

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 30th March 2021

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Kath Hey and Councillors Kenyon (Chair), Boulter, Foxton, Hornsey, Milln, Oliver, Powell, Stevens, Tillett, Tyler and Williams. (Noted that Councillor Milln was attending as a non-voting Councillor as he is not a member of Community Development Committee.)

Attending: Steve Kerry Town Clerk, Becci O'Reilly Committees, Events and Contracts Officer, Mike Truelove Hereford City BID Manager.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting was taking place under the regulations for online meetings as part of the response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

CD2020/21.111 CONFIRMATION OF MEMBER ACCESS

The Chair confirmed that all members could see and hear the meeting and all of them could be seen and heard.

CD2020/21.112 CONFIRMATION OF PUBLIC ACCESS

The Committees, Events and Contracts Officer confirmed that the meeting was being live streamed and was being recorded.

CD2020/21.113 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk reported apologies from Councillor Wilcox who was unable to attend, and for early departure from Councillor Tyler who was attending the Herefordshire Council Parish Summit from 6.45 pm.

CD2020/21.114 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

The Clerk reported that Councillor Wilcox had nominated Councillor Williams as his substitute. The Chair welcomed Councillor Williams and thanked him for standing in, he also welcomed Councillor Milln to the meeting as an observing member.

CD2020/21.115 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

CD2020/21.116 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

In answer to a question it was confirmed that the minute regarding May Fair 900 was correct, the proposed date for recognising the Fair's history with a mainly online event is not affected by the subsequent decision to postpone the actual fair until August.

With that clarification it was proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Boulter and

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meetings of 19th January 2021 and 8th February 2021 be agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

CD2020/21.117 HEREFORDSHIRE VENNTURE SLA

As no representative was available it was proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Stevens and

RESOLVED That this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

CD2020/21.118 SEAGULL CONTROL – WYE VALLEY FALCONRY

The Clerk presented the suggestion from Wye Valley Falconry that in the absence of effective control measures which are now prohibited by the government, a peregrine falcon be used to deter seagulls from the City. The Chair introduced Mike Truelove from the Hereford BID and asked for his observations. Mike reported that the use of falcons in other cities had not been particularly successful, and it was quite an expensive solution. The falcons sometimes took live pigeons or other smaller birds in aerial attacks as well as intimidating gulls. In one incident a gull had been savaged in front of a large crowd by a falcon and the resulting press and public reaction was extremely negative. In his opinion the most effective way of deterring gulls was the denial of food sources, and the most effective way of doing that was the use of seagull proof litter bags for food premises in particular, but also for residential properties. Herefordshire Council and the BID had supported an initiative in this area which had been quite successful but information at the time was that all the bags had been used and there was nothing in the budget for any more. An estimated 150 at a cost of around £2,000 would make a major impact and would leave sufficient for residential properties that don't use wheelie bins to be included as well as commercial premises outside the BID area.

In discussion, members established that the bag is big enough to hold two large bags of domestic rubbish so it will meet the domestic need. (In case there was any doubt it was also confirmed that the bags were for rubbish not for catching gulls!) In any case it was too late to deploy a falcon now as breeding had already started in the resident gull population.

It was also noted that "boomers" which seek to scare away gulls by a loud noise similar to a cannon being fired are ineffective; the birds quickly adapt and either fly up briefly and then return or in time learn to ignore the noise. More emphasis on enforcement of trade waste standards and increasing pressure to use the seagull bags would be advantageous and there was a proposal on the agenda to move forward with a joined up enforcement effort part-funded by the City Council. This resource could be deployed to support the use of seagull bags and the identification and if necessary prosecution of trade premises that did not adequately manage their waste.

There is another issue of street bins not being emptied quickly enough which needs further work with Herefordshire Council and BBLP, especially in Commercial Road on Friday and Saturday nights.

The possibility of action through Environmental Health was also discussed; the main focus of Herefordshire Council's effort at the moment is thought to be on making buildings less seagull friendly by removing nesting and roosting sites or netting them.

Finally it was noted that seagull bags won't just be available in the city centre. There are some suburban "hotspots" of seagull activity such as Judges Close which will need to be offered support.

It was proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Stevens and

RESOLVED That the Clerk is authorised to fund the purchase of seagull bags to be held by the BID and distributed via the BID and Herefordshire Council at a cost of £2,000.

CD2020/21.119 ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

The Clerk reported that this item had been placed on the agenda in anticipation of Herefordshire Council completing a draft agreement for members to approve to progress this proposal. The agreement had not been received.

It was proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Boulter and

RESOLVED That this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

CD2020/21.120 ALLOTMENTS' LEASE UPDATE

It was noted that the agenda title of this item is not accurate, the lease has not progressed through the legal process, this item is about the ongoing discussions with the Allotments Society (HALGS) on day to day operations.

The Chair reported a positive meeting and subsequent series of discussions with some of the trustees. There was some resistance from other trustees to taking on a more hands on role, and a rather unrealistic suggestion of increased funding as a part of that. Despite that, good progress was being made in picking up areas where some capital could be spent by the Council to deliver sustained improvement, with HALGS site representatives and trustees taking a more direct role in managing the sites.

The Clerk reported that although fences and gates were HALGS' responsibility under the existing Allotments Agreement, the Council had agreed to some replacements, however individual people on sites had obstructed the contractors or made several changes to what was required. It was in his view better for matters like this to be managed locally by the trustees with the Council providing funds once quotes had been taken and specification agreed by HALGS. In addition, aggregate had been supplied to sites for the repair of parking areas and this had gone well, with the model of the Council supplying funds and HALGS supplying the on-site management and delivery being notably successful.

There was now a green pressure group within HALGS who wanted to see more work on improving biodiversity, wild flower areas to encourage bees and butterflies etc and a more environmentally sensitive approach to pest control to encourage natural predators such as hedgehogs. This sits very well with the Climate and Biodiversity Sub Committee's thoughts on allotments, and although there was some resistance among some HALGS members this concept seemed to be gaining support. This was another area where the Council could act to encourage positive movement.

Water is a major cost for the allotment, although it is more than covered by the Council's general allotment grant. Reducing that grant but making one off

investments in water reduction and recycling schemes was a better solution both environmentally and financially and was being actively explored.

Grass cutting had been a constant source of complaints, some valid, some not, with sporadic complaints about hedge pruning, also sometimes valid, sometimes not. It was very difficult to manage a grounds maintenance contract at long distance and the flow of information about contractor activity had been erratic both in terms of timing and content. HALGS had been interested in the proposal to scrap the existing contract and replace it with local people mowing the grass, although there was some concern about equipment availability. The Council could consider the purchase of a suitable ride on mower at a later date to enable local mowing by members of HALGS. Hedges could be dealt with on a site by site basis, some could be cut by hand tools by existing plot holders, such as happens often at Corporation Farm, some would require a contractor from time to time but perhaps not every year. Where the hedges abut onto farmland and the farmer cuts their side, they might be willing for a modest fee to cut both sides.

It was noted that if we do purchase a mower the liability for its use and maintenance would rest with HALGS; the Council's role was up front investment, the Society's role was the management and operation of allotments.

Councillor Kenyon announced it was his intention to step down as Chair of this Committee after nine years, but asked that he be enabled to act as the lead member contact for pursuing the new way of working with HALGS as he felt he could make considerable further progress. Members expressed support for this.

It was also noted that nothing listed above was in any way dependent on the resolution of title which was holding up the long lease.

At this point Councillor Boulter asked for it to be noted that she had not taken part in the debate and would not be voting as she had a non-pecuniary interest in the discussion as it had developed as she is a member of HALGS.

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

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the progress made to date.

That after one more meeting with HALGS a new service level agreement should be drafted.

That the delegated authority given to the Clerk for spending up to £3,000 per item on improvements to the street scene or parks and open spaces be extended to cover investments in works to achieve revenue savings and/or environmental improvements in the allotments.

Councillor Tyler apologised that she had to leave the meeting at this point.

CD2020/21.121 CYCLE TACK UPDATE

Cllr Kenyon provided an update. A meeting is taking place between HALO Leisure and British Cycling to agree to draw down funds and get started on scoping and planning the final version of the scheme. There will need to be a new planning application as the effluxion of time and the many changes made since the original proposal mean that the current permission is no longer valid.

CD2020/21.122 HEREFORDSHIRE VENNTURE SLA

It was noted that Esther Rudge from Vennture had now been able to join the meeting, so with the agreement of members the Chair restored the item to the agenda and invited her to introduce her proposals.

Esther described the work of Street Pastors, who support the night time economy, and Ambassadors who patrol during the day assisting visitors, vulnerable people and generally seeking to create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere in the city centre. There are two shifts per day, pre Covid. Lean on Me is the service for those seriously affected by drink, but not so ill as to need emergency hospitalisation. It is provided by young volunteers some from the Sixth Form College who must have an appropriate and qualified supervisor. Costs are mainly for equipment, uniforms and training, with some administrative and management overheads.

It was noted that there is considerable concern amongst night time venue providers about the pent up demand, basically a year's worth of stag and hen nights, 18th birthdays etc which is likely to lead to a flood of younger people with very little experience of how to behave in the night time economy and on the streets between venues. There is a risk of services being overwhelmed.

Vennture have been in discussion with door staff and the Police and are well aware of this concern and are developing plans for a significant effort to help manage it when lockdown is relaxed and premises re-open, especially when larger number are permitted to use indoor venues.

It was noted that the fear many women have of being alone on the streets at night is something the Pastors can provide a really useful service to address.

The Mayor reported that when she had been out with the Street Pastors she had been impressed by the positive response to their presence from so many people, it was clearly a valued service.

Members queried the staffing and overhead elements of the costs and wondered why so much management was necessary for a service entirely provided by volunteers. It was explained that this includes a share of the Vennture Director's costs, which is a salaried post, and the office administrator, apportioned across all services. Volunteer services require a lot of co-ordination to run.

Members were concerned that before agreeing to a long term SLA they would like more information about running costs and overheads, and that this could be a problem if the proposal as stated was sent forward to Council for approval beyond a one year grant. In fact, it was noted that the Committee did not have a fully drafted service level agreement to consider, it had a budget (about which it had some queries)

and a request for financial support. Members considered whether it would be reasonable to make a one off grant within the Committee's delegated powers now and consider the SLA again when a complete draft was available.

It was suggested that the day time Ambassadors could liaise with the TIC when it re-opens giving specific guidance to one off attractions, special exhibitions or events etc. Esther thought this was an excellent idea and good liaison with the TIC as well as the event providers was essential.

It as the proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Kenyon and

RESOLVED

That Herefordshire Vennture receive a grant of £3,000 to support the work of the Street Pastors and Lean on Me.

That more work is done to develop a draft service level agreement to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee for referral to Council, and that if the SLA is satisfactory that consideration be given to releasing up to a further £7,000 of funding for 2021/22.

CD2020/21.123 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Further developments of wildflower area and small park improvements, noting the delegated authority of the Clerk to spend up to £3,000 per item.

City centre refurbishment and tree planting.

Parkour – agreed this was a project for discussion with Cllr Davies at Herefordshire and HALO.

Christmas Lights – the Clerk reported that he was due to re-tender this in collaboration with the Old Market. However with great uncertainty about retail recovery, Old Market had decided to extend their existing contract for one more year before agreeing a new one. The Clerk would not therefore be bringing a report to Committee and would extend the Council contract also for one more year at the best discount available, unless members specifically demanded a tendering exercise and report. Members did not ask for a tendering report.

Easter greetings from Jaworzno were acknowledged as well as comments on the live feed on Facebook from the public.

CD2020/21.124 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19th April 2021 Grants Meeting (Cllr Kenyon as Chair)

25th May 2021 General meeting (at which the first business would be to elect a Chair and Vice Chair for the municipal year

The meeting closed with birthday greetings to the Clerk at 7.21 pm.

Signed

Date