



HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE 21 NOVEMBER 2023

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Rob Owens (Chair) and Councillors Cat Hornsey, Jeremy Milln, Dan Powell (part) and Ben Proctor

Attending: Steve Kerry Town Clerk

CBD2023/24.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillor Diana Toynbee.

CBD2023/24.23 SUBSTITUTIONS

None.

CBD2023/24.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Owens and Procter declared non-pecuniary interests in the item from the Wildlife Trust as a casual employee or a volunteer respectively.

CBD2023/24.25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Noted that under "attending" it should read Sera not Sarah Hornsey. With that amendment it was proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Hornsey and unanimously

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 19 September be agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

CBD2023/24.26 PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

The Chair welcomed Claire Spicer the Head of Nature Recovery at HWT to the meeting and referred to the successful collaboration to restore the Yazor Brook which had been led by the Trust and in part funded by the City Council.

The latest news from the Trust is that they have introduced a three year strategy based on blue/green corridors, community engagement and a sustained drive to reduce carbon emissions. On the Bartonsham Meadow they have a 25 year lease which does not affect the Council's permissive path agreement with the Church Commissioners. The meadow has a new management plan in place and will revert to natural flood plain with light grazing. Some new hedges will be planted. They are talking to Herefordshire Council about how to resolve any conflict between grazing and need for disability and cyclist access. Fencing will be reduced by using cattle collars with GPS tags to enable monitoring of movements. They are seeking funding widely and would like to restore at least some of the historic ponds on the site. They would like to extend the lease if possible.

On the Yazor Brook they are developing a management plan to support further fundraising efforts and to support more planting. Some trees would be pollarded to introduce dappled light to enable a more diverse ground cover growth. There will also be some scrapes for habitats and they are discussing the future of the Essex Arms site where there seem to be conflicting plans at HC. They have just been awarded £0.5m for a project around properties at risk of flooding in the Yazor Brook area and will be looking to natural flood management solutions such as grassland, trees and scrapes to attenuate flow.

In answer to questions from members, Claire added that they would seek to develop more wild play session on the Brook as it is an ideal site. They are also seeking to challenge the number of extraction licenses for groundwater which can cause the Brook to run very nearly dry in the summer which adversely affects the habitat variety of the stream. They would be looking at the Council's grants scheme with some of these projects in mind.

Regarding the Bartonsham Meadow there was clarification that the reason for 40% of the site being free to generate thistle and other native plants was that the use of light grazing would allow natural plants and grasses to grow. The Trust would focus on dock to stop it growing beyond a designated area and taking over.

The Church Commissioners had insisted that they get credit for all the biodiversity net gain from the Meadow; the Trust are trying to get a more reasonable split recognising they are doing all the work and sourcing all the funding.

The issue was raised of Himalayan Balsam which is a very invasive non-natural growth on river banks. The Trust are working with Cardiff University on means of removing it, noting that the Herefordshire strain of the balsam is particularly resistant to the fungal solution. Regarding roadside verges, the Trust are developing with HC and Verging on the Wild a plan which will balance safety considerations like maintaining lines of sight at junctions with increasing the value of verges as habitats.

Finally, members suggested a number of local sheltered housing schemes that might be willing to support and look after wild planting areas.

The Chair thanked Claire for her presentation.

Councillor Powell apologised that he had to leave the meeting at this point.

CBD2023/24.27 GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

The Clerk introduced the revised, and tested, process for dealing with grants at Community Development Committee and suggested it would be sensible for the Committee to adopt the same process for grants that fell within its remit to consider.

Councillor Milln left the meeting at this point. The Clerk confirmed that with the three members present there was still a quorum.

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

RESOLVED To adopt the grants policy and process used at Community Development Committee for the consideration of grants at this Committee.

CBD2023/24.28 FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

In response to the Chair raising at Council when the calendar was reported that meetings of this Committee were infrequent it was opportune for members to consider how frequently they wished to meet. With the resolution of the grants issue and the creation of a budget for Climate and Biodiversity Committee grants it would be sensible to time meetings so that there was no significant disadvantage to applicants if their proposals went to one committee or the other. That would definitely require an additional meeting before the planned next one in February. Possible dates were suggested for a meeting in December to be reviewed against the timetable of meetings both on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

CBD2023/24.29 GRANTS FOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS

It was agreed without a vote that this was not an item for this Committee and it would be taken off the list of items to be considered at future meetings.

CBD2023/24.30 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- Grant Application(s)
- Eco Awards
- Carbon Footprint
- Youth Council Liaison

CBD2023/24.31 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Grant Meeting in December to be confirmed.

Next Scheduled meeting 20th February 2024 at 6pm, which would include grants as there was a meeting of Community Development Committee planned for 27th February.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting.

Signed

Date