



HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

OF THE MEETING OF 12 NOVEMBER 2024

HELD IN THE HCC COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, HEREFORD

Present: Councillors Cat Hornsey (in the Chair), Polly Andrews, Susan Boulter, Debbie Hobbs, Mark Dykes (until after item Minute Reference PR2024/25.62), Paul Stevens, Diana Toynbee, Sam Potts, Ben Proctor (substituting for Cllr Rob Owens) and Kevin Tillet.

Attending: One Member of the Public (until after item PR2024/25.50); Becci O'Reilly – Administration and Events Manager, Acting Town Clerk; Alyson Kinsey – Finance Officer; Olena Hayward – locum Clerk, HALC.

PR2024/25.45 CLERK COVER FROM HALC

It was proposed by Cllr Hornsey, seconded by Cllr Potts and unanimously

RESOLVED to approve clerk cover service from HALC at a cost up to £275 and to appoint Mrs Olena Hayward as clerk for the meeting.

PR2024/25.46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Rob Owens.

PR2024/25.47 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Proctor was appointed to substitute for Cllr Owens and took the seat.

PR2024/25.48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

- a) Cllr Boulter declared an interest in item 19 of the Agenda (Minute Reference PR2024/25.50), as she owns an allotment managed by HALG;
- b) Cllr Hobbes declared personal interest in item 19 of the Agenda (Minute Reference PR2024/25.50).

PR2024/25.49 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A representation with regards to item 19 of the Agenda (Minute Reference PR2024/25.50) was received from the member of the public present. The importance of the land in question to the local community was outlined, including the consequences of its loss for the public use, as perceived by the member of the public making the representation. The Committee was asked to consider making an application for designation of the land as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

The Chair thanked the Member of the Public for her attendance and representation.

At the discretion of the Chair item 19 of the Agenda was moved up in order and considered at this point.

PR2024/25.50 ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

The Committee considered the request to make an application for the designation of a piece of land off Ross Road, next to the Child Development Centre as an Asset of Community Value.

The plot in question is a disused piece of land, lying surrounded by houses and adjacent to the Child Development Centre (CDC) off Ross Road. There is some evidence that the land is used as a recreational open space by members of the public and employees of the CDC, and have been for some time. It is known that the land owner – Connexus, has been in communications with Hereford Allotments and Leisure Gardeners (HALG) and the landowner's permission has been granted for establishment of allotments on site. Subsequently, a planning application was made to the Local Planning Authority, which was withdrawn by the applicant. However, following advice from a planning consultant, an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness was made and such was obtained, confirming that establishment of allotments on the land does not require planning permission. The designation of the land as an ACV is sought by members of the public in order to prevent the establishment of the allotments and the anticipated loss or restriction of public use and/or access.

The Committee was advised that the designation of land as ACV would only become relevant in two situations:

- If there was a planning application for development on the land, in which case the Planning Authority may consider such designation as a material planning consideration. However, it may not or may assign greater weight to other planning considerations, rendering the AVC designation of limited value;
- If the land was to be sold, in which case the ACV designation would allow the community to exercise their Right To Bid/Buy, halting the sale process for a period of 6 months to allow for fundraising, giving the community Right to Bid for the land. However, the landowner is under no obligation to sell the land to the community and could still proceed with commercial sale.

Given that a Certificate of Lawfulness is already in place, it is unlikely that planning application will be made prior to establishment of allotments. It is also not anticipated that a sale of the land is to be expected. Consequently, the Committee was advised that designation of the land as ACV seems to be of limited capacity to achieve the stated objective and is not the right mechanism to be used to ensure the land's availability for public use.

It was also reported that conversations have been had with both Connexus and HALG and assurances were made regarding the public access to the land following establishment of the allotments, as well as retention of a proportion of the land as a space opened for the public recreation. It is also planned for half-a-plot to be assigned to two local schools each, for educational purposes.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of preserving and protecting lands available for public use in the City in principle and considered the merits of seeking the AVC designation as a measure to protect the plot in question from uses other than the currently anticipated allotments.

It was then proposed by Cllr Andrews, seconded by Cllr Stevens and by majority vote of five in favour, two against and three abstentions

RESOLVED to forego making the application for designation as Asset of Community Value and support the dialogue between all parties with a view to satisfy needs of all members of the community with the support of the PC Ward Member, Cllr Dan Powell.

Member of the public left the meeting.

PR2024/25.51 MINUTES

Cllr Potts has sought clarification regarding Minute Reference PR2024/25.33 (confidential) and it was confirmed that the Minute reflects accurately the Resolution made by the Committee and the action described therein was sanctioned.

Cllr Boulter raised a matter relating to Minutes under consideration, however, the matter was of a follow-up nature and not concerning the accuracy of the Minute itself.

It was then proposed by Cllr Hornsey, seconded by Cllr Potts and by majority vote of seven in favour and three abstentions

RESOLVED to approve the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meetings of 4 June, 10 September and 22 October, as correct and accurate record. The Minutes were duly signed by the Chair.

PR2024/25.52 SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Committee considered the Schedules of Payments made in May, June, July, August and September 2024, as produced by the Finance Officer, and distributed prior to the meeting.

Questions about payments relating to noticeboards' key replacements, biscuits and silver valuation were satisfactorily addressed.

Question regarding Unison Subscription payment will be researched and feedback will be provided to the Committee in due course.

There being no further questions, it was proposed by Cllr Andrews, seconded by Cllr Potts and unanimously

RESOLVED to note and approve the Schedule of Payments made in May, June, July, August and September 2024, as correct and appropriately authorised.

PR2024/25.53 BANK RECONCILIATION

The Committee received and considered bank reconciliations for May, June, July, August and September 2024, as produced by the Finance Officer, and distributed prior to the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr Dykes, seconded by Cllr Andrews and unanimously

RESOLVED to approve the Bank Reconciliations for May, June, July, August and September 2024 and confirm that the accounts have been appropriately reconciled to 30 September 2024.

PR2024/25.54 2023/24 AGAR EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Committee received and noted the Conclusion of External Audit Report for the Financial Year 2023/24.

It was then proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr Potts and unanimously

RESOLVED to note the 2023/24 AGAR External Audit Report and recommend it be received and noted by the Full Council. To extend thanks to the Acting Town Clerk and the Finance Officer for their hard work on the Annual Governance and Accountability Report and the clean audit outcome.

PR2024/25.55 2024/25 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Committee received the Interim Internal Audit Report, as produced by Adrian Shepherd-Roberts of Auditing Solutions Ltd and noted that no matters of concern have been highlighted.

It was then proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr Andrews and unanimously

RESOLVED to note the Interim Internal Audit Report and recommend that it be received and noted by the Full Council. It was further RESOLVED to extend thanks to the Finance Officer for her sterling work on the matter.

PR2024/25.56 BALANCE SHEET AND INCOME & EXPENDITURE

The Committee received the Rialtas Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure Statement as at 30 September 2024.

It was duly **NOTED**.

PR2024/25.57 2025/26 CCTV REVIEW REQUEST

The Committee considered the request for review of the Council's decision to discontinue its contributions toward the maintenance of CCTV in the City, in respect of the financial year 2025/26, as received from the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership and Herefordshire Council.

It has been noted that provision of CCTV is not the Parish Council statutory duty, with the merits of the City's taxpayers bearing the burden of the attendant costs questionable.

It was then proposed by Cllr Potts, seconded by Cllr Stevens and with majority vote of eight in favour and two against

RESOLVED to refuse the request for contributions to the CCTV in the financial year 2025/26. The Acting Town Clerk to write to the requesting Authorities to convey this resolution and to emphasise that, following a careful consideration, the City Council feels that the provision of CCTV should be financed from the Police and Crime Commissioner's purse and/or raised through the West Mercia Police's Precept; The City Council would welcome an invitation to participate in the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership, given that it represents one third of the County's population.

PR2024/25.58 THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL HOSPITALITY

The Committee received a report from the Acting Town Clerk and considered the various aspects, financial implications and required officer time in relation to the provision of hospitality during the Three Choirs Festival, when it is hosted by Hereford City.

It was reported that, historically, the City Council provided an Opening Service Lunch, including comfort refreshments prior to the Opening Procession and hot buffet lunch afterwards. In addition the City Council (the Mayor's Office) provided a Closing 'Thank You' Reception with cold buffet and drinks, involving late hours opening of the Town Hall and staffing provision.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Andrews, seconded by Cllr Stevens and carried by a majority vote of six in favour, one against and three abstentions*, to

RESOLVE that in respect of the Opening Lunch, cold buffet lunch will be provided henceforth, with comfort refreshments to be made available on arrival.

*At the request of Cllr Potts and pursuant to Standing Order 3s, Members' votes on the motion were recorded as follows:

Voting in favour of the Resolution, Councillors: Stevens, Boulter, Dykes, Hobbs, Andrews and Hornsey;

Voting against the Resolution, Councillor Potts;

Abstaining, Councillors: Toynbee, Tillet and Proctor.

It was then further proposed by Cllr Hornsey, seconded by Cllr Proctor and unanimously

RESOLVED to discontinue the provision of the Closing ‘Thank You’ Reception henceforth.

PR2024/25.59 HEREFORD APPLEFEST

The Committee received a report from the Acting Town Clerk/Administration and Events Manager on the event’s organisation in 2025 and considered all aspects of the matter, including staffing and funding issues and implications.

It was noted that the Council originally approved funding of £20,000 for three consecutive financial years each, which includes financial year 2025. It was also noted that some outside funding streams are already known to have expired and others are uncertain, which coupled with raising costs is likely to effect in a budget shortfall. It was also noted that the lead Officer on the project will not be available and alternative staffing provision would have to be made to allow for the project’s delivery.

It was proposed by Cllr Potts, seconded by Cllr Toynbee and with a majority vote of nine in favour and one abstention

RESOLVED to pause the delivery of the Festival in the financial year 2025 (fallow year) and review the matter for the financial year 2026 (review required at 2026/27 Budget Setting point – Autumn/Winter 2025/26).

At the discretion of the Chair item 15 of the Agenda (Minute Reference PR2024/25.63) was moved in order and considered after item 18 of the Agenda (Minute Reference PR2024/25.62)

PR2024/25.60 MARKETING ASSISTANT – NEW PART TIME POSITION

The Committee was advised that this matter, having already been considered by the Committee, is subject to a valid and standing Resolution Minute Reference PR2024/25.41 (confidential). Accordingly, a recommendation to the Full Council for the approval of financing the required post on staff from Reserves is in order and no further Resolutions of this Committee are required.

PR2024/25.61 ANNUAL FUNDING AWARD – H&W CITIZENS ADVICE

The Committee received the annual report in respect of Citizens Advice activities in Hereford for the financial year 2023/24 and considered releasing the annual funding of £10,000, as previously awarded. A request for an increase of the funding to £13,000 was also considered.

Following a discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Potts, seconded by Cllr Toynbee to

Increase the funding, as per the request, to £13,000

With two votes in favour and eight votes against the motion failed.

It was then proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr Toynbee and unanimously

RESOLVED to release the funding of £10,000 as awarded and reject the request for increase. It was further RESOLVED that the annual funding awards will be reviewed in due course and once a new Town Clerk is in post.

PR2024/25.62 ANNUAL FUNDING AWARD – HEREFORD IN BLOOM

The Committee received the annual brochure in respect of Hereford in Bloom activities in Hereford during 2023 (2024 brochure not yet available) and considered releasing the annual funding of £10,000, as previously awarded. A request for an increase of the funding to £13,000 was also considered.

Following a discussion it was proposed by Cllr Toynbee, seconded by Cllr Stevens and with majority vote of nine in favour and one against

RESOLVED to release the funding of £10,000 as awarded and reject the request for increase. This annual funding award to be reviewed, alongside other annual funding awards, according to the Resolution under Minute Reference PR2024/25.61.

Cllr Dykes left the meeting.

PR2024/25.63 2025/26 BUDGET OPTIONS

In addition to the written report from the Acting Town Clerk and the Finance Officer, as distributed prior to the meeting, the Committee received a short verbal report from the same.

It was noted that, at present, there are number of unknowns and the options presented in the written report are, by necessity, based on a number of assumptions, estimates and the tax base for current financial year Crucially, the tax base for 2025/26 financial year will only be known once released by the Local Authority, which is anticipated in December 2025. Further, some internal decisions by the Council with likely impact on the expenditure budget, still remain to be confirmed, including staffing matters and costs. In conclusion, it is not possible, at this stage, to produce reliable Budget Options, with number of factors still to be established and/or received, and figures likely to change.

It was therefore, proposed by Cllr Hornsey, seconded by Cllr Potts and with majority vote of eight in favour and one against

RESOLVED to defer this item to be considered at the next meeting of this Committee – January 14 2025.

PR2024/25.64 MAYORAL CAR LEASE

The Committee noted that the lease of the Mayoral Car has been extended for further 12 months with effect from February 2025 for a reduced monthly amount, with the option to extend for an additional two years.

PR2024/25.65 2024/25 NJC PAY AWARD

The Committee considered the adoption of the 2024/25 National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) recommendation of the pay scale increase for all staff.

It was proposed by Cllr Hornsey, seconded by Cllr Potts and with majority vote of eight in favour and one abstention

RESOLVED to adopt the NJC recommended new salary pay scales for all staff for the year 2024/25 with effect from 1 April 2024. All payments to be backdated from that date.

PR2024/25.66 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 14 January 2025, ordinary meeting - **CONFIRMED**

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 8:53 PM

Signed

Date