



## HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 13 June 2023

#### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present:** The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Jacqui Carwardine and Councillors Hornsey (Chair), Hobbs, Stevens, Potts, Proctor, Griffiths and Boulter.

**Attending:** Steve Kerry Town Clerk, Dave Tristram External Funding and Community Support Officer.

#### **CD2023/24.16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Clerk reported apologies from Councillors Jim Kenyon and Adam Spencer.

#### **CD2023/24.17 SUBSTITUTIONS**

The Clerk reported that Councillor Kenyon had nominated Councillor Foxton, but it was not clear if she would be able to attend as she had another meeting at Plough Lane.

#### **CD2023/24.18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were made.

#### **CD2023/24.19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Clerk reported that it had been practice to bring minutes of Grants meetings to the next routine agenda meeting. There had been a plethora of Grants meeting recently and no routine agenda meetings, so several sets of historic minutes were now being presented. In future each committee would receive the minutes of the previous one whether it was a Grant agenda or a routine one to avoid a backlog building up again.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Carwardine and

**RESOLVED That the minutes of the meetings of 18 October 2022, and the Grants meetings of 3 October 2022, 10 October 2022, 28 November 2022, 6 February 2023 and 6 March 2023 be agreed as accurate records and signed accordingly by the Chair.**

#### **CD2023/24.20 HEREFORD IN BLOOM**

As the deputation from HiB had arrived, the Chair agreed to move this item up the agenda.

Kevin began by explaining the brief history of HiB and their success. Recently they had encountered a problem that the soil in the large beds was past its useful life and could not simply be topped up, but needed replacing, this was a major undertaking. He introduced Ellie, who is a professional horticulturalist, who has joined the group and is advising on how best to

do this. It was further explained that it is intended over the next three or four years to dig out all the soil in four sites, replace it with new topsoil and put in suitable plants which would be durable and would thrive in the specific site conditions. For the bed near the Old House, an oriental theme was suggested and a hand drawing of how that might look was circulated. For beds elsewhere, other planting would be suitable. It was noted that the bed near the Kerry public house was particularly exposed to traffic fumes and poorly sheltered, so very durable Mediterranean type planting would be used here. The cost was variable as the beds were not all the same size, but depending on size, indicative costs were between £5,000 for the smallest and £10,000 for the largest, giving a total projected outlay of between £25,000 and £40,000 for the whole project. Work would normally be undertaken in the Autumn.

In answers to question, further information was noted. The group do not have specific costing, only very outline figures. If the Council agreed to fund all the activity in one year using contractors, it might achieve some economies of scale, but it might overwhelm the group in terms of planting and setting the new beds. The project might well be suitable for an application to Awards for All who are just about to raise their small grants ceiling figure. The External Funding Officer will advise and assist the group to make an application to spread the cost of the project. The group are looking for agreement in principle so they can know it will be worthwhile investing volunteers' time in bringing this project forward with full costings and designs. There was a good prospect of involving young people in the delivery of this project, especially as several of the beds were very close to Close House.

The Chair thanked the members of HiB for attending the meeting and answering questions. Members then considered how to respond. Initially there were two proposals but after discussion the proposers agreed a combined form of words which would be presented to committee as a single proposal.

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

**RESOLVED That the Committee supports the Hereford in Bloom project to renew key flower beds in the city in principle.**

**That subject to detailed costs being identified, the Committee welcome a request for funding for the bed nearest to the Old House as the first stage in the project and anticipates agreeing to fund this as soon as the costs are confirmed.**

**That the Committee supports an application being made to Awards for All for the remaining beds and will positively welcome an application for funding after Awards for All have been approached to support this project going forward.**

#### **CD2023/24.21 CHANGES TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The Clerk explained that any changes to the remit of the Committee, or which affected other committees, would require approval from full Council. He would be asking all committees to reflect on their role and practice and would bring a report to Council in September for final approval. In answer to a question, it was confirmed that matters which purely affected how this committee operates could be agreed and introduced more rapidly than that.

The first matter discussed was service level agreements. Some of these were in the nature of ongoing contracts and could be monitored through the Policy and Resources Committee,

subject to a change in the terms of reference agreed at Council. There was some discussion about whether some SLAs were more obviously recurring grants for community projects over three or four years and should remain with the Community Development Committee. The Clerk advised that this would only be a difficulty if it was not made clear at the outset whether a matter would be referred to P&R or remain with CD Committee. The Chair of P&R confirmed that he would have no difficulty recommending this when that committee considers its role as part of the overall review.

Discussion then turned to whether grant applications could be accepted from groups already in receipt of SLAs. The general view was that this was not a problem as long as the grant application was a separate project or activity and not an extension of the existing SLA, the two things must be clearly separate and given specific consideration on their own merits. Where an SLA was remitted to P&R for monitoring, it would still come to CD Cttee at the end of the agreement if there was a proposal for a new SLA or an extension. It was noted that the workload of the Committee was becoming onerous in terms of the number of grants coming through and that something needed to be done to reduce that load or streamline the process, perhaps both.

The role of the Climate and Biodiversity Committee in terms of how it affects community development was discussed. It was noted that several of the grants agreed at CD Committee were for specific local nature and biodiversity projects, but that the C&BD Committee only had a very small budget. The Clerk confirmed that it would be perfectly in order for Council to agree to change the remit of C&BD Committee to give it wider role in awarding grants for biodiversity projects. It was unlikely, given the global scale of the climate emergency, that there would be many local climate change projects, but not impossible. It would however require a virement of budget to give effect to this. The Clerk would discuss this with the C&BD members and cover it in his final report to Council.

Members then discussed the time it takes to review grants at Committee. The Clerk suggested that they could reduce that by eliminating the presentations and rely solely on applications, as many grant awarding bodies do. Members did not want to go that far. It was suggested that some grants could be considered to be complete and could be judged on their merits solely on the application form, others would require more checking and should be the subject of presentations and questions. The difficulty was how to decide which applications were in which category. All those who had filled in applications in this cycle had already been told they would be required to do a presentation and had therefore preprepared their applications with that in mind. The Chair alone, nor the Chair and Vice Chair, could not determine this, and it was not appropriate to leave it to officers to second guess members' wishes. It was eventually decided that the only way to do this openly and democratically was for dates to be adjusted for committees so that the Tuesday evening meetings could decide which of the grants received would be the subject of a request for a presentation. Meanwhile the wording of grants applications could be modified to delete "will" and insert "may" to make it clear the presentation was an option not a certainty. This would require a rescheduling of meetings of the committees in the September cycle to be given effect. It was also noted that members must apply a strict ten-minute limit to presentations and people will be cut off after that. In addition, ten minutes for questions was reasonable which would require members to ask brief focussed questions and accept answers, not engage in ongoing debates with the applicants where this would prevent others from raising their questions in the time allowed. The

possibility of requiring a presentation automatically for anything over £3,000 was discussed but was not supported as a rule, it was more the quality of information presented in the applications that should determine whether a presentation was necessary.

The issues of electronic circulation of agendas and related papers was discussed. A resolution had been passed by council some time ago to set this up, but it had allowed for members to demur from it and ask for hard copies. Sufficient members had done that to make any saving in paper negligible, but to create confusion about who wanted what in what format for what meeting making it too difficult to operate. In addition, some members requested papers electronically and then asked for hard copies at meetings because they hadn't brought a PC or couldn't log on to get it up for review. If all members of a committee agreed to a way of circulating papers (as Planning Committee have done) it can be done, but trying to have different protocols for different members was unworkable.

Among the applications currently scheduled for consideration it was noted that one or two might not meet the grant criteria at all, in which case the officers would advise the applicants that their bids would not go to members. This was standard practice now and should continue.

It was suggested that to save paper it is possible to hold background papers such as constitutions, accounts, etc in the office and send agenda and applications out to members. Background papers would be held in the office for members to come in and peruse. The Clerk added a caution that all members must be in a position to consider all relevant information so it was important that members availed themselves of the opportunity to check background papers as if only one or two do this and then raise questions at the meeting others will not know what the discussion is about and be unable to play a full part in it. It was important that if this is introduced that staff were not then asked to send copies to some members and not others, either everyone is sent everything or everyone is sent the application and the background documents are available on the same basis to everyone, in the same way that we currently deal with grant completion forms.

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

**RESOLVED That the dates of meetings in the September cycle be altered to allow for pre-consideration of which applications for grants needed presentations and for those that did not, we offer the opportunity to be considered on the basis of their applications alone.**

**That where presentations do take place, they will be strictly time limited and members will also work within a strict time limit for questions.**

**That as part of the wider review of committee roles the CD Committee supports the suggestion of moving some SLAs to the monitoring of P&R Committee and some wildlife, planting and other "green" projects to the remit of C&BD Committee with a commensurate virement of funds to make it effective.**

**That if the whole committee commits to receiving papers electronically this will be implemented.**

**That details of grant applications only will be sent to all members of the Committee and a set of background papers will be held at the office to be available for members to read before the meeting, if they wish to do so.**

#### **CD2023/24.22 HEREFORD ALLOTMENTS AND LEISURE GARDENERS' ANNUAL GRANT**

The Clerk introduced this item and explained that HALG receive an annual grant as shown in their budget proposal. This is outside the normal run of grant applications. This had been frozen for some years and the Society undertake some areas that used to be covered by the Council themselves, notably mowing grass paths and pruning some of the hedges. In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the only hedge the City Council prunes is the street facing Holmer allotment hedge, as it is very long and very quickly obstructs the footway if it is not pruned three or four times a year. There was a separate one off job to cut the hedge back from the roadway at Holmer for road safety – otherwise hedges were pruned by HALG members or by contractors they engage. Large trees were looked after by the Council using a suitably qualified tree surgeon.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Proctor and (with Councillor Boulter abstaining)

**RESOLVED That the annual grant to HALG of £7,053 be approved.**

#### **CD2023/24.23 BLUE PLAQUES**

The Clerk presented two suggestions from the community for blue plaques, one to commemorate John Parker the City Engineer and Surveyor from 1881 to 1919 who had a major impact on providing clean water and efficient drainage and sewerage to the growing city, and the other to commemorate the site of the formation of the Herefordshire Football Association in time for their 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. The last time plaques had been ordered they were £290 from a company in Buxton, Derbyshire. If the Committee approved either or both installations, the Clerk would see if there was a local foundry who could match the price, allowing for inflation since the last one four years ago.

It was suggested by the Chair that both agenda items be taken together, and this was informally agreed.

It was proposed by Councillor Potts, seconded by Councillor Hobbs and unanimously

**RESOLVED That where the property owners agree, blue plaques be ordered and installed, as set out in the report to commemorate the work of John Parker and the formation of the Herefordshire Football Association.**

#### **CD2023/24.24 EXTERNAL FUNDING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER'S REPORT**

The External Funding and Community Support Officer reported that last year the full grants budget of £100,000 had been spent. This year's budget of £150,000 should be adequate. So far £23,000 has been spent and £39,000 is under consideration for the next meeting. There is no need to advertise the grants policy, there are plenty of applications. Much of his time has been spent supporting the Town Hall project, especially the tortuous process of evaluating 18 applications to carry out the feasibility study on the Town Hall.

In addition to the Town Hall work he had responded to 31 possible grant applications since last year. He advised the Committee of significant changes to lottery funding, moving from three categories to two and changing the cash limits that apply. He had been invited to join the

trustees of HVOSS and would be attending the next Herefordshire Funders Meeting in July. He would also be at the Talk Communities capital funding meeting.

With the Tourism and Communications Manager Connor Powell, he had prepared a case study of our grant award to a primary school for outdoor equipment and site development, and this would be on our social media soon, with others to follow. This would emphasise the positive impact of the City Council on the community.

There was a suggestion of not allowing groups who had come for grants to come back with another application for two years, but this was not supported and would not be added to the discussion regarding processing grants.

**CD2023/24.25 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Changes to terms of reference for the Committee and procedure for grants

Mapping community assets and needs\*

Community commissioning through BBLP\*

List of blue and green plaques – note since the meeting it seems this already exists

\*Councillor Proctor to discuss with the Clerk before the next meeting.

**CD2023/24.26 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Community Development Committee – Tuesday 5 September 2023 – 6pm

Community Development Grants Committee – Monday 18 September 2023 – 9.30am

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Signed .....

Date .....