

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 28 June 2022
MINUTES OF MEETING

Present Councillor Sue Boulter (Chair) and Councillors Hornsey, Owens, Stevens, Carwardine, Williams, Wilcox and Oliver

In attendance Steve Kerry Town Clerk and Dave Tristram External Funding and Community Support Officer

CD2022/23.1 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

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

RESOLVED That Councillor Boulter is elected as Chair of the Committee for the year 2022/23.

It was proposed by Councillor Owens, seconded by Councillor Carwardine that Councillor Hornsey be elected Vice Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Boulter that Councillor Williams be Vice Chair of the Committee.

On being put to the vote it was, by 5 votes to 3 and

RESOLVED That Councillor Hornsey be elected Vice Chair of the Committee for the year 2022/23.

CD2022/23.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk reported apologies from Councillors Hey, Kenyon and Tyler.

CD2022/23.3 SUBSTITUTIONS

None.

CD2022/23.4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stevens declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 as the non-paid Chair of the Hereford BID.

Councillor Boulter declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 as the spouse of a plot holder on one the City allotments operated by the Hereford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.

Both interests were duly entered into the register.

CD2022/23.5 HEREFORD BID CHRISTMAS REPORT

The Chair welcomed Mike Truelove, the BID Chief Executive, who presented the report which had been circulated with the agenda. In answer to questions a number of additional points were noted.

There are two film clip adverts for the Gift Card, which are quite expensive to produce. They will be recycled although, if possible, a new female shopper will be used as the current one in one film looks very miserable.

There was a detailed explanation of how the footfall counting works, how it avoids double counting as people come in and out of the city and how, within the constraints of GDPR, it is

possible to identify new and one-off visitors (who may well be tourists) from shopping or working regulars.

Shopping trends up to Christmas have changed with the pre-Christmas rush starting much later than it used to. Five free Wednesday evenings is not the most helpful parking concession, this year it will be three, with a free Saturday after 10am in February for Valentine's.

The report was formally noted.

CD2022.6 HEREFORD BID THREE YEAR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Mike Truelove introduced this proposal and reviewed the seven-year history of the BID and the changes made last year to dramatically improve the Christmas offer, with a 300% increase in budget and world class performers being brought onto the streets. The BID is constituted to run to 2025, hence the suggestion for a three-year agreement to give stability to the finances and clarity for budgeting, both to the BID and the Council. In addition to the circulated paper notes there was also a short video presentation. A key feature of the proposal this year is the Nutcracker Trail which was described in some detail.

In answer to questions a number of additional points were noted.

The accounts are prepared by Thorn Widgery who do the day to day bookkeeping, and there is no legal requirement for them to be independently audited. The usual proportion of budget spent on salaries is around one third, but last year it was higher as staff were kept on to do developmental work while activities were curtailed due to COVID-19 restrictions. There is a surplus in the accounts which will be largely spent in the current life span, with an amount retained to fund a ballot and campaign for a reconstituting of the BID for a third term when that falls due.

The plans for a Ferris wheel and carousel have not been successful. The restrictions of space and the high cost of moving planters has made it impossible for the fairground supplier to bring the equipment in and have enough space for a Christmas Village from which he will make enough income to cover the cost.

It was confirmed that although listed on the agenda as a bid for £7,000 pa it is now £8,000 pa as stated in the detailed application.

Support from the City Council is frequently acknowledged and appears on all promotional literature, signs, etc. at events. About 300 gift cards have been issued and the support of the City Council's TIC in selling these is much appreciated. Sadly, Herefordshire Council has not been very helpful in getting sales from the Old House or the libraries. The COVID-19 recovery grant of £10,000 was obtained from Herefordshire Council using central government funding and there is no doubt about the group's entitlement to it.

Partnership working with the City Council, for example around Hereford AppleFest, stands the BID in good stead when it comes to seeking funding from Herefordshire Council from the economic development pot, and hopefully will also persuade the Herefordshire Tourism BID to make a contribution, as some of the Christmas events will be outside the city centre BID area.

The three year SLA will be subject to an annual report and a decision to release funds using the well-tried model we have for Close House and CCTV. The main draw for Christmas will be the high quality street entertainment and there is already liaison with the Three Choirs organisers about the community bandstand idea. It was noted that traders will only be able

to take advantage of all this effort if they remain open and put their displays, etc. in good order. The vacancy rate for shops is exactly where it was in 2016, and while improvement would have been welcomed, standing still through COVID-19 and the failure of a number of national chains is an achievement in its own right. It had been a long hard slog to achieve this.

Members thanked Mr Truelove for the BID's continuing efforts to maintain and enhance the vibrancy of the city centre.

It was proposed by Councillor Hornsey, seconded by Councillor Wilcox and, with Councillor Stevens abstaining,

RESOLVED That the application for a grant of £8,000 for Christmas events in 2022 and for a Service Level Agreement for the same amount for the same purpose in 2024 and 2025 be referred to Council with the Committee's recommendation that the proposals be approved.

CD2022/23.7 ALLOTMENT ISSUES AND GRANT REQUEST

The Chair welcomed Derek Mumford, a trustee of the Hereford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners to the meeting and he apologised that the Treasurer Val Simms was not able to be at this meeting.

The Clerk introduced his report which highlighted some issues where full information was known and decisions could be made, and some where there were still queries and he found it difficult to offer advice to the committee. The water containers had not all been installed as the trustee who had undertaken to do that work had resigned and left the job unfinished. Thus, the full benefit of the water retention on the water charges had not been felt. Likewise, the request to return the large mower to the supplier and seek to redeploy the Council's grant to purchase a number of smaller mowers was the result of the same trustee/contractor not delivering a reliable service. A contract had been let for mowing, with the contractor previously used by the Council and Mr Mumford reported that this was going well, although the plan was to replace this provision with the smaller mowers. The Clerk reported that when Councillor Kenyon sent his apologies, he also asked that a suggestion that the Council retains the larger mower and moves it to another community or sports group might be a better solution, than getting a reduced value trade in. The issue of how to fund grass cutting and other issues such as water charges could be considered more fully when all the information was to hand.

The composting toilet had been a success, it reduces water use which is both financially and environmentally advantageous and produces usable compost. The Clerk recommended that he be authorised to continue to enter into agreements with HALG to install more of these as suggested in the correspondence. In answer to a query about the VAT reclaim on part-funded assets, the Clerk undertook to take specialist advice before the VAT reclaim was submitted at the half year to HMRC, to make sure the Council was in full compliance with the regulations.

After hearing Mr Mumford's account of the situation with the grass cutting, members decided to amend the recommendations in the original report and to make decisions on composting toilets and the completion of the installation of the water containers whilst considering the final general grant application at their next meeting. He also confirmed that the ban on slug pellets and other harmful insecticides and weed killers was in force on all sites.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Williams, and, with Councillor Boulter abstaining,

RESOLVED That the Committee asks the Clerk and Councillor Kenyon to discuss with the trustees and to try and bring all matters, including a resolution of the issue of the large mower and the grant, into a single report and proposal for consideration at the October meeting of this Committee, with support from other officers of the Council, if that would be helpful.

That while these discussions are taking place, the Clerk is authorised to spend up to his delegated authority limit to support the installation of composting toilets and the completion of the water retention scheme to achieve immediate financial and environmental benefits.

CD2022/23.8 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Boulter, seconded by Councillor Stevens and unanimously

RESOLVED That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1(2) the press and public be excluded for the meeting as the next item will require the disclosure of commercially sensitive information.

CD2022/23.9 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Clerk reminded members that the confidentiality was around the details of each of the competitive bids and that members must not pass information to bidders about the contents of other bids. Once a decision was made it, and the discussion that led to it, would be in the public domain.

Four bids had been received, and three had been circulated by email to members, one was too late to do that. All four were available to be viewed on the projector. All four bids were shown to members and their observations noted.

The two proposals from Festive Lighting were considered to offer the best aesthetic solution especially given the possibility of using some of Option One which is more conservative in style and some of Option Two which is very bright and modern. The Clerk reported that the potential partners in achieving a single design theme throughout the City, British Land for the Old Market shopping centre and Herefordshire Council for Maylords, had also indicated a preference for either of Festive's designs, with the designs from Blachere in second place. Members then reviewed the costs of the four bids and noted that Festive was the most financially advantageous across the life of the contract, as well as the more aesthetically pleasing.

It was proposed by Councillor Boulter, seconded by Councillor Stevens and unanimously

RESOLVED That the Clerk notifies Festive Lighting that they are the preferred bidder and convenes a meeting with the partners in the City and the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee to resolve the details of mixing and matching between Option One and Option Two in each area.

CD2022/23.10 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Confidential business having been completed it was proposed by Councillor Boulter, seconded by Councillor Williams and unanimously

RESOLVED To readmit the press and public.

CD2022/23.11 URGENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE HEREFORD FOOD BANK

The Clerk briefly introduced the report which he hoped was largely self-explanatory. The Chair added that she had been approached about an urgent item and had agreed it should be placed on the agenda. Councillor Stevens has been appointed as an ambassador by the Food Bank and updated the Committee on the continuing falling off in donations as many families are unable to fund their own food and toiletry purchases and still make a contribution. The local supermarkets do run collection trollies but Tesco send their items to Birmingham as part of a corporate policy, it is not used locally. The problem is as urgent and severe as described in the report.

The Chair added that she was very much in favour of an immediate grant but less sure that a Service Level Agreement for a fixed amount each month was the best solution in a rapidly changing situation. Members also discussed her need to apply some restrictions on 'use by' or 'sell by' dates, but that there was some flexibility if food could be safely given away that a supermarket would not consider selling. It was noted that the Food Bank is continuing to provide fresh fruit in all its boxes which is to be commended. They are also building links with local farmers about surplus fresh produce and will be talking to HALG about surplus allotment produce.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Hornsey and unanimously

RESOLVED That the Committee accepts that there is a valid reason for this matter to be taken as urgent and agrees to consider it at this meeting.

That the Committee agrees to an immediate grant of £4,000 to the Hereford Food Bank to meet urgent needs to purchase groceries to maintain the service.

That the Committee mandates the Clerk and the External Funding and Community Support Officer to engage with the management of the Food Bank and bring a proposal for ongoing financial support to the organisation to the meeting of this Committee scheduled for 12 October 2022.

CD2022/23.12 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Financial support for the Food Bank 12/10/22

HALG Grant 12/10/22

Grants received 11/07/22

CD2022/23.13 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Monday 11 July 2022 at 10am Grants Agenda (Noted that the Chair will be sending apologies and the Vice Chair will be presiding at this meeting.)

Monday 19 September at 10am Grants Agenda

Tuesday 12 October at 6pm General Agenda

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.05pm

Signed

Date