

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE 8th June 2021

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Paul Stevens and Councillors Hornsey, Milln, Oliver, Powell and Toynbee

Attending: Steve Kerry, Town Clerk

CBD2021/22.1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor Hornsey, seconded by Councillor Powell and with one abstention

RESOLVED That Councillor Toynbee is elected to Chair the Committee for the municipal year 2021/22.

It was proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Hornsey and with one abstention

RESOLVED That Councillor Powell be elected to Vice Chair the Committee for the municipal year 2021/22.

The Chair thanked members for their support and acknowledged that this was now a full committee of the council, the recommendation that it no longer be a sub-committee having been endorsed by full council.

CBD2021/22.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Boulter, Owens and Tyler.

CBD2021/22.3 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

None

CBD2021/22.4 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

CBD2021/22.5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

It was proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Oliver and unanimously

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 4th March 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair, and that the notes of the informal meeting of 15th April 2021 were also accepted.

CBD2021/22.6 ALLOTMENTS

The Clerk updated the Committee on progress towards a new allotments agreement which would have much more stringent rules regarding pesticides, but otherwise would move the Council away from managing day to day operations and more into the role of a funding partner. Funds would be supplied on a reducing sliding scale for general expenses, but in compensation the Council would invest in capital works to improve water retention and recycling, raise organic growing techniques and the use

of solar power for toilets. Councillor Milln raised the issue of planting a long hedge around the Drybridge allotment which he had discussed with a representative of Highways England, who had been surprisingly receptive to the idea. Cllr Milln will supply the Clerk with his details so this can be followed up. Maintenance might be an issue for HALGS as this would add about 175m of hedgerow to the estate, but this would be offset if Highways England had the hedge on their land and looked after it. Large water containers had been delivered to sites to support rain water retention, which was not only an environmental initiative it would also reduce water charges, one of the main running costs faced by HALGS.

CBD2021/22.7 HINTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Clerk reported a suggestion that the work being done on the community garden at Hinton might be a suitable topic for a video using the council's social media to promote what could be done. This was endorsed by the Committee, who added that the peace garden at Saxon Hall and the Hunderton Community Garden off Cagebrook Avenue could also be included. It was agreed that the Clerk would discuss this with the staff with appropriate skills and also see if the Mayor could time a visit to at least one of the sites to be included in the video.

CBD2021/22.8 HYDROPONICS AND WILD FLOWERS

Councillor Hornsey introduced notes of a much longer report she had prepared on hydroponic gardening and the various methods that can be used to develop this for raising food crops or flowers in very restricted spaces. Most of the studies had been in developing community food growing initiatives using hydroponics given the shortage of allotment spaces and the number of people in towns and cities without access to a garden. The Clerk would ask staff to put this on social media.

It was noted that wild flowers had been planted in Tupsley Quarry and that if members could identify other sites the Clerk would use his delegated authority to fund parks and open spaces improvements to purchase more batches of seeds. It was noted that there is an area of King George V Playing Fields to the east of the path from the south entrance towards the Victoria Bridge that is too small and too frequently flooded to be of any use for sports pitches but might be ideal for suitable wild flower planting, noting that the plants must be resilient to flooding.

Following this discussion Cllr Milln reported that in the same meeting with Highways England about a hedge he had seen the large spaces underneath the Greyfriars Bridge. These were not suitable for storing equipment such as mowers, tractors etc for open spaces or highway works as there was an absolute ban on storing any fuel or combustible material under the bridge, but would be ideal for cycloponics, which is growing in water with little natural light. The area would lend itself to mushroom or chicory growth.

In order to follow up on these discussions the following actions were noted:

The Clerk will circulate all councillors asking for them to consider any areas where wild flower planting might be viable, and also for councillors to contact schools in their wards to see if they are interested.

The Clerk will suggest to Balfour Beatty a different mowing regime for King George V Park, with more attention to maintain the remaining sports pitches at a useable length but leaving the wild flower areas unmown to encourage natural growth, and balance the cost of more attention to the sports pitches.

CBD2021/22.9 YOUTH COUNCIL

The Clerk suggested that this be a standing item as the Youth Council had several environmental projects under consideration and liaison with them and the committee would be mutually beneficial. This was agreed. It was noted that the council's two members who work with the Youth Council, Cllrs Hornsey and Powell, are both on this Committee.

The Youth Council have completed the planting of a mini orchard by the scout hut in Park Street and Eign Road. They were working with Laura Hall of Hey Honey on promoting bee friendly habitats. They had also received a presentation from Bristol on environmentally sensitive public transport schemes which they would pass on for members.

CBD2021/22.10 REVITALISING THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AND GREEN AWARDS

As this year's annual parish meeting has only just taken place it was agreed to defer this item until October.

CBD2021/22.11 BUSINESS PLAN

The Clerk explained that the Council's business plan needed to be rewritten to take into account some significant changes, most notably the need for a post Covid regeneration of the local economy and the need to respond to the council's recognition of the climate emergency. His target was to re write the plan so it could be considered at the same council meeting in January which would approve the budget for 2022/23, so that there would be coherence between the allocation of resources and the policy priorities of the Council.

It was noted with pleasure that news had come through that Hereford has been very successful in its Stronger Towns Fund Bid, gaining government approval for some £22.5m of funding against a bid for £23.9m. This was far better than several other towns/cities in the West Midlands. The Council's electric bus scheme was the only bid related to connectivity and had been supported with no additional information required and could be fast tracked for funding if the sponsors were able to get it ready in time. There would be much work to do, probably in short time as the government is notorious for demanding a lot of information on very tight deadlines. If necessary, the Clerk might seek additional professional support from a specialist in transport schemes.

It was also noted that the Soil from the City project had not been supported and so far no explanation had been given for the this. The STB Chair and the MP were pursuing an explanation as it appears that this project met several criteria and no other scheme supported by the government has filled that gap in the overall proposal.

The STF Board would be meeting shortly to discuss how to find the £1.5m shortfall between applications and agreements, and also to begin to address the match funding and other issues that need to be progressed now in order to go to the next stage.

Encore got approval for £800,000 towards their scheme for a community arts hub based on live music which will be based in the town hall, subject to an ongoing negotiation regarding an asset transfer. Growing Local is funded as part of the larger Skills Foundry concept. Greening and composting initiatives have also been approved at this first stage. There is some doubt about the scheme for the river as the Environment Agency might have concerns about pontoons and an electric hoist on the Sea Cadets site given the frequency of severe flooding.

Having considered the decision of Community Development Committee to organise a half day for a special think tank type meeting on their issues to be reflected in the business plan, members of the Climate and Biodiversity Committee felt a similar approach would also be useful. Following consideration by Policy and Resources Committee (who are the committee that owns the business plan overall within its remit) all members would be invited to comment and put forward suggestions and the committee half day conference approach was an excellent way of harnessing and prioritising this to prevent the plan from becoming unwieldy.

CBD2021/22.12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5th October 2021

Half day for open discussion of business plan proposals to be arranged in September 2021.

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 7-05 pm

Signed

Date