



HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING - 19 MARCH 2024

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor Councillor Jacqui Carwardine and Councillors Andrews, Dykes, Hobbs, Hornsey, Kenyon, Milln, Owens, Potts, Proctor, Powell, Spencer, Stevens, Tillett and Toynbee.

Attending: Steve Kerry, Town Clerk and Becci O'Reilly Events and Administration Manager.

C2023/24.73 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Boulter, Foxton and Griffiths. Councillor Kenyon apologised that he may have to leave before the end of the meeting.

C2023/24.74 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stevens declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 relating to the City BID as he is the Chair of that group.

Councillor Potts declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12 medical provision at events as he was a St. John Ambulance volunteer.

C2023/24.75 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

C2023/24.76 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

It was noted in the confidential minutes of 20 February that the vote had been 13 in favour and 3 abstentions not 15/3 as stated as there were two absentees from that meeting.

With that correction made, it was proposed by Councillor Tillett, seconded by Councillor Potts and, with one abstention

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of 20 February and the confidential minutes of the meetings of 14 November and 20 February be agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

C2023/24.77 PRESENTATION BY POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER AND REVIEW OF PARISH PRIORITIES

The Clerk explained that he had received emails in quick succession from a number of PCSOs, each trying to establish ward priorities for areas that covered two or three wards. These were the officers' patrol areas. In rural areas one PCSO might cover two or three parishes, in the City the patrol areas were much smaller than the city as a whole and the areas did not necessarily make sense in terms of consultation with us. He had suggested, and the Police had agreed,

that an attendance at this meeting would make the process much more effective. However, Sgt Reynolds was unwell, and the other officer designated had been directed to other duties in the morning which apparently precluded his attendance this evening. Members expressed disappointment that having approached the council for comments, and agreed a way forward, the Police had not attended.

Members discussed their own views as to priorities in their wards and there was a considerable repetition of the point of having a visible uniformed presence, not just in the centre but across the city, and the beneficial effect this would have on street crime, much of it associated with drinking and substance abuse which led to much, but not all, of the anti-social behaviour which is so often complained about. It was noted that the Council requires an open and regular dialogue at command level regarding city policing; this is not particularly effective at the moment and hasn't been for some time. Speeding was also referred to as a widespread problem along with several other matters such as reckless cycling, money laundering and graffiti as criminal damage, not just an eyesore.

With too many conflicting priorities it was suggested by Councillor Proctor and agreed without a formal vote that each member present would fill in their three suggestions on the forms the Police had provided, and the Clerk would collate these into a representative city-wide response.

C2023/24.78 ANNUAL FUNDING AWARD - CLOSE HOUSE

The Clerk explained that at present Close House receives an annual award – which is the £20,000 figure referred to on the agenda. They have not yet had their award from this financial year and if this is agreed tonight, it will be paid quickly to assist their cashflow and closure of accounts. As soon as we commence the new Financial Year on 1 April, the 2024/2025 award, and also £20,000 will be paid.

In addition, Close House provide the EPICs who are an extremely useful group of people who provide stewarding and general support at several of our events. Our funding is in the form of a £15,000 grant which we have paid on application every other year. With other funding drying up, Close House will be applying for this annually in future, rather than having a block of funding agreed annually and then annually agreeing a second payment for something the Council already supports. It might be more sensible and would certainly ease Close House's budgeting if the £15,000 for the EPICs was added to the annual funding award to make a single annual award of £35,000.

Councillor Potts proposed, Councillor Andrews seconded and after a brief discussion in which the huge contribution the EPICs make to the City as a whole, and our events in particular, was raised and it was unanimously

RESOLVED To release the £20,000 annual award for 2023/24 to Close House immediately.

To approve and release the £20,000 award for 2024/25 to Close House as soon as the new Financial Year opened and to add £15,000 to the 2024/25 award in respect of the work of the EPICs.

The future annual award will be £35,000 subject to annual approval.

C2023/24.79 ANNUAL AWARD - HEREFORD BID

The Deputy Mayor proposed that as there was now a list of similar items for release of annual award funds or approval of their renewal, it would expedite business if these were taken as a single item. He noted that all of these, and the large grant to the Skatepark had been considered very fully at committees and were unopposed recommendations to Council. The Clerk confirmed that this was legal, but that Councillor Stevens' declaration would mean that he would have to abstain from the combined vote, unless the BID item was taken separately. Councillor Stevens agreed that combining the items made sense and would abstain when it was taken to the vote. It was also suggested that once a recurring agreement is reached it will be for the appropriate committee to oversee the renewal and release of funds each year.

It was proposed by Councillor Tillett, seconded by Councillor Stevens and with one abstention

RESOLVED That the items listed be taken as a single item for decision:

Annual Funding Award - Hereford Business Improvement District £20,000

Annual Funding Award - Hereford in Bloom £10,000

Annual Funding Award - Herefordshire and Worcestershire Citizens Advice Bureau £10,000

Service Level Agreement - Hereford River Carnival £13,000 pa for an event every three years.

Wheeled Sports 4 Hereford - Large Grant of £9,000 in respect of a seating area

and that in future years renewals of recurring agreements and decisions to release funds be delegated to the appropriate committee.

It was then proposed by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Andrews and with Councillor Stevens abstaining because of a declaration of interest and with one other abstention it was

RESOLVED That the annual awards for 2024/25, the service level agreement and the large grant referred from Community Development Committee be approved for payment.

C2023/24.80 MEDICAL PROVISION AT EVENTS

Councillor Potts explained the background to this item. The Loftus Report on event safety had been drafted by well-meaning people who had sought to introduce some standardisation of practice, and the guidance of people wanting to put on events. Instead of complying with the first aid levels suggested in the report, St. John Ambulance (SJA) had made matters 100% worse by persisting with their own qualifications which did not sit with the new categories known as FREC. The local SJA have gone with a First Aider course that does not include use of medical gases such as Entonox, which FREC3 does, or an Advanced First Aider course that goes well beyond FREC3 level. He liked the idea of an assessment based on each event by Committee and in addition to recommendation 4.5 suggested adding an authority for officers to seek specialist support on the risk management of events and planning if they needed it.

The Clerk described how this came to Council and the lack of any clarity at all from the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). Despite the name, it did not try to balance conflicting priorities, for instance the counter-terrorism police always want restricted access, vehicle barriers, etc.

whilst the Fire and Rescue Service want open access for their emergency vehicles to all points. Instead of reconciling these into a single workable event guide, SAG just passes everyone's individual demands and reminds event organisers that if they go against any advice, they may be personally liable in both civil and criminal law. This is profoundly unhelpful and raises the question what is SAG for?

There was considerable debate about the unhelpful attitude that had been taken by individual organisations who seemed more interested in blame shifting and fighting turf wars than in helping event organisers put on safe and successful events.

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

RESOLVED

That members delegate the decision on an event-by-event basis to an appropriate committee, depending on the level of cover SJA are able to quote for, based on their volunteer availability.

That the Council subscribes to the Purple Guide for £25 pa to be kept informed of updates and additional guidance, and that officers are authorised to commission external specialist advice to verify risk assessments in event management plans if required.

The Events and Administration Manager pointed out that given the long lead-in time for SJA, because they rely on volunteers, it was necessary for the Council to act as the appropriate committee and decide the first aid level required for AppleFest. Two quotes had been supplied by SJA. The cost difference was substantial, as to meet the demand from the Ambulance Service for FREC3 attenders we would need to book four advanced first aiders.

A long and detailed debate then ensued in which the following points emerged and were repeated. West Midland Ambulance Service were demanding in writing that all the first aiders were FREC3, which SJA could only meet by providing four Advanced First Aiders. St. John Ambulance felt this was excessive for AppleFest and would be a major strain on their resources. The representative of the Ambulance Service had said on the phone call (but declined to put that in writing) that two Advanced First Aiders would be acceptable if the others were not allowed to work autonomously, but under their direction. The double standard was not appreciated or seen to be helpful, and his later statement that "the fact you haven't had a major incident in the past makes it more likely you will in the future" was nonsensical. Again, members were very critical of SAG for doing nothing to resolve this and simply acting as a conduit for contradictory demands, often accompanied by threats of litigation if things went wrong. All the responsibility was being dumped on to the event organisers. It was again noted that SJA's refusal to adapt their training and descriptions of staff to the national standard, despite being given several years to do so, was very unhelpful too. It was noted that if we did not commit to SJA for AppleFest there would be time to test prices for commercial providers for FREC3 qualified staff as required. Based on other events, this was likely to come somewhere between the two SJA quotes.

Members generally found it very difficult to come to a reasonable conclusion on the basis of conflicting claims from the Ambulance Service and SJA and the non-contribution from SAG.

As members were now reconsidering whether they could come to a fair event-by-event assessment as required in the resolution they had just passed, the Clerk asked if they wished to reverse that decision, in which case they would need to suspend the Standing Orders to do

so. This was not unheard of, although it was very rare to do it immediately after passing a resolution on an item.

It was proposed by Councillor Kenyon and seconded by Councillor Tillett that the Standing Orders be suspended to allow for reversal or reconsideration of the decision just made. This was opposed by Councillors Potts and Stevens, and it was noted that the proposal in paragraph 4.4 only rules out using SJA until they reconcile their training and staff descriptions to the FREC3 categories, which they should have done some time ago.

On being put to the vote it was, by 8 votes to 3 with 3 abstentions

RESOLVED To suspend the Standing Orders to enable reconsideration and possible reversal of the earlier decision on this item.

It was then proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Owens and by 9 votes to 4 with 3 abstentions

RESOLVED That Council reverses its previous decision on this matter and resolves to cease working with St. John Ambulance until all their first aiders are upskilled to FREC3 qualified and request that until then, a suitable alternative first aid provider is found.

For the avoidance of doubt, it was also proposed by Councillor Kenyon, seconded by Councillor Owens and unanimously

RESOLVED That the Council subscribes to the Purple Guide for £25 per annum to be kept informed of developments and additional guidance, and that officers are authorised to commission external specialist advice to verify risk assessments in event management plans when required.

C2023/24.81 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Clerk briefly explained the need to renew the strategy.

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

RESOLVED To accept the recommendation of Policy and Resources Committee to adopt the investment strategy set out in the report.

C2023/24.82 APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR-ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR-ELECT

Councillor Hornsey spoke briefly in favour of the Deputy Mayor Councillor Tillett being recognised as Mayor-elect and looked forward to proposing him for the office at the Annual Meeting of Council in May. Councillor Kenyon said it was a very easy job to second that, Councillor Tillett was hard working, fair and does a huge amount for this community. He would have much more to say on this topic at the Annual Meeting.

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

RESOLVED That Councillor Kevin Tillett be recognised as Mayor-elect for 2024-2025.

Councillor Andrews proposed Councillor Powell whom she described as a lovely young man. Councillor Potts spoke in favour of this nomination although intimated he would adumbrate other reasons for supporting him at the Annual Meeting of Council.

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

RESOLVED That Councillor Daniel Powell be recognised as Deputy Mayor-elect for 2024-2025

Councillor Kenyon left the meeting at this point.

C2023/24.83 CIVIC CEREMONIAL AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Clerk reported that he had met with the Deputy Mayor and the next two councillors in the ballot for seniority, namely Councillors Powell and Hornsey, to discuss the future of council meetings. Hereford's practice was somewhat archaic by comparison with most councils, although recently we had dispensed with robing the Mayor and clerk for meetings, we still had the ceremonial sword which necessitated the attendance of the Mayor's officer throughout the meeting. There had been a consensus that it was time to move away from historical practice and treat council meetings as business meetings to be chaired and presented in much the same way as committees. The pomp and ceremony were intended in the past to impress spectators, but there usually aren't any. The full ceremonial tradition would continue for Mayor Making where there are large numbers of invited guests.

As to having two officers attending meetings as the norm, the Clerk suggested it would have been impossible for one person to contribute to the detailed debate we had just had about first aid at council events if they were also trying to minute the item. This difficulty frequently arose at Committee where the officer clerking the meeting had to ask the members to stop while they caught up with noting a conversation they had taken part in. Recording could be a valuable aid to minute taking but the official record should be maintained as the minutes.

On the matter of prayer at the start of the meeting the Clerk stated that he believes in God and in prayer. He does not believe there is any Biblical case that prayer is more efficacious if it is uttered in the presence of numerous people who do not believe who stand respectfully and may even mutter a half-meant Amen, indeed the Bible actually says "when you pray, do not stand up in a public place where people can see you but instead go to your room and pray quietly to your Father in heaven". If members wish to pray together or privately before a meeting, they would be given a facility to do so, but with the majority of councillors not evincing a belief in the Deity it was inappropriate to have this as a public act.

Councillor Toynbee supported the recommendations but noted that some councils that record their meetings keep the recordings for public viewing in perpetuity and wondered why we did not, although these were broadcasts of meetings including visual recording not just sound.

The Deputy Mayor asked for it to be noted that in paragraph 2.1 of the report there is a reference to him presiding over the Extraordinary Meeting of Council in February in lieu of the Mayor. In fact, this was the January meeting and the Mayor presided over the February meeting. This was agreed as a textual correction.

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

RESOLVED That for all Council Meetings other than Mayor Making and ceremonial awards, the Mayor will attend the meeting and take their place on the dais before the start of the meeting in non-ceremonial clothing and will call the meeting to order at 6pm just as is done by Committee Chairs at their meetings.

That the chain will not be worn, nor the state sword processed in, and therefore it is not expected that the Mayor's Officer will attend the meeting unless they are doing so to bring a piece of business forward.

That the Clerk will arrange appropriate attendance for minute taking and decision support depending on the nature of the business on the agenda.

That the meeting will be recorded for minute taking, but that the recording will not be kept once the minutes have been agreed at a subsequent meeting.

That a room will be made available for prayers before the meeting for those wishing to use it, but that prayers will not be said in the chamber before the meeting.

C2023/24.84 REFURBISHMENT OF CITY NOTICE BOARDS

The Clerk presented a proposal from Cityscape for a comprehensive cleaning and refurbishing of the city map boards and noticeboards. It was noted that the lock on the John Venn Cemetery board has long since disappeared, among several others. It was also stated that the programme could be increased to include the relocation of the Churchill Gardens noticeboard to somewhere on College Green where it would be much more visible.

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

RESOLVED That officers are authorised to complete the programme of cleaning and refurbishment suggested by Cityscape and to add the relocation of the Churchill Gardens board to the works.

C2023/24.85 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor stated that as her term of office was coming to an end she was still enjoying it, although it had been very tiring. As this was the last meeting at which the Clerk would be present, she would like to thank him for all his support to her and to past Mayors especially in the role of chairing of Council Meetings which was extremely difficult if you hadn't done anything like it before. She also thanked John Marshall for his attendance and for carefully placing the sword behind her head securely.

C2023/24.86 MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

- a) Community and Biodiversity Committee 27 February 2024 - No questions.
- b) Planning and Highways Committee 7 March 2024 - No questions.
- c) Policy and Resources Committee 5 March 2024 - No questions.
- d) Community Development (Grants) Committee 28 November 2023 - No questions.
- e) Youth Council 19 February 2024 - No questions.

C2023/24.87 REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

- a) **Hereford in Bloom** - In Councillor Boulter's absence - no report.
- b) **Close House** - Councillor Potts drew attention to the annual report submitted with an earlier item.
- c) **Hereford BID** - Councillor Stevens reported that Ferrous had gone very well.
- d) **Stronger Towns Board** - Councillor Hornsey reported no major issues.
- e) **Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat Scholl Charity** - Councillor Hobbs reported that Reverend Nick Armstong is retiring, and a replacement would be sought shortly.
- f) **Hereford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners** - In Councillor Kenyon's absence - no report.
- g) **Herefordshire Association of Local Councils** - Councillor Potts reported that there is a meeting of the Executive Committee tomorrow which will be focussing on the nightmare

of Herefordshire Council's mishandling of declarations of interest. He would be supporting calls for a strong response.

- h) Three Choirs** - Councillor Hornsey reported that the Worcester festival is now officially underway for 2024.

C2023/24.88 TOWN CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by Councillor Boulter after the agenda had been despatched. She is suffering from ill health, and it is something that is likely to require considerable investigation and long term treatment before there will be a significant improvement. On that basis he asked members to consider granting leave of absence.

It was proposed by Councillor Hornsey seconded by Councillor Andrews and unanimously

RESOLVED That Councillor Boulter be granted three month's leave of absence in recognition of her health issues and that this be reviewed after three months when more information is available.

That the Council sends best wishes to Councillor Boulter for her recovery.

The Clerk said his only other communication was to invite all present to the event in honour of his retirement on Thursday 28 March at 5pm in the Assembly Hall.

Councillor Stevens added that he had heard that a class action is now being taken forward against Avara for allowing chicken processing waste to pollute the river Wye and that as a council who had supported the petition to DEFRA on this matter could we support this action. It was agreed that this be referred to Climate and Biodiversity Committee for a recommendation to Council.

Councillor Milln said all members would have an opportunity to thank the Clerk personally on 28 March for his work, but he would like it to be minuted that he had greatly valued his professionalism, experience and judgement over the years he had been on the Council. He also appreciated the vigorous challenge he has presented to colleagues at Herefordshire Council and said the incoming clerk had been set a high example to follow.

C2023/24.89 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

In announcing the date of the next meeting, the Mayor thanked members for allowing her to Chair their meetings, and for making her next to last one such a lively one. It was the only part of the Mayoral role that had terrified her, and she was glad her next meeting would be her last as Chair.

Tuesday 21 May 2024 at 6 pm in the Council Chamber - Annual Meeting of Council and Mayor Making.

Signed

Date