



HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING - 20 June 2023

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Jacqui Carwardine and Councillors Andrews, Boulter, Dykes (part), Foxton, Griffiths, Hobbs, Hornsey, Milln, Owens, Potts, Proctor, Tillett and Toynbee

Attending: Steve Kerry Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

C2023/24.19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk reported apologies from Councillors Powell, Spencer and Stevens.

C2023/24.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

C2023/24.21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

C2023/24.22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

RESOLVED That the minutes of the Annual Meeting of Council of 16 May 2023 and the Council Meeting of 23 May 2023 be accepted as an accurate record and be signed accordingly by the Mayor.

C2023/24.23 COMMUNITY ENFORCEMENT OFFICER PRESENTATION

The Clerk introduced Fiona Farrington whom the Council funds as an additional Community Enforcement Officer with Herefordshire Council and her line manager Craig Sandman. Fiona explained that she works exclusively in the City either on a rota of patrols or to address specific "grot spots" raised with her by the Clerk after requests from the City Councillors. Her approach was partly education, partly encouragement and also, when necessary, statutory enforcement. This arrangement is now a year old and is going well as far as she is concerned. Craig added some more information about the team as a whole, which has been as low as two staff but is now up to four. They cover mainly fly tipping but also deal with littering, dog fouling, noise, pollution, and all manner of complaints about anti-social behaviour. Sometimes they work with the Police or other agencies to address a problem, often they have the legal powers to deal with it within the team. Craig and Fiona then asked members for their questions and comments.

In answer to questions, the following points were noted. The biggest case they have dealt with was a dump of 26 tons of oil which led to a fine of £35,000. They have done a lot of work on the Council owned traveller site, where some people have taken in industrial or household waste to take to a licensed dump and then fly tipped it. This is time consuming, but three custodial sentences have been handed down in Herefordshire courts recently. This has had a deterrent effect.

There is a new BBLP supervisor who has made a real difference, especially on the Union Street food premises where at 2am the area is swathed in food waste and by 4am is clear. This is helping to contain the seagull problem and proactive encouragement and then enforcement around the use of seagull bags has also been undertaken. There are monthly meetings with the Clerk and anyone with an issue to raise should pass it to the Clerk at any time and it will be taken up straightaway – the monthly meetings are for monitoring. Whittern Way has improved with a more positive attitude by college students including some who act as litter advocates among the rest and enforcement on the trade waste obligations of the local shops. Any enforcement action is taken by Herefordshire which means they keep the fine money, but they also take on the court work debt collection and follow up.

There had undoubtedly been an improvement; this is partly due to the splendid volunteer litter pickers who do so much unpaid work to supplement the main contractor. There is no plan at the County to restart the Task and Finish Group that looked at litter, which unfortunately failed to achieve much because it had no dedicated resource to support its work.

The service does cover the parks and some enforcement actions have been taken in respect of Churchill Gardens. However, drug use is a matter for the Police and intelligence is shared with them for follow up action. The Neighbourhood Policing Teams should be the first port of call for members with any specific concerns about gatherings for drug sharing in their wards.

A dumped caravan can be dealt with as an abandoned vehicle under existing legislation and the service can liaise with the DVLA to track owners and get discarded, or carelessly parked vans removed. Litter and broken glass on a footpath should be passed to the Footpaths Officer at Herefordshire who will organise an emergency collection by BBLP if it is dangerous.

There being no more questions or comments the Mayor thanked Craig and Fiona for all they have done over the year and for coming to the meeting tonight.

C2023/24.24 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Clerk presented the final internal audit report for the financial year 2022-23 which had shown no areas of concern or comment.

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

RESOLVED That the internal audit report be noted.

C2023/24.25 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS, REPORT ON VARIANCES AND CONFIRMATION OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

The Clerk presented the report on the closure of accounts and the commentary on significant variances from last year. This commentary was part of our AGAR and reflected the sharp increase in income from Stronger Towns Fund money passing through the accounts as project costs were paid, as well as more use of the Deposit Account, better rates on that account and increased sales at the TIC. Other variances had also been noted and accounted for.

The Clerk explained the purpose of the AGAR and that there were a number of questions which members must answer to express their satisfaction with the accounts and the Council's financial arrangements. In answer to a question, he stated again that members should consider each of these questions and determine that they are happy to make a positive response. He then read the questions set out on page 4 of the AGAR and explained why, in his view, Council could give positive answers to questions 1-8, noting that question 9 did not apply. In particular, he drew members' attention to the way in which the Council had managed the revenue costs associated with the Hereford Zipper project by making a series of decisions to manage the higher than expected tender returns and to minimise risk. In addition, the internal audit report and the unqualified report of the external auditors last year enable positive answers to relevant questions.

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

RESOLVED That the 2022-23 accounts be accepted and signed accordingly by the Responsible Financial Officer.

That the report on variances for the Financial Year 2022-23 be accepted.

That the AGAR be completed with questions 1-8 on page 4 answered positively and that it be signed accordingly by the Clerk/RFO and the Mayor.

C2023/24.26 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor had no announcements.

C2023/24.27 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

a) Climate and Biodiversity Committee

No minutes to present.

b) Community Development Committee 5 June 2023

No questions or comments.

c) Planning Committee 25 May 2023

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the Airbnb application for Whitehorse Square was on the Herefordshire agenda for next week and that there was a site visit planned. The City Council's grounds for objection had been met by variations to the original application and we would not be pressing an objection at the meeting.

d) Policy and Resources Committee 6 June 2023

There were no questions or comments.

e) Youth Council 15 May 2023

No questions, but it was noted that dates in the minutes relate to the Young Citizen's Assembly.

C2023/24.28 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Dykes left the meeting at this point.

a) Municipal Charities

Councillor Hornsey had attended an away day for internal audit.

b) Hereford in Bloom

Councillor Boulter reported the last meeting had been a couple of weeks ago. National judging would be on 5 July this year. Councillor Owens reported that he had not been made aware of the meeting.

c) Close House

Councillor Proctor reported no meetings yet, but one was coming up soon.

d) Stronger Towns Board

Councillor Hornsey reported most projects are progressing well, although the decision by Herefordshire to review the location of the library element for their project had been a considerable surprise.

e) Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School Charity

Councillor Hobbs reported no meetings, the Clerk confirmed that the charity is aware of her election and would be in touch with her.

f) Community Land Trust

Councillor Milln reported that he had been at a site meeting on 6 June on Barton Road to scope the project.

g) Hereford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

In the absence of Councillor Kenyon, the Clerk reported that the annual grant request had been accepted by Community Development Committee.

h) Youth Council

Nothing to add to the minutes, this item to be deleted from this part of the agenda.

C2023/24.29 TOWN CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS

Hereford Zipper - the Clerk reported that following the acceptance by Council of the revenue funding plans for the project, he had signed a contract with Yeomans for the provision of drivers and servicing for the Hereford Zipper. He had written to the new cabinet member of infrastructure to press the case for the bus to be allowed to continue to use a stop on the station forecourt. Other members stated that they too had raised this as part of their critique of the somewhat overblown and extravagant plans for the new hub.

The Clerk asked members of the Climate and Biodiversity Committee to collect their agendas before leaving this meeting.

C2023/24.30 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 26 September 2023 at 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting.

Signed

Date