

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE 1 FEBRUARY 2022

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Paul Stevens, Councillor Diana Toynbee (Chair) and Councillors Rob Owens, Aubrey Oliver, Cat Hornsey and Jeremy Milln (from 6.10 pm)

Attending: Steve Kerry, Town Clerk

CBD2021/22.32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Boulter and Powell

CBD2021/22.33 SUBSTITUTIONS

None

CBD2021/22.34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CBD2021/22.35 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by Councillor Owens, seconded by Councillor Oliver and

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 23 November be accepted as a true record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

CBD2021/22.36 BUSINESS PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

The Chair thanked the Clerk for producing a business plan which had a very strong green theme running through it.

Members discussed the application of impact assessments to a number of areas of council activity. It was reported that Anna Darwood gave a superb presentation to the County Councillor, John Harrington at the Youth Council meeting, on Bristol City Council's approach to environmental issues and it was agreed that she be invited to do it again to the Committee. The Clerk will contact Ben Lea to arrange this.

When reviewing grants policies, it will be important to look at how energy is used, for example electric rather than petrol mowers, as well as seeking explicitly green grants such as the support for the Castle Green pavilion heat exchanger. There was a suggestion about purchasing LED lights for distribution to families in fuel poverty, but also some debate about who effective they were in domestic settings, and no firm resolution was reached.

It was noted that the Committee has the delegated power to approve small biodiversity schemes in parks and other open spaces. For example, the gardens at Saxon Hall now have over 100 species of plants, including areas of wildflower planting in the grass. This should be publicised as a model of good practice. All the allotment spaces offered on the site have been taken up and have proved very popular because they are smaller, and thus more manageable, than the ones offered on the council's sites by the Allotments Society. It was noted that the litter bins are in a very poor state and as all the older ones have the City crest on them people assume they are still our responsibility. The Clerk referred to the programme some years ago of increasing the number of bins which were purchased by the

City Council but are the responsibility now of Herefordshire Council as the highway authority. Members could consider this as a possible investment of accumulated balances and reserves, and a meeting was taking place next week to look at this in more detail.

The Mayor referred to an email circulated by Councillor Kenyon with some proposals regarding transport. The Committee did not feel that the idea of replacing the Mayor's car, which is a hybrid, with a rickshaw or other pedalled vehicle was sensible, and nor did they feel that intervening in how individual staff get to work was appropriate. In fact, staff are already walking to work where they can, and car sharing, and of the two longer distance commuters, one uses the train and the other has no public transport option to consider. The City Council has established good green credentials by scrapping the roadshow vehicle, replacing the Mayor's car with a hybrid and leveraging in £1.7m of government funds for electric buses and agreeing a budget strategy that would secure their revenue costs for the foreseeable future. It was noted that one of the deterrents to more walking and cycling is the darkness of some areas, most notably the paths across Bishop's Meadow which otherwise are an excellent option for healthy travel from south of the river into the City. Improving the lighting, noting the need for down lighting so as not to add to light pollution, would be a tangible way of positively encouraging healthier and more environmentally sustainable transport choices. Effective enforcement against pavement parking and inconsiderate contractors who block pavements, but do not create safe walkways around their works would also help.

Referring to site and building management issues, the Committee noted that as part of the consideration for the future of the town hall we should investigate the possibility of a better location for the car, and a more suitable use for the coach house which was part of the heritage site and a significant building in its own right. The Council could support the lobby for VAT relief on renovation and restoration of buildings as the tax regime at present actually encourages owners to allow buildings to become so dilapidated, they can be demolished, and sites sold. Solar power for allotment toilets was also an area worth considering.

Regarding sources of expertise to help with environmental impact assessments, Cllr Milln had a useful contact he would follow up.

CD2021/22.37 RIVER QUALITY UPDATE

The Clerk reported that the Welsh Community Council, that cover Builth Wells, had passed the resolution previously passed by the City Council, as had Ross Town Council and now Herefordshire Council had supported this too. The local MP had asked a question of the Prime Minister, followed by the MP for Ludlow who is also Chair of the Environment Select Committee on the same topic, and obtained a somewhat ambiguous answer that indicated that the government does understand the need for concerted enforcement action and effective policy between the English government agency responsible and the devolved Welsh government counterparts. It was noted that the planning of recent development just north of Roman Road, on which the City had been consulted as a neighbouring authority, had attenuation ponds built in to alleviate the risk of rainwater overtopping into the sewerage system and causing sewerage to run into the rivers. River action and the Campaign for Rural England were seeking enthusiasts to act as citizen scientists to conduct regular water sampling and we will publicise this and seek a member or officer to volunteer to do this on the River Wye in the City twice weekly.

CBD2021/22.38 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING

Anna Darwood as guest speaker

Open forum for staff ideas

Awards and River Carnival Update

Investigation of mechanical CO2 extraction

Investigation of the use of charcoal as an alternative to coke for Ferrous

Comment about the loss of the Rugby Club hedge in their Stronger Towns Fund bid

CBD2021/22.39 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday April 5 at 6pm at the Town Hall

Signed

Date