



## HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE 27 June 2023

### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present:** Councillors Hornsey, Milln, Owens, Powell and Proctor. Also present Councillor Potts, a non-member of the Committee.

**Attending:** Steve Kerry, Town Clerk, Mr Aubrey Oliver a member of the public.

#### **CB2023/24.1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

Councillor Powell proposed and Councillor Hornsey seconded that Councillor Owens be Chair.

Councillor Milln proposed, and Councillor Proctor seconded that Councillor Toynebee be Chair.

On being put to the vote it was, by four votes to one.

**RESOLVED That Councillor Owens be appointed Chair for the municipal year 2023/2024.**

Councillor Hornsey proposed and Councillor Powell seconded that Councillor Proctor be Vice Chair.

Councillor Milln proposed, and Councillor Proctor seconded that Councillor Milln be Vice Chair.

On being put to the vote it was, by four votes to one.

**RESOLVED That Councillor Proctor be appointed Vice Chair for the municipal year 2023/2024.**

#### **CB2023/24.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Toynebee for lateness or absence.

#### **CB2023/24.3 SUBSTITUTIONS**

None.

#### **CB2023/24.4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Powell declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10 as a volunteer at the Rugby Club.

Councillor Owens declared a pecuniary interest in item 9 as an occasional employee of the Wildlife Trust.

#### **CB2023/24.5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Hornsey and with one abstention

**RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 7 February 2023 be accepted as a true record and signed accordingly by the Chair.**

#### **CD2023/24.6 CARBON FOOTPRINT**

The Chair introduced this item. In the discussion it was noted that most small businesses do their own carbon footprint assessments using online analytical tools, which are reasonably easy to operate. It was also noted that the Herefordshire Green Network and the Great Collaboration have useful information on this. In the discussion with Herefordshire Council about a possible asset transfer of the Town Hall, information had been requested about the energy survey of the building but nothing substantial had been forthcoming. Members were keen that we do this and, if possible, find some valid comparators to benchmark performance against. It was important to identify carbon reduction actions we could claim credit for, such as grants for tree planting schemes, as well as assessing carbon production.

It was agreed without a vote that this would be an item of the next meeting and that during the summer the Clerk and other staff would look at the online tools available and use at least one of them to do a proposed carbon footprint analysis.

#### **CB2023/24.7 GRANTS FOR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PROJECTS**

The Clerk reported the discussion that had taken place at Community Development Committee about the possibility, as part of a wider review of committee roles and functions, that some grants could be moved to the Committee. These would be for grants where the primary purpose was either addressing climate change or seeking to enhance biodiversity. Thus, a project to set up a community facility for refugees, which included among several plans, a small vegetable plot, would be a community development initiative, but a plan to create a new wildflower garden which happened to be adjacent to a community centre would be a biodiversity project. The Clerk also explained the new way Community Development Committee have tried dealing with grants with the committee pre-inspecting the applications and deciding which ones needed a presentation and which ones were ready to be considered on the application alone. This has been tested once and had been very successful. If the Committee did take on grants, the Clerk strongly recommended that the Council retains one form and one process, with a decision by officers to direct applications to one or the other committee. To have two separate systems for the public to navigate would be too complex.

Members agreed that transferring some grant making powers, and some budget, to the Climate and Biodiversity Committee was a sensible idea and that it would be good to have a common application form and process. The form itself might need some alteration to invite people to apply specifically for climate change and biodiversity projects and to encourage these, just as it would also be appropriate for the Community Development Committee to consider environmental impact of other grants, for example challenging the use of petrol driven cars and testing where electric alternatives would work.

Mr Oliver raised an example of a grant for lighting for Staddlestone Circle which the Committee felt was a sound idea, but the most significant benefit was community safety and a lowering of fear of crime in accessing a dark space, so it would be for Community Development to consider.

The ratio of budget for general community grants and climate and biodiversity grants had not been set. When the idea was suggested at Community Development the Clerk had suggested

£20-30,000 in a year, and based on a very crude analysis of the current agenda of applications, that might be about right. It would be possible if it turned out to be an over or underestimate to ask Council to vire money from one Committee to another to have a better balance of resources to needs.

It was also noted that it was not wise to try and be too prescriptive about the line between one committee and another, that would be tested and it might need in the light of experience to be drawn differently. Under no circumstances would an applicant be asked to take part of their application to one committee and then repeat the process, nor could one committee commit the resources of another. Each application would have to be on one agenda or another, and the committee receiving the application would deal with it as a single proposal.

Finally, it was noted that the Committee was set up to reduce the workload of the Community Development Committee and the recent increase in the number of grant applications meant this was a timely suggestion.

Members endorsed the Clerk including this in his review of Committee roles and operations and it would be part of the presentation of proposals to Policy and Resources and the Council for final decision in the September cycle of meetings.

#### **CB2023/24.8 CITY COUNCIL ROLE IN TREE MANAGEMENT**

It was noted that Herefordshire Council are not keen to respond on street and parks trees if they can avoid it, most complaints about over growing, shading and roots relate to boundary trees in the parks or the trees on the footways. The biggest issue is wind damage where BBLP will remove fallen or loose branches, but even if they cut the tree, they still leave a stump. They neither lift it, nor grind it down. The Clerk advised that there could be very substantial liabilities in simply taking over trees, although a collaborative approach with Herefordshire might be possible if we had a meeting and established some clear boundaries and got some financial information together to propose to members. It was also noted that we could do a lot more to lobby for trees which are shown as “illustrative” in development plans for housing sites, etc. to be included in the actual conditions of the planning permission.

It was agreed that the Clerk would try and set up a meeting with Herefordshire’s officers to see what might be possible and affordable.

#### **CB2023/24.9 COLLABORATION WITH HEREFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST**

Having declared a pecuniary interest, Councillor Owens left the meeting and Councillor Proctor took the Chair.

It was noted that the Yazor Brook project has grown for a rubbish clearance scheme into a full restoration and habitat enhancing community project of great value. The Council has supported it at various stages with grants. Members were advised that the Trust have now taken a lease on the Bartonsham Meadows from the Church Commissioners and are trying to restore it to true meadow status, noting the ancient monument site within the meadow. It was confirmed that this was not likely to have any effect on the permissive path arrangement the City Council holds in that area, as the Church Commissioners, with whom we have the agreement, are retaining the freehold. The Trust has been awarded £5,000 as part of a Stronger Towns Fund project and had also received support from the local ‘Friends of’ group.

It was agreed that this could well be of interest to the Committee and that the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust could be invited to the next meeting to discuss their plans and how the Committee might be able to help them.

**CB2023/24.10 RUGBY CLUB HEDGE**

It was reported that the Rugby Club had applied last year for planning permission for a new fence and to tear down the existing hedge. They had modified this to simply reducing the hedge where necessary and placing the fence inside the hedge line. However, they had in fact removed the entire hedge. It was noted that this was in a Conservation Area. The tree works application had been for lopping parts of the hedge to enable CCTV to have a clear view, not for complete removal. After discussion it was identified that this could have been a criminal act if there were nesting birds in the hedge, and it would have to have been thoroughly checked for birds before work began to avoid committing an offence. It was also possible that this was a breach of conservation area rules.

The Clerk will follow this up with the relevant officer at Herefordshire Council.

**CB2023/24.11 TIMING OF MEETINGS**

After a very brief discussion it was agreed there was no merit in changing the dates of meetings, Tuesdays suited the current members.

**CB2023/24.12 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Invitation to Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

Carbon Footprint analysis

(Noted that work on the awards to be presented at the River Carnival would continue in the meantime.)

**CB2023/24.13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 26 September 2023 at 6 pm.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting.

Signed .....

Date .....