRMATION OF MEMBER ACCESS

The Mayor confirmed that all members could see and hear the proceedings and that they could all be seen and heard. The Mayor then paused for the Chaplain Reverend Andy Morgan to lead prayers.

C2020/21.82 CONFIRMATION OF PUBLIC ACCESS

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

C2020/21.83 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

C2020/21.84 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

C2020/21.85 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No questions or applications to speak had been received from members of the public.

C2020/21.86 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Clerk asked that the heading of minute C2020/21.72 be changed to read "Final 2019/2020 External Audit", as it referred to the previous financial year, and thanked Cllr Oliver for pointing this out before the meeting.

It was then proposed by Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Kenyon and, with the amendment noted above,

RESOLVED That the minutes of the council meeting of 26th January 2021 be accepted as amended as a true record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

Signed

Date

C2020/21.87 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Committees, Events and Contracts Officer represented a revised calendar of meetings, including the merger of Policy and Finance, and Governance and Procedures into a single Policy and Resources Committee, and creating slots for the new Climate and Biodiversity Sub-Committee.

The Calendar was noted for information.

C2020/21.88 CATCHER MEDIA – GRANT RE-PURPOSE

It was conformed that Catcher Media were not represented at this meeting. The Clerk explained that in order to comply with Covid restrictions the organisers of this event had altered its format and they sought permission to re-purpose the grant awarded by Community Development Committee. The item had come to Council because an urgent decision was required to enable the organisers to know the constraints on their planning.

Cllr Kenyon commented that he felt this was a reasonable request and he would have supported it had it come to Committee.

It was then proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Foxton and unanimously

RESOLVED That Catcher Media be authorised to re-purpose their grant to enable the May Fair 900 project to continue within the prevailing Covid restrictions.

C2020/21.89 STRONGER TOWNS & TOWN IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Mayor introduced this item and explained that we were now at the stage of producing a draft Town Improvement Plan (TIP) for approval by the government. At the Stronger Towns Board (STB) meeting last Friday it had been noted that a tranche of towns have now been awarded between £19m and £24.8m, but that the next tranche, which includes Hereford, would not be determined until after May 6th because of local election purdah rules. Members have received the TIP for information; it is lengthy and detailed and discussion is not expected today. It is not a Council document. The STB consists of one representative from Herefordshire Council, one from the City Council and the rest from business and the private sector.

Cllr Tillett commented that many people living south of the river had noted the preponderance of schemes based north of the river, and that on the map the one scheme in the southern area had been misplaced. It was in fact in Newton Farm near Belmont, not as shown. He was disappointed that the schemes had not been more fairly spread across the city.

The Clerk drew members' attention to the section in his report about an opportunity to feed back on this process and assured members that this point would be included.

The Mayor also pointed out that many projects not selected for inclusion in the TIP would nonetheless be continuing through other funding streams. The STB are continuing to look for ways of making more projects viable than can be included within the budget restricted TIP. It was also noted that there had been more proposals for projects north of the river.

Signed

Date

The report was noted for information.

C2020/21.90 BISHOP OF HEREFORD'S BLUECOAT SCHOOL CHARITY

The Clerk repeated the correspondence from Mr Pratley, the Secretary to the above charitable trust. The Council had a power to appoint a trustee, it was not obliged to do so unless it wished to.

After a brief discussion among a number of members interested it was proposed by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Kenyon and unanimously

RESOLVED That Councillor Wilcox be appointed as the City Council trustee on the Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School Charity.

C2020/21.91 ANNUAL RISK ANALYSIS

The Clerk introduced two reports, explaining that non-financial risks are considered by Governance and Procedures Committee, financial risks by Finance and Policy Committee. In future the new Policy and Resources Committee would consider one report. It was an audit requirement that the Council received and confirmed a report setting out the Council's current risk level, and the two committee items presented constituted that report. Risks had been amended in the light of the Covid outbreak to include items relating to home working and otherwise the text had generally been updated.

There being no questions or comments it was proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Foxtan and unanimously

RESOLVED That the annual risk analysis is accepted.

C2020/21.92 MAYOR'S CORRESPONDENCE

The Mayor noted that this was her last meeting, after an unexpectedly long term in office and a very strange and disrupted second year. We can now look forward with some confidence to the prospect of normality. A couple of social gatherings for members, possibly via zoom initially, would be organised as ordinary social contact in the office and with members had been much missed.

One very positive aspect had been the development of the Youth Council. The Mayor met Ben Lea yesterday and heard how the Youth Council is thriving and they continue to impress Ben and the two members they work with (Cllrs Hornsey and Powell) with their maturity, wisdom and commitment. They have asked about Stronger Towns and the Mayor will be attending their meeting on 18th March to speak about that and answer questions. Ben has also said they are keen to work with individual ward members, and he will be talking to the Council about how to facilitate that.

The Mayor also reported a visit to the Courtyard with the Chairman of Herefordshire Council and thanked Councillor Andrews for organising that. The work done to expand and improve the theatre was impressive, with a new dance studio and a greatly improved café area with a terrace. Members who wished to do so could arrange a tour and the Mayor will circulate contact details. She urges as many as can to take up the opportunity. The work has been completed in really challenging circumstances and the Courtyard deserve great praise for what they have done.

Signed

Date

C2020/21.93 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

C2020/2193a Governance and Procedures Committee 16th February 2021

Councillor Wilcox presented the non-confidential minutes of the meeting, the majority of which had been about an ongoing staff restructuring. Confidential minutes of that would be circulated when the process had been completed. There were no questions.

C2020/21.93b Community Development Committee 19th January 2021

Councillor Kenyon presented the minutes. In answer to a question Cllr Kenyon gave a brief account of the first meeting with the Allotments Society about environmental issues and some grounds improvements including re-covering some parking and turning areas (but no new areas) with aggregate, water retention, pest control and a more do it yourself approach to grounds maintenance. The Clerk also updated on the long running issue of resolving title before the long lease could be completed.

C2020/21.93c Climate and Biodiversity Sub Committee 21st January 2021

Cllr Toynbee presented the minutes, adding that the Committee had got off to a flying start and was working on a detailed work plan. Friday is the second anniversary of the Council voting to recognise the Climate Emergency and it would be good to issue some publicity about what we had done about that. There were no questions.

C2020/21.93d Community Development Committee (Grants) 8th February 2021

Cllr Kenyon presented the minutes, there were no questions.

C2020/21.93e Planning Committee 14th January 2021 and 11th February 2021

Cllr Andrews presented the minutes. There were no questions. Cllr Andrews added that consideration had been given to Zoom meetings but the logistics of trying to view and compare multiple plans on a split screen whilst engaging with members were prohibitive. As soon as possible the Committee would revert to live meetings with plans displayed on a large screen for everyone to see at the same time.

C2020/21.93f Youth Council 21st January 2021

Councillor Powell presented the minutes, there were no questions.

All of the above were noted for information.

C2020/21.94 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Mayor reminded members that it had been agreed that we would only receive a report if a member had something to say, rather than reading out a long list for no reports to be offered.

Councillor Stevens reported from the City BID that they are looking forward to getting their handymen back from furlough and engaged on useful work as soon as possible. He also represents the BID on the Destination BID, or Herefordshire BID, and it has been agreed to push the vote back to October at the earliest. The original plan for June was hopelessly impractical.

Signed

Date

C2020/21.95 TOWN CLERK’S CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk referred to the announcement by Herefordshire’s cabinet of a decision to asset transfer the Town Hall to a third party. He confirmed that he was well aware of this, the third party was a putative charitable trust and the City Council and Encore were working on that with officers from Herefordshire. Many details need to be resolved before a final decision could be made, including shared responsibility for common areas, building management, finances and reversionary process. The good news was that the option of simply selling the building to a developer to minimise future costs was no longer on the table.

The Clerk also referred to the extensive publicity given to a parish council recently and the behaviour of the person clerking the meeting who had become something of a heroine on social media. In his view she had handled a difficult meeting very poorly and under some provocation her reaction had been such that the whole meeting had probably been rendered unlawful and all its decisions void. He wanted to assure members, and more especially anyone watching this meeting, that the antics of members and “clerk” shown in the excerpts were not typical of how parish councils did their business.

Cllr Milln asked to update the comment on the town hall with news of a discussion he has had with conservation specialists who concur with our view that extensive and immediate works to arrest dry rot and repair its ravages are needed. It may be that rain water goods designed 120 years ago are simply not up to the recent levels of occasional torrential rain and need to be improved. The Mayor added that she is thrilled at the prospect of the town hall being retained and restored but concerned about soaring costs. She had asked for a commitment from the Leader of Herefordshire Council that urgent repairs would be undertaken and a written response was awaited.

C2020/21.96 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Before deciding the date of the next meeting, Cllr Tillet asked, on behalf of all councillors, to express their thanks and appreciation for the remarkable work the Mayor has done during her two years in office. It has been an extraordinarily difficult time, twice as long as planned and with so many unforeseen and sudden changes and new challenges. She has conducted meetings with dignity and forbearance. He also thanked the Deputy Mayor for his contribution over the two years. The Mayor thanked him for his words and said she couldn’t have done it without the support of Council which had made this crazy period bearable. She was proud of the fact that the Council had been able to help so many people in difficult times, which was what it was there for.

The dates of future meetings were agreed as:

10th May 2021 at 6 pm Annual Meeting and Mayor-making

18th May 2021 at 6 pm Business Meeting (including creation of, and election to, committees)

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting at 7.20 pm.

Signed

Date