HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL COMMITTEE 27 JANUARY 2026

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Cllrs D Powell, K Tillett, B Proctor, R Owens, D Toynbee, E Foxton, S Boulter, P Stevens, C Hornsey, J Carwardine, D Hobbs, A Griffiths, S Potts & J Milln

Officers: K Carpenter (Town Clerk) & S Jones (Committee Co-ordinator)

C2025/26.83. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J Kenyon, P Andrews, M Dykes & A Spencer.

DP thanked the Deputy Mayor CH for representing him at the Holocaust Day service at Worcester that morning. He also welcomed SB on her return to meetings and added that it was nice to see her back.

DP also noted that AG had recently become engaged and Council shared their congratulations.

C2025/26.84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no requests for dispensation in respect of items on the agenda made by Members at this point in the meeting, but all were reminded that they could declare an interest if one arose during the meeting.

C2025/26.85. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present at the meeting, this possible attendance is being hampered by the building being locked thus preventing access.

C2025/26.86. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

BP asked that a spelling error in the minutes be corrected, this was agreed by the TC and actioned by SJ.

PS proposed the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting, this was seconded by EF and resolved with a vote of 13 and 1 abstention.

It was RESOLVED To accept the minutes as a true representation of the Council Committee on the 25 November 2025 once this amendment was made.

C2025/26.87. LARGE GRANT APPLICATION - HEREFORD COMMUNITY SKATE PARK

There was a brief discussion about the application for £8,014 from the Skate School Hub, there was a question about the level of funding being requested which was duly answered by CH and KT who both spoke about the exceptional work being done and the need for the capital works project to increase their capacity of people utilizing the services. CH proposed that this funding be awarded, this was seconded by DH and resolved with a vote of 13 with 1 abstention.

It was RESOLVED To award Hereford Community Skatepark £8,014 for the purposes outlined in their application

C2025/26.88. 2026/2027 ANNUAL BUDGET & PRECEPT

The Town Clerk introduced the item and displayed the working documents on screen for the meeting to be considered. PS added that this had been a challenging budget to work through and thanked the members of the committee for their diligent work, these issues around inflation and changing NI contributions had been taken into consideration. BP added that we needed to ensure that we advise what this budget does deliver such as community grants, support for young people through Close House as an example, the Tourist Information Centre and the continued running of the Zipper service. He also thanked the Town Clerk and the Committee for their work on this budget.

KT further acknowledged the work that had gone into this budget setting process and added this was a document of consensus. SP echoed these points and agreed this was the best process by far and thanked the Town Clerk for this and the process which made it visually understandable and the quality of information within the documents.

PS proposed that Council accept the budget which sets a precept of £1,259,350 and gives an annual increase of £9.31 on a Band D property bring the City Councils proportion of the council tax to £75.09, this was seconded by BP and resolved with a vote of 13:0 with abstention from Cllr Potts.

RESOLVED To adopt a precept of £1,259,350 which gives an annual increase of £9.31 on a Band D property bringing the City Councils proportion of the council tax to £75.09

C2025/26.89. GOVERNANCE POLICY UPDATES

The Smoking and Vaping Policy requires some clarification about the locations where smoking or vaping is allowed at the Town Hall and Hinton CC and the correction of a spelling error.

DP proposed that following these minor amendments that the policies be approved on bloc, this was seconded by DH and resolved with a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED To approve these policies once these amendments have been made.

C2025/26.90. WEBSITE PLAN & FRAMEWORK

The meeting briefly discussed the document submitted by the Communication and Tourism Manager with BP adding that some indicative timescales and costs would be helpful. KT asked for a spelling error to be corrected. It was proposed by KT that this plan and the development of a specification for tender continue, this was seconded by JC and resolved by a unanimous vote.

It was AGREED That the website plan and development of specification for tender continue.

C2025/26.91. MOTION – CLLR OWENS IN REGARD TO HCC USING `X' AS A COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

RO read out a prepared statement to support the motion for the City Council to not use X as a communication tool due to the ongoing issue with its AI tool GROK and the potential to produce inappropriate images being distributed.

There was a great deal of debate about this motion and although many were sympathetic to it the general feeling was that it was not appropriate for the City Council to withdraw from X as its broader usage was an important communication tool for important information, such as flood alerts, and that the Government, OFFCOM and the impending EU investigation would deal with the GROK AI tool. There were also counter arguments about this and it being a premium feature of X, with these being legally

available to GROK, it raises a question of ethical considerations and whether now is not the time to cease using X.

The motion to cease using X was proposed by RO, seconded by BP and was resolved with a vote of 3:9 against and 2 abstentions. The motion was not carried.

It was RESOLVED That the motion not be carried and that HCC would continue to use its X account for the time being.

C2025/26.92. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The exclusion of the press and public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s 1(2) as the remaining business of the meeting is confidential and personal to named individuals was proposed by PS, seconded by DP and resolved with a unanimous vote.

C2025/26.93. CONFIDENTIAL STAFFING MATTER

SP proposed that the recommendation from Staffing Committee be accepted by Council and progress on this commence, this was seconded by KT and resolved with a vote of 12:0 with 2 abstentions based on not enough information.

It was RESOLVED That the council accept these recommendations from the Staffing Committee and that progress on this would commence.

C2025/26.94. READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

SP proposed to readmit the press and public at the conclusion of confidential business, this was seconded by DP and resolved by a unanimous vote.

C2025/26.95. MAYORS COMMUNICATIONS

DP began by wishing all a Happy New Year and noted the £500 raised on New Years Day by a swimming event. He also spoke about the Blue Monday Conference and what a fantastically organized event this was.

He spoke briefly about the installation of the New Junior Major and celebration event held, as well as the visit to watch Hamnet at the Courtyard adding it was emotional to see parts of Herefordshire in the film.

DP also spoke about the Twinning meeting and the proposal for the twinned towns to visit Hereford and commemorate Remembrance Day with us. As there had been no response to the initial email, he suggested that a second be sent and that the meeting be proponed until then

C2025/26.96. REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The following reports were received:

a. **Hereford in Bloom** – following on from a previous meeting where the Clerk was tasked with due diligence checks, which have been concluded to the satisfaction of the Finance Committee the annual funding can be released. EF also spoke about the need to plan and purchase plants for the coming year.
b. **Close House** SP advised that the executive meeting was due to be held that week.
c. **Hereford Business Improvement District** PS spoke about the car park charges increase and the new 30min free parking, there had been no consultation with businesses or the City Council, but a review of social media comments had fed into this decision.
d. **Stronger Towns Board** BP advised there was nothing to report and the focus was on delivery of projects.
e. **Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School Charity** DT advised that no meetings had been held since the last report.
f. **Community Land Trust** JM advised of two ongoing projects, Artlandish would soon become its own entity, the Georgian Mews (garages) has the funding for the RIBA stage 2 works.
g. **Hereford Allotment & Leisure Gardeners** RO advised there was nothing to report, but the use of rat poison had ceased.
h. **Hereford Association of Local Councils** SP advised that the HALC conference was being held on 21/3/2026 where a new way of things being done.
i. **Youth Council** BP spoke briefly about the combined Christmas meeting and meal, that there had been a good turnout of youth council for junior mayor making and that two meetings were being held in February.

C2025/26.97. TOWN CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS

There were no additional items from the Town Clerk

C2025/26.98. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To confirm the date of the next meeting of Council as Tuesday 24 March 2026

SIGNED .....

DATE .....

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 19:22