

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING 16th November 2021

MINUTES OF MEETING

Before the meeting, the Mayor invited the Venerable Tultrim Tensing Chosang representing the County Inter-faith Forum to lead a reflection and recite the prayer for all sentient beings. The meeting remained standing for a minute's silence to mark the passing of a former Mayor Colin Rumsey.

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Paul Stevens and Councillors Andrews, Boulter, Dykes, Foxton, Hey, Hornsey, Kenyon, Milln, Oliver, Owens, Powell, Tillett, Toynbee, Tyler, and Williams

Attending: Steve Kerry, Town Clerk

C2021/22.55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Carwardine and Wilcox.

C2021/22.56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

C2021/22.57 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

C2021/22.58 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was noted that the typing correction sent in by Councillor Oliver had been acknowledged in the final version which was in front of the Mayor.

It was proposed by Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hornsey and with two abstentions

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 21st September 2021 are accepted as an accurate record and that they be signed accordingly by the Mayor.

C2021/22.59 HALF YEARLY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

The Clerk presented the report for members' information; it had already been considered by Policy and Resources Committee. He asked Council to note that the statement in paragraph 5.12, that there would be no voluntary sector training and therefore no budget had been rescinded following the appointment of the External Funding and Community Support Officer who would be organising and directly providing training for voluntary organisations, so this budget would in fact be retained in the next financial year. Otherwise, the report was presented for information, and to guide for consideration alongside the proposed budget at the next council meeting.

The income and expenditure report was noted by Council.

C2021/22.60 BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW

The Clerk explained that the business plan had been written over two years ago and since then home working, Covid, decisions relating to the Town Hall and service devolution, issues with the title to the allotments and numerous other issues had altered plans. There had also

been the advent of the Stronger Towns Fund which would have major implications for the City Council going forward. It was therefore necessary to rewrite the business plan. The timing was to link with the budget consideration at the next Council Meeting, as a budget without a plan was simply a bill, and a business plan without a budget was just a wish list. Bringing the two together was a logical and sensible move. The intention was to advise all members of the current plan and to take it to each of the Council's four committees in the next cycle. Their deliberations would be written into a revised plan which would then be approved at Council at the same meeting as the annual budget. This would be in January 2022.

Councillor Toynbee thanked the Clerk for the report and asked if it could have an appendix setting out what each member of staff did as it related to the activities in the plan. Members felt this would be helpful.

It was noted that prior notice of significant proposals would be appreciated before each committee meeting to allow for ideas to be properly researched. It was also noted that references to Finance and Policy and Governance and Procedures Committees would be modified to reflect the formation of the new Policy and Resources Committee. The plan was intended to last for three years, the same term as the medium term financial strategy for the Council.

It was then proposed by Councillor Tillett, seconded by Councillor Williams and unanimously

RESOLVED

That Council notes that the Business Plan written in October 2019 needs to be modified in the light of several developments since it was written.

That Council refers the Business Plan written then to each of the Committees for comments in the next cycle before receiving a final draft for consideration at the meeting of 24th January 2022.

C2021/22.61 ARMED FORCES COVENANT

The Clerk reported that he had been in contact with Kate Le Barre who co-ordinates the covenant across the county. It should ideally be renewed every couple of years, and it was two years since the Council had agreed to sign it. There had been a problem with getting that onto the national register which should now be smoothed out. Kate's suggestion was that we resolve to sign the covenant to renew our commitment but that we hold off on a public signing event until the home coming parade of the Queen's Dragoon Guards planned for July 2022, at which it could be presented by the Mayor and counter-signed by the CO of the unit as representative of the Armed Forces.

Councillor Oliver suggested that we should only sign the covenant if it was going to make a difference in some way. He suggested adding a requirement to the proposal that there be a twice yearly meeting with representatives of armed forces and veterans charities to find out what they wanted and how the Council could help them. Members generally supported this idea, especially as it would mean finding out what people with specific needs wanted, rather than telling them what the Council had decided to do without first consulting them.

Councillor Kenyon asked that we list how many veterans are employed at the Council, which can be done. It was also noted that the Mayor, during his time as Deputy Mayor had visited

the Veterans Centre in West Street and had been hugely impressed by the work they do, and that we would ensure the signing received appropriate publicity.

It was then proposed by Councillor Williams seconded by Councillor Powell and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Council renews its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

That the Mayor signs on behalf of the Council to signify this renewal of the covenant and that the Clerk ensures that the Council is added to the list of bodies held nationally who have supported the covenant.

That the covenant is presented as part of the homecoming parade of the Queen's Dragoon Guards held in July 2022 as this is the next major civic and military event in the City.

That the Council meets twice yearly with armed forces and veterans charities to hear their needs and to consider how it can best support them.

C2021/22.62 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported that it had been a great pleasure to meet Tensing Chosang at the AGM of Services for Independent Living. She was there as a recipient of domiciliary care due to her disability. His firm intention as Mayor had been to reach out to communities who did not normally feature in civic life and the invitation to her to lead prayers, as well as the celebration of the national day of Fiji in the company of local members of that community had been very moving and important events. It had been pointed out that on Remembrance Sunday there was no inter-faith representation or even recognition of denominations of the Christian church beyond the Church of England. He would like to see that change in future years.

At this point Councillor Andrews, a former Mayor, recalled that other denominations had been represented in the past and agreed this should be restarted.

The Mayor also reported the recent meeting of Town Mayors with the Chair of Herefordshire Council where during a discussion on the Talk Communities project there had been an airing of the dissatisfaction with the way Herefordshire Council communicates with the parishes, so strong that one of the Clerks recalling how she had been treated had become visibly distressed. The Clerk explained the specific context of this, relating to unrealistic demands related to the recent Town Fund process, including a press release before any information had gone to the towns, and a sense of the councils and their clerks not being respected or listened to. Councillor Hornsey added that many community groups feel exactly the same way.

Finally the Mayor thanked all concerned, and who attended, Remembrance Sunday, the first since Covid restrictions were lifted. He felt it had shown the City in a very positive light. Councillor Kenyon expressed the hope that having worked through the notes left by the previous officer in charge of this, and correcting many points, it would not be so time consuming and stressful for the officers concerned again.

The Mayor agreed and said there would be a detailed debriefing to pick up on all lessons learned.

C2021/22.63 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

a) Climate and Biodiversity Committee 5th October 2021

Councillor Toynbee presented the minutes and reminded members of a meeting next week. Ideas for projects are welcome from any member of council. She also drew members' attention to the survey from Herefordshire Council seeking to build a register of all community groups and asked members to spread the word in their local communities. The minutes were noted.

b) Community Development Committee 14th September 2021

There being no questions or comments the minutes were noted.

c) Planning and Highways Committee 9th September 2021 and 7th October 2021

There being no questions or comments the minutes were noted.

d) Policy and Resources Committee 12th October 2021

There being no questions or comments the minutes were noted.

e) Youth Council 23rd September 2021 and 18th October 2021

Councillor Hornsey reported that meetings were now held on Mondays instead of Thursdays. There had been a very busy meeting yesterday which had been a question and answer session with the Herefordshire cabinet member Cllr John Harrington, who had been given a very good grilling. They had also met the Paralympian Dan Pembroke. The Mayor added that Cllr Harrington had told him how impressed he had been with the Youth Council – a view which he shared.

C2021/22.64 REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

a) Municipal Charities - Councillor Boulter reported a meeting yesterday to allocate three properties to tenants, all resolved. There is still a waiting list. The Christmas meal for tenants would be on 15th December this year.

b) Enterprise Zone Stakeholders – Nothing to report.

c) Three Choirs - A planned meeting had been postponed but our representatives do now appear to be getting notice of meetings etc.

d) Hereford in Bloom - Councillor Boulter reported there had been a meeting yesterday but she could not attend because of the clash with Municipal Charities.

e) Twinning Association – Nothing to report.

f) Close House – Councillor Hey reported that she had attended the Close House awayday (actually half a day) last week at Powerhouse in Maylords. The point had been to bring trustees and staff together, to bring furloughed staff back up to speed and to work out how to manage without the full open door policy which had been forced to change because of Covid and had led to many contacts being lost with vulnerable young people. There was pleasing evidence that contacts were picking up again and a new group of youth were being

reached by the services of the organisation and thus diverted from crime and anti-social behaviour from which they would otherwise be at risk. The big challenges would be funding for major projects and building outreach links at the Whitehouse and the Kindle Centre using the EPICs.

- g) Hereford BID** – The Mayor had circulated the latest end of year report and brochure with the agenda. He added that he had been very disappointed with progress and communication with the Herefordshire BID which has not worked constructively with the city businesses outside the BID district. The task group had met this afternoon and appeared to be entirely focussed on the visitor economy. Councillor Kenyon reported he had called in the Herefordshire Cabinet decision on this for scrutiny. Councillor Hey added that she thought the BID brochure and annual report was excellent.
- h) Bluecoat School Charity** – Noted that Councillor Wilcox was absent with apologies and there was no report.
- i) Stronger Towns Board** – Councillor Hey reported a meeting with the Rose Regeneration consultants and a new lead officer with Herefordshire Council (Joni Hughes) regarding progressing the business case, clarifying the anticipated spend profile, procurement rules and the arrangements for clearance of funds from Herefordshire Council. There had been a noticeable improvement in the level of support being offered and she felt the project, and the City Council, was being taken more seriously. We are working towards the end of March to complete the business case, with the end of June as a final backstop date if needed.
- j) Youth Council** – Councillor Powell reported that visits by the Mayor, himself, the Mayor's Officer and the Clerk to the Academy had been very well received and applications for Junior Mayor and expressions of interest in joining the Council had been received.
- k) Community Land Trust** – Councillor Milln reported that due to community opposition to a housing scheme in Andrews Close this would now be replaced by a plan for a community orchard. Three other sites were under active consideration, although negotiations on one with Herefordshire Council regarding transferring the land are proving somewhat difficult. The other two are moving ahead with feasibility studies and option appraisals. Owners are keen to sell if the grant funding comes through. One is in the Artists' Quarter and the other is in Aubrey Street.
- l) Hereford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (HALGS)** – covered by the Clerk in the next item.

C2021/22.65 TOWN CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk reported that the service level agreement with HALGS would be fully implemented in April at the start of the new Financial Year, however the grounds maintenance contract had already been terminated and HALGS had the equipment to do their own grass cutting and some hedge pruning. The highways side of the Holmer allotment hedge remained with the Council to keep clear of the footway. There would be an application for a grant from HALGS next year which should be less than the combined cost of the previous grant and contract payments, so that as well as making savings and reducing the use of metered piped water, the Council was encouraging more self-management of the sites by HALGS representatives, which

they were, in the most part, keen to do. Councillor Kenyon thanked the Clerk for his patience and persistence in bringing this long running issue to a successful outcome. The ongoing saga of the lease and title to the site would be likely to run for some time yet.

The Clerk also reported that he would be doing induction for two new staff, one had worked for Herefordshire for nearly twenty years and the other had never worked in local government so they were quite a diverse group. Both new starters would bring important skills and knowledge to the Council team.

Councillor Boulter asked the Clerk to pass on thanks to the Mayor's Officer and all the staff who had worked on Armistice and Remembrance Days which had been very well done. Members endorsed this request.

C2021/22.66 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 25th January 2022.

With this in mind, the Mayor wished everyone a Merry Christmas and, there being no further business, closed the meeting.

Signed

Date