

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING 15 March 2022

MINUTES OF MEETING

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

Attending: Steve Kerry Town Clerk and Ali Tolley Administrative Officer

C2021/22.82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillor Foxton.

C2021/22.83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 on the agenda, Large Grant for South Marches District Scouts Council for their gang show as he is a member of the local Scouts.

C2021/22.84 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

C2021/22.85 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Tillett asked for it to be noted that the gull referred to in C2021/22.80 had been incorrectly named and for his name to be spelt consistently with a double t.

With those corrections noted it was proposed by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Toynbee and unanimously

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 25 January 2022 be accepted as a true record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

C2021/22.86 CCLA ETHICAL INVESTMENT POLICIES

The Mayor welcomed Kelly Watson who reminded the meeting that CCLA stood for Churches, Charities and Local Authorities investments. She had been with the company for three years prior to a career in local government as a senior finance and S151 officer. The public sector ethos is fundamental to CCLA and is reflected throughout their practice. It is owned by its shareholders who are the local authorities, charities and churches that invest. CCLA manages around £14bn for 750 local authorities from small parishes to large unitary and metropolitan councils.

The City Council has an investment in the Public Sector Deposit Fund which gives 24 hr access and is invested in only accounts of counter-parties with a high level of screening for high ethical ratings. There is no investment in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine or the Middle East because of concerns about governance and transparency under their banking laws. Screening has always been monthly, but has become more frequent recently. They also now carry out environmental and social policy screening, which is more subjective than financial stress testing, but is nonetheless important in the ethical setting of public sector investment. The second investment the City has is with the Local Authorities Property Fund which is a long term investment we made in two tranches in 2017 and 2018. CCLA only buy properties that

can be improved and always talk to the local council about planning and development potential before investing. They undertake Green Leases which is an innovation which requires tenants to co-operate with schemes to reduce carbon footprint and improve environmental sustainability of buildings. Across CCLA no tenants are permitted who trade in arms, tobacco, gambling or legal pornography. CCLA also seek to look at the tenant supply chains, although this can become very complicated and can only be taken so far. The Property Fund has no Russian, Belarusian or Ukrainian links or investments.

As an organisation CCLA see themselves as stewards, not owners, of public money which they hold in trust. They have recently started "Find, Fix it, Prevent it" a consortium with over £4tn of investments pledged to end modern slavery. They are leading on the Mental Health Benchmark exercise with the FTSE top 100 and want to expand this to the top 350.

Regarding climate, their policy was defined as "Aiming for A" which was set in 2009/10. This has evolved into "Climate Action 100 Plus", the plus indicating that more than 100 tenants have joined in improvement plans.

In answer to questions, Kelly Watson confirmed that CCLA does include equalities in their social policy assessments. The company does invest in historic buildings in need of renovation provided there is the possibility of a revenue return, due diligence applies to protect investors. The Local Authority Property Fund has held up well by investing in new out of town and warehousing developments which have continued to be lucrative and moving away from traditional retail in town centres where values have been affected by COVID-19 and the rise of e-shopping. The market position recovered quite well in 2021 post-COVID-19 and industrials are outperforming other market sectors. Student accommodation is also a lucrative area of investment, although offices are declining and investments here are being cut back. CCLA has no investments in Israel.

The Mayor thanked Kelly for a very informative and detailed presentation.

C2021/22.87 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Clerk reminded members that a decision to consider the recommendation of Policy and Resources Committee to re-approve the investment strategy had been placed on hold until the CCLA presentation was received. He did not think anything had arisen which called the recommendation into question.

There being no further comments from members, it was proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Williams and unanimously

RESOLVED That Council re-adopts the current investment strategy as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee, with the specified changes since 2018 noted.

C2021/22.88 LARGE GRANT APPLICATION SOUTH MARCHES DISTRICT SCOUT COUNCIL GANG SHOW

The Mayor welcomed David Fraser Owen to the meeting who had presented the original application to Community Development Grants Committee. He confirmed that even though the cast is smaller than usual, some 60 rather than 140, it nonetheless still requires 650 costume changes to put the show on. Costs had risen in some areas and ticket sales were down because families buy tickets to see their children perform, so lower cast number equals lower ticket sales. The Gang Show has been self-financing for many years but in the last couple

some assistance had been needed. The average age of cast members has been falling and is now under 14.

It was then proposed by Councillor Hey, seconded by Councillor Kenyon and (with Councillor Williams abstaining having declared his non-pecuniary interest at the start of the meeting)

RESOLVED That Council awards a grant of £5,000 to the South Marches District Scout Council to support this year's Gang Show.

C2021/22.89 MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

a) Support for Ukraine

The Mayor proposed the motion on the agenda in his name. It had been written some three weeks ago and sadly little had changed. The Home Office continues to under-perform badly compared to the authorities of other governments with unnecessary obstructions being placed in the way of desperate refugees despite assurances from ministers that things were being fixed.

Councillor Tillet seconded the motion, saying he hoped he was pushing an open door on this issue. The motion refers to our Belgian flag which is a poignant reminder that the kindness of a previous generation in 1914 in responding to another refugee crisis is still remembered and is still important. What we do now for Ukraine will be remembered for generations to come. Although much remains the same, what has changed is the movement of attacks nearer and nearer to the Polish border, and the number of people coming forward to offer spaces in homes, in one case organising neighbours to offer the option of building a mini-community of refugees to avoid social isolation.

Councillor Kenyon added that while the previous speaker had been making that point, he had received a text from someone offering accommodation. The government website isn't working and much of their response had been dismal.

Councillor Oliver noted the historic similarities to Putin's attack on Ukraine and the German invasion of neutral Belgium in 1914, and the need to avoid such reparations from Russia that will fuel the rise of another dictator, as had happened with Hitler post 1919.

Councillor Toynbee commented that the Nationality and Borders Bill is going through Parliament and the need for that to reflect what we have learnt from this crisis and our inability to respond as quickly as other countries. Therefore, the wording in the original resolution about the Bill should be deleted, this was agreed without a vote.

Having been proposed by the Mayor and seconded by Councillor Tillet it was put to the vote and unanimously

RESOLVED that

Hereford City Council stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and condemns the Russian invasion of their country. We call on the UK government to maintain stringent and effective sanctions against the Russian state.

We call on the UK government to open our borders and waive visa requirements for Ukrainian refugees seeking sanctuary, making it safe and legal for them to travel to this country. Hereford has a strong history of welcoming refugees, notably the Belgians who settled here in 1914 having fled the invasion of their country. We believe the Ukrainians fleeing the war in their country will find a warm welcome here.

The crisis has highlighted serious issues with the UK policy on refugees, so we call for an urgent review of current Home Office policy, which prevents the protection of those forced to flee for their lives.

This motion to be sent to the MP for Hereford and Herefordshire South.

b) Financial Issues

The Clerk reported that as the original motion had received an amendment which had been accepted by the proposer and seconder, he had drafted a new composite resolution for members to debate which covered both aspects. There was also a brief enabling resolution to follow to allow the funds to be paid if the motions were passed.

Councillor Wilcox then moved the composite resolution. He noted that whatever we can give will never be enough but we must do what we can. The Disasters Emergency Committee is formed from 15 UK charities with wide experience of supporting people in humanitarian disasters and is recognised and monitored by the Charity Commission. The motion covers two payments, one to them and one directly to the President and Council of Jaworzno. In this respect action speaks louder than words and it is action that is required now.

The Deputy Mayor reserved his right to speak later as seconder.

Councillor Kenyon affirmed his support of the resolution - local needs are ever changing and the local response is also growing fast. He referred to the efforts of a new group in Three Elms who have sent two 7.5 tonne trucks after just one week of collecting supplies, and their next shipment will be in two 44 tonne lorries. They too should be supported and he would be proposing something to Community Development Committee in a couple of weeks to do that.

Councillor Boulter, Chair of Community Development Committee said she would welcome that on the agenda as the need for support with fuel costs was pressing.

It was noted that a week ago Jaworzno had one hundred refugees, now it is five hundred and is rising exponentially. It was also noted that government's promise to match fund was in fact limited to the first £20m of aid from UK citizens and this has already been surpassed. We would share details through our social media of the activity with Jaworzno and we will support the work done by Herefordshire Council's emergency management staff to help with relocation of refugees and the gathering of supplies for shipment.

Councillor Dykes, in seconding the motion, said he agreed with everything that had been said. The need was urgent and the strong response from the people of the City indicates we will have overwhelming support in doing what we could to help.

It was then proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Dykes and unanimously

RESOLVED

That as a token of Hereford City's support and concern arising out of the Ukrainian humanitarian disaster, this Council donates £10,000 to the Disasters Emergency Committee to provide emergency aid and rapid relief to refugees and other civilians suffering through the Ukrainian conflict.

In addition, having regard to our close partnership with the Polish city of Jaworzno, we will donate a further £10,000 to the Jaworzno Supports Ukraine Fund set up by the City's President, specifically to purchase goods and items to support the many Ukrainian refugees that have fled across to the City.

The Clerk explained that these sums needed to be drawn from reserves, but that the reserves are not expenditure codes. As a matter of accounting the payments would be drawn from the Grants and Community Support budget which could then be replenished with a virement from reserves.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Tillett and unanimously

RESOLVED

Noting the decision to make two donations totalling £20,000 in support of Ukrainian refugees, Council authorises these sums to be drawn from the Grants and Community Support budget and for that budget to be replenished with a virement of £20,000 from the general reserve.

C2021/22.90 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Clerk reported that the new internal auditors had produced a very inadequate report that had been rejected by Policy and Resources Committee and our former internal auditors had been re-engaged. He presented the report of Auditing Solutions and asked members to note there were no concerns or areas for action noted.

Members noted the report and thanked the Clerk and the finance staff for resolving this matter.

C2021/22.91 POLICIES REFERRED FROM POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Clerk reported that the Policy and Resources Committee reviewed all financial, administrative and staffing policies in a three to four year cycle, or whenever a change in employment law or financial rules made it necessary. A number of policies had been reviewed recently and the resulting revised documents were presented for consideration.

Councillor Tyler asked how discretion worked in the case of long-term sickness after a traumatic injury. The Clerk explained that it was very difficult to set down in a policy how that would happen in a specific case, the more you write the more you've constrained your discretion, the broad thrust was to help people get back into work after a period of prolonged

absence provided they were co-operative and there was a reasonable prospect of an eventual return to work, possibly on modified duties.

Councillor Milln asked how many of the policies were templates from other organisations. The Clerk explained that most are either from Hoople our HR advisers or from Shropshire Council our payroll provider, we look at both and produce hybrids that suit the City Council best. The special leave policy was entirely local.

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

RESOLVED That the:

Behaviour, Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

Equality and Diversity Policy

Managing Attendance and Absence Policy and Guidance

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Policy

Special Leave Policy

as revised by Policy and Resources Committee and recommended to Council be accepted.

C2021/22.92 MAYOR ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR ELECT

Councillor Hey proposed the Deputy Mayor Councillor Dykes as Mayor-elect to serve from May 2022. She said they had been together on the Council since 2015, and he has been a solid, sensible and dependable councillor and friend. He has given a lot to the Council. He will put his own stamp on the role of Mayor and she is confident he will do it well.

Councillor Kenyon seconded the proposal adding that he had known Councillor Dykes since they were at Whitecross. He had been in the Sea Cadets, then the Royal Artillery and then 29 (Cdo) Regiment RA attached to the Royal Marines. When serving on the buffer zone in Cyprus he had managed to get a duty teaching canoeing on the beach, which showed great initiative. He felt he would make an excellent Mayor.

There being no further nomination it was put to the vote and unanimously

RESOLVED That the Deputy Mayor Councillor Mark Dykes be recognised as Mayor-elect.

Councillor Tillett nominated Councillor Carwardine as Deputy Mayor-elect. He recalled that in his thirty years as a Hereford resident there had been a time when she had been his local councillor. She had served three terms as a councillor and has put in more years than many others before reaching the Mayoralty. Noting that Hereford is a city of extraordinary history, she in fact will be the sixth Carwardine to be Mayor, the first having held office under Queen Mary I, and most recent in 1702 at the end of the Stuart period, under Queen Anne.

Councillor Kenyon, in seconding the proposal, recalled Councillor Carwardine's service in the Women's Royal Army Corps as a radio technician and PT instructor, before she left when she was eight months pregnant.

Councillor Hey asked for confirmation of the correct interpretation of the name which was recited.

There being no other nominations it was put to the vote and unanimously

RESOLVED That Councillor Jacqui Carwardine be recognised as Deputy Mayor-elect.

C2021/22.93 JUNIOR MAYOR-MAKING

The Mayor advised Council that there had been a very small scale handover from Theo to Kyro as COVID-19 restrictions had still been in place. He had been talking with the Dean about holding a combined thank you to Theo for two difficult years in post and a welcome to Kyro, but the complexity of doing this around Easter and getting both families together had so far prevented this. After the Youth Council meeting of 11 April there would be a small reception with buffet to mark the handover.

C2021/22.94 STRONGER TOWNS FUND HEREFORD ZIPPER PROJECT

The Clerk introduced the draft full business case and explained that this was due for completion by the end of March to go forward for consideration by the government for funding. It was therefore written as a funding bid and not as a council report. So far, the project had been given a provisional £1.7m, which was £100,000 less than the original bid, the savings had been found and the project was still very much intact. The draft was not complete, several consultees working with him had made some suggestions and a revised text had been circulated by email, nothing fundamental had changed. The three appendices, statistics to establish a demand schedule, a route map and a statement setting out the linkages with other Town Improvement Plan projects (i.e. those STF bids that were still going forward) were works in progress, and would be completed this week. Then the whole report would go to Rose Regeneration for them to pre-assess it, leaving a few days for any last minute alterations necessary to get over the final funding hurdle.

Councillor Kenyon asked if there would be links to other bus routes and Clerk explained that a key destination was the transport hub, and in the meantime the railway station and both bus stations were served on the route and quite a few other single route stops. He also asked about hydrogen buses and the Mayor explained this had been looked at, but so far hydrogen buses are only available as large double deckers and are extremely expensive. At present electric is the emission free option for a midi bus of around 25 seats.

Councillor Oliver asked members to thank the Clerk for the effort put into producing this very long and detailed document.

Councillor Owens asked if the statements about funding meant that the Council was committing to a 5% increase in tax every year. The Clerk reminded members that this was exactly what had been agreed in October 2021 in the three year financial strategy and had been supported in the budget debate in January for 2022. However, the commitment was to provide revenue funding; that could be by raising more from tax, or finding savings in other areas or finding a new income stream. There was also the possibility that government revenue funding might be edged back towards the 10% they had originally offered, rather than the 7%

that it turned out to be. Council would fix its budget year on year; what was vital was to show the government that this was a sustainable project with a life after STF funding ran out.

Councillor Wilcox asked about possible future costs for example in infrastructure. The Clerk explained this was the more flexible area of the project. Once the buses had been bought and the charging facility and Phase 3A current supply arranged, there would be about £200,000 left over for signage, stops, etc. This should cover everything, but if it didn't, then it was not essential to have interactive bus stop information at every point, we could settle for these just at key points like the railway station and the cathedral, which would be the busier pick up and set down locations. The capital budget is finite, there is no facility to go back to government and ask for a top up.

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

RESOLVED That the Stronger Towns Fund bid for an electric bus in Hereford is endorsed by the Council and the Clerk is thanked for his continuing efforts to progress this project through the funding stages.

C2021/22.95 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor stated that as this was his last full council meeting before Mayor-Making in May he would like to say something about his 51 weeks in the office. It had not been an easy year and COVID-19 has prevented much being done to support the Mayor's charities. During the year he had recovered from cancer and thankfully the ongoing signs were that it had not returned, and from pneumonia which had been undiagnosed for several weeks. Men's Mental Health continues to be a growing need in the community.

His proudest moment had been recently when the Lord Lieutenant, in front of a large audience, had publicly thanked the Mayor and the City Council for arranging the coloured lighting of the Town Hall in the Ukrainian colours, on the same day the Queen had met Canadian PM Trudeau in front of a display of yellow and blue flowers. This received the loudest round of applause of the evening and showed that the Council was punching above its weight and getting the credit it deserved. He had also attended the installation of the first female Dean at the cathedral in 1,300 years which had been a splendid occasion and he had been delighted to see that change, and to invite the Dean to lead prayers before tonight's meeting.

Finally, he thanked the former Mayors and the Deputy Mayor who had covered appointments during the year when fixtures had clashed and reported that he had been asked to serve as an Ambassador for the Hereford Food Bank which he had been glad to agree to undertake.

C2021/22.96 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

Climate and Biodiversity Committee 1 February 2022 noted after a brief discussion of Herefordshire Council's very expensive new bus shelters with grass tops which may be an issue for the next meeting.

Community Development Committee 14 February 2022 (not 14 September 2021 as printed) noted.

Planning Committees 13 January and 11 February 2022 to be circulated with decision sheets attached.

Policy and Resources Committee 1 March 2022 noted.

Youth Council 13 December 2021 noted. Councillor Powell reported the later meetings minutes were not ready yet.

C2021/22.97 VACANCIES ON COMMITTEES

There were no nominations to vacancies on any of the Committees. This will be considered again after the Annual Meeting of Council.

C2021/22.98 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

- a) **Municipal Charities** Councillor Boulter reported that there is a meeting next week.
- b) **Enterprise Zone Stakeholders** Councillor Andrews again had nothing to report, this group appears to have shut down.
- c) **Three Choirs** Councillor Hornsey reported that the group had met last week and a presentation regarding the grant is due to be given at Community Development on 29 March. All rehearsals will be free to enter and there will be a community bandstand. Councillor Kenyon asked how much longer we have to fund Three Choirs, the Clerk answered this was entirely up to members, it was a discretionary grant.
- d) **Hereford Twinning Association** Councillor Dykes had nothing to report.
- e) **Hereford in Bloom** Councillor Boulter and Councillor Wilcox reported on progress with a local project in Churchill Gardens to begin some restoration of part of the formal garden.
- f) **Close House** Councillor Hey reported she had not been able to attend the last meeting but would be at the staff and trustees day on 25 March.
- g) **Hereford Business Improvement District** The Mayor had circulated the latest monthly newsletter.
- h) **Stronger Towns Board** Councillor Hey noted the most important issue had been covered in the report on the bus bid. The Board is meeting once a month and the group looking at each project will meet weekly until the business cases are all done. Publicity will be ramped up once some government decisions are made, and our internal publicity will follow suit.
- i) **Bluecoat School Charity** Councillor Wilcox reported there is a meeting next week.

- j) **Youth Council** Councillor Powell reported that a new cohort of Youth Councillors had been recruited and the group was now enjoying their energy and enthusiasm. All members of council are invited to come and LISTEN to the meetings but please confirm in advance so there are enough chairs.
- k) **Community Land Trust** Councillor Milln had nothing new to report.
- l) **Hereford Allotments and Leisure Gardeners** Councillor Kenyon reported everyone seems happy, there are no complaints.

Councillor Powell asked about the Further Education Group that had been set up at the start of the administration but never seemed to have got off the ground. The Mayor replied he is meeting NMiTE on 29 April and would ask what had become of that.

C2021/22.99 TOWN CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk reported that following storm damage he had been asked by HALGS to have a large conifer checked on the Westfaling site. Acer Tree Services had reported it was not in good health and he had authorised them to remove it.

Despite most payments being made by BACS now he had one cheque and asked that two signatories sign it before they left the meeting.

C2021/22.100 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING REVIEW OF ARRANGMENTS

The Clerk explained that now civic awards were not being given out at the APM there was nothing that needed to happen there that couldn't take place before a council meeting, it was really just public participation. Therefore, it was possible to combine the meetings.

Councillor Tillett asked if the awards were permanently stopped, the Clerk said they had been considered by Community Development Committee who had passed it to Climate and Biodiversity Committee who would be making some awards which would be presented at the River Carnival with a readymade audience, rather than the expense and trouble of trying to organise a single event, which had been declining in attendance for some years. That was a one year experiment but if successful might well be the model for future years.

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

RESOLVED

That the date of the Annual Parish Meeting for 2022 be changed to 24 May and that the Council meeting for that date be called for 6.15pm or the conclusion of the Parish Meeting if that is later.

C2021/22.101 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday 9 May 2022 6pm Annual Meeting of Council and Mayor-Making

Tuesday 24 May 6.15pm or at the conclusion of the Annual Parish Meeting if that is later – including elections to Committee and external bodies.

Tuesday 24 May 6pm Annual Parish Meeting

There being no further business the Mayor declared to meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed

Date