

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE 21 March 2023

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Mark Dykes, Councillor Paul Stevens (Chair) and Councillors Sue Boulter, Polly Andrews, Kevin Tillett, Cat Hornsey, Diana Toynbee, Brian Wilcox and Aubrey Oliver

In attendance Steve Kerry Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

PR2022/23.46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillor Rob Williams.

PR2022/23.47 SUBSTITUTION

None.

PR2022/23.48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

PR2022/23.49 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Andrews and unanimously

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 10 January be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

PR2022/23.50 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The schedule of payments since the last meeting was presented. Queries were raised on two items.

On the civic apparel the Clerk explained that the civic hats were in a poor condition and so a batch of twelve new ones had been purchased. This covered hats for men and women and for those who had been Mayor and those who had not. With elections coming there needed to be some spare capacity as we have no way of knowing the gender balance of the new council nor how many former mayors would be in the new council. The only known factor was that over the next four years there would be three new former mayors compared to the starting number.

The leases on the defibrillators had not yet terminated but we are near the end of the term. The Clerk would do a report into options before any decisions were made to renew, purchase outright or make some other arrangements.

With these matters resolved the schedule of payments was noted.

PR2022/23.51 BANK RECONCILIATIONS

The bank reconciliations for completed months since the last meeting were presented. There were no queries, and the reconciliations were noted.

PR2022/23.52 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Clerk presented the proposed investment strategy including retention of the deposit account with CCLA for short term holdings of surplus monies and the retention of the CCLA

Local Authority Property Fund as the place for long term investment of strategic reserves. He noted that CCLA continued to have a high credit rating and was offering competitive rates for deposits. The Council had a fiduciary duty to seek to maximise income whilst retaining a high degree of safety around its investments which must be in institutions, covered by British banking law. The report detailed changes to the amounts invested on deposit and in the property fund and brought these figures up to date.

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

RESOLVED That the Committee readopts the current strategy, with the amendments to the specified investment and to the amount invested in the long term investment.

PR2022/23.53 REVIEW AND REAPPROVAL OF POLICIES

The Clerk presented a number of internal policies which are due for renewal. These were based principally on policies from our payroll provider Shropshire Council, cross checked against Herefordshire Council to capture any changes in legislation or professional advice. Any policies which had been operated in the previous period would also be reviewed to see how well they had worked in practice.

- a) **Bank Holidays for Part-Time Staff.** No changes and agreed.
- b) **Grievance Procedure.** No cases to report and no changes indicated by external HR advice, agreed with no amendments.
- c) **Information and Data Protection Policy.** Noted that the requirement to retain training records for fifty years seems odd. The Clerk will check and revise this if it is an error, otherwise no changes required. Agreed.
- d) **Parental and Dependant Child Care Policy.** No indications that any changes were required. Agreed without amendment. (It was noted that legislation may be about to change regarding unpaid parental leave entitlements, the Clerk would check and amend as and when legislation was enacted.)
- e) **Social Media.** No changes to the policy required. The Clerk and Councillor Hornsey would check with the Youth Council to see if any of them were using Tik Tok and if any advice needed to be given.
- f) **Whistle Blowing.** No changes to the policy required. The Clerk would check its plain English and see if some simplified practice notes for those wishing to use it needed to be issued.

PR2022/23.54 EMAILS FOR MEMBERS

The Clerk presented the report and explained the advantages of having a discreet email address for parish councillors. Firstly, it enabled a clear identification of what was, and what was not City Council correspondence. This has important implications for the Nolan standards and for possible issues around personal conduct in public life. It also made it much easier to manage Freedom of Information Act requests by making those items which should be covered by the Act clearly separate from those which should not be. Finally, it would enhance the identity of the City Council as distinct from Herefordshire Council if emails from our twin hatted members especially were clearly delineated. Members could choose to have emails diverted onto a single address for their convenience if they wanted to and the Council's IT adviser would assist them to set this up, whilst retaining the distinct address for external communications.

A query was raised about Cyber Essentials accreditation, the Clerk would look into this, and the recommendations would be amended to include this point.

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

RESOLVED That upon election, all members will be issued with a standard City Council email address based on one initial, their surname and the herefordcitycouncil.gov.uk address.

That officers will only use this address for all official correspondence from the Council and will give it out to the public to use as a contact address.

That officers and the Council's IT support provider will assist any member who wishes to set up a single inbox to review all their incoming messages to one or more personal addresses as well as the City Council one in such a way that the identity of the City Council correspondence remains distinct.

That the Clerk will look into the Cyber Essentials accreditation and take advice as to whether this is a useful step, and report to a future meeting of the Committee.

PR2022/23.55 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To enable the discussion of a confidential item it was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Andrews and unanimously

RESOLVED That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s 1(2) the press and public now be excluded from the meeting to enable a confidential matter to be discussed.

The discussion that followed regarding the grading of an individual member of staff was confidential and is covered in separate minutes (PR2022/23.56). The regrading was agreed.

PR2022/23.56 READMISSION OF THE RPRESS AND PUBLIC

Confidential business having been concluded, the Chair affirmed that the meeting was again open to the press and public.

PR2022/23.57 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 6 June 2023 at 6pm.

The Chair noted that, as the next meeting was after the elections, the two long serving members who were standing down at the elections, Councillors Brian Wilcox and Aubrey Oliver, were at their last meeting. He thanked them for their many years of service on the committee and for the quality and frequency of their contributions over that time. Their experience and knowledge of financial and procedural matters had been greatly appreciated and would be missed. He added that it had been a pleasure and privilege to chair the Committee, firstly as Finance and Policy and then as the combined Policy and Resources Committee and he thanked all members for courteous and constructive debates on many issues.

The Committee expressed thanks to Councillors Oliver and Wilcox and to the Chair.

Signed

Date