



## HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

### POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE 4 JULY 2023

#### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present:** Councillor Paul Stevens (Chair), and Councillors Mark Dykes, Debbie Hobbs, Rob Owens, Kevin Tillett and Diana Toynbee.

**Attending:** Steve Kerry, Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

#### **PR2023/24.14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were noted from Councillors Andrews, Hornsey and Potts.

#### **PR2023/24.15 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Owens was substituting for Councillor Hornsey. The Chair thanked Councillor Owens for attending.

#### **PR2023/24.16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **PR2023/24.17 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

**RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 6 June be accepted as a true record and signed accordingly by the Chair.**

#### **PR2023/24.18 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Clerk presented the schedule of payments made since the last meeting of the Committee. There were no questions, and the schedule was noted.

#### **PR2023/24.19 BANK RECONCILIATIONS**

Reconciliations for all accounts held by the Council were presented. There were no questions, the reconciliations were noted.

#### **PR2023/24.20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

In order to enable the discussion of a confidential item which referred to personal details of identified members of staff, it was proposed by Councillor Tillett, seconded by Councillor Owens and unanimously

**RESOLVED That in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s 1(2) that the press and public be excluded to enable confidential business to be discussed.**

## **PR2023/24.21 STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS**

**These minutes give an account of the discussion as far as is possible without revealing confidential details. A more detailed version has been prepared and is filed separately.**

The Clerk introduced the report, explaining that following the departure of the Tourism and Communications Manager a series of temporary working arrangements had been sanctioned by the Committee and put in place. This had taken some time as there had been two external recruitments; a temporary Administrative Officer and a Cleaner. The purpose of the report was to review the working of those temporary arrangements and propose permanent arrangements. The temporary arrangements had been very successful, and the Clerk circulated some pictures of before and after some of the Parlour silverware had been cleaned and also a summary of social media activity undertaken by the Information and Communications Officer in his acting up role. The additional duties undertaken by the Reception and Information Officer had also worked well and there was sufficient administrative resource to support the Council's key events and programmes of work. He asked members to bear in mind that while each proposal for each member of staff required a separate decision, the proposals were linked, so altering the arrangements for one member of staff would probably have some knock on effects for others that would need to be resolved. The gist of the proposal was to make the current temporary arrangements permanent. The grades allocated were based on the known job evaluated levels of jobs which have been done in the past. The Council has had many jobs created and modified over the years and has thus built up a good knowledge of how particular levels of work come out of the job evaluation system. Each job is assigned a grade which normally has four pay points on what is known as the spinal column. Staff progress from bottom to top of the points in their grade and then remain at the top point unless they are upgraded.

In addition to the allocation of grades to posts, there is also a proposal for a personal increment to be awarded to one member of staff. This is something that can be done where a member of staff is working at a higher level but not sufficiently so to warrant a full regrading. This does not affect the grading of the post as such, it is a personal preserved payment of one additional spinal column point.

Councillor Tillett noted that on a recent visit to the Parlour he had observed that it is in very good condition with everything looking bright and polished. He enquired about the financial implications of the proposals. The Clerk clarified that the costs of the regradings would be set against the fact that the post of Information and Communications Officer vacated by the acting officer would not be filled and would therefore be a saving to set against the increases. He anticipated that this would be broadly balanced to zero.

Regarding the proposals for a member of staff to work on Saturdays in the Tourist Information Centre it was noted that there might be options to seek volunteers from the group who are currently providing guides to the Silver Museum on Wednesdays. When we advertise, we will use Hereford Voice as it appears to have better coverage than the Hereford Times as well as using our own social media. We are able to put our own information on the website, DM Labs provide hosting services, not editorial ones. It was noted we could do more to publicise Mayoral events before they take place rather than resumes and photographs after the event.

The practice of trying staff out in temporary roles to see how they cope before making permanent appointments was becoming quite widespread. With the difficulties in recruitment

noted not only at the council, but by many other employers developing the skills and capacities of current staff was a sensible way forward.

A series of recommendations specific to each member of staff was considered and resolved, details of which appear in the confidential minutes as they disclose personal information about the remuneration of specific individuals.

#### **PR2023/24.22 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

**RESOLVED That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.**

#### **PR2023/24.23 MOBILE PHONES FOR MEMBERS**

This item had been requested by Councillor Boulter who was absent from the meeting. Several members commented that they already had more than one phone and adding another one for limited City Council use would not be helpful. The total cost of providing phones for all City Council members was in the region of £3,500-£4,000 per annum.

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

**RESOLVED Not to purchase mobile phones for the use of members of the City Council.**

#### **PR2023/24.24 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND ROLES**

The Clerk gave a brief update on the debates at Community Development and Climate and Biodiversity Committees about their current roles, and the possibility of moving some grants from environmental projects, and the budget to fund them, to Climate and Biodiversity Committee. There had also been a discussion at Community Development about some of the Service Level Agreements which were for service contracts such as CCTV with Herefordshire Council and the Community Enforcement Officer coming under Policy and Resources Committee. A discussion was yet to be had with Planning Committee about their role in dealing with planning and licensing applications and this would take place in August, before a report was presented in the September cycle to Policy and Resources and then to full Council for agreement. When new Committee roles were created it would be possible for any members who now felt they wished to take part in a meeting which had become more germane to their personal areas of interest to seek election, and this might mean some committees changing size as well as their remits.

Members noted the progress so far with the review.

#### **PR2023/24.25 GREEN BAGS**

The Clerk presented a report on developing difficulties with the supply of green bags for garden waste. This is not a City Council function, it was something we undertook to be of assistance to the public, but as Herefordshire Council reduced their outlets so that there is now nowhere people could go to buy bags over the counter for cash (unless they used shops which charged a considerable mark-up) demand at the Tourist Information Centre was reaching the point where it was compromising the work of the Centre. The response so far to requests for a streamlined stock control and ordering system with a monthly invoice for settlement had not been helpful and this exacerbated the difficulty.

To avoid the need for a special meeting in the summer the Clerk sought delegated authority to terminate the arrangement with Herefordshire if the current difficulties could not be resolved or if demand for bags becomes a serious operational issue at the TIC.

Councillor Dykes reported that the community centre adjacent to his ward had also pulled out of selling green bags on behalf of Herefordshire because of the difficulties in establishing a workable stock ordering and invoicing system.

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

**RESOLVED**

**That the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to cease the sale of green bags from the Tourist Information Centre if:**

**a) The increase in demand resulting from the closure by Herefordshire Council of other outlets means that the effective working of the TIC in its primary role is undermined.**

**or**

**b) The City Council is unable to agree a sensible provision for stock to be maintained by calling it off an open purchase order with invoices settled in 30 days, after they have been issued in line with normal business practice and as a result it is becoming difficult to maintain an adequate level of service.**

**PR2023/24.26 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Review of Committee remits and functions for consideration before Council.

**PR2023/24.27 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 12 September 2023 at 6pm.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting.

Signed .....

Date .....