

Present: Councillor Dr B G Wood (Chairman)
The Mayor, Councillor Mrs G Zakss
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor A J Follett (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Miss L M Hillier
Councillor Mrs J Wood
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor C Pye

In attendance: Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator
Councillor D R Nimmo-Smith
A member of the press
A member of the public

1820. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor A J Elliott.

1821. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are hereby reminded that, under the provisions of Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 (The Code of Conduct), a member with a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent. A member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest. A member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting is being held whenever it becomes apparent that the matter is being considered at that meeting, unless he has obtained a dispensation from the standards committee of the responsible authority; and not seek improperly to influence a decision about the matter. For the purposes of this Part (of the Act), "meeting" means any meeting of the authority; or any of the authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees.

Councillor A J Follett – West Street Stores – Progress report, Min 1823 - personal and prejudicial – member of the Lions Club of Henley-on-Thames

Councillor E Hodgkin – West Street Stores – Progress report, Min 1823 - personal interest - wife of a member of Lions Club of Henley-on- Thames.
Min 1830 – Loans – personal and prejudicial – Eyot Centre – trustee. Min 1830 – CAB – personal – Council representative/observer.

Councillor G Zakss – Min 1830 – Loans – personal and prejudicial interest – Eyot Centre – trustee.

Councillor Dr Skolar – Min 1825 – Moorings – personal – boat owner.

Town Clerk – Min 1830 – Staff appraisals/increments – personal and prejudicial – staff member.

1822. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2009 were received and approved.

1823. **PROGRESS REPORT**

Councillors received and considered the Progress Report and made the following comments:

Henley Town Football Club

The Chairman referred to the notes of the meeting held with the Club which outlined the Club's serious financial situation. Provision would have to be made in the Council's 2008-09 capital account to reflect this as it would not be plausible to convince the auditors that the Club could meet their commitment. Although provision will be made, this did not mean that the debt would be written off. The 2009 -10 accounts will also be affected in terms of cash flow if future repayments are not made. Representatives from the Club had met with the HTC Accountant to discuss their financial position and had given an undertaking to pay the outstanding debts of £825 by 31 March.

Action: Town Clerk/Accountant to arrange another meeting with the Club in April.

1824. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

Page 2 – Bank Interest - Councillor Dr B Wood informed the meeting that putting the Council's money on 2 months deposit was only earning a limited rate of interest (0.86%). Rathbones could only offer 0.92% and Williams de Broë 1.23%

It was RESOLVED that the HTC Accountant should be given permission to place the relevant monies where he thinks most appropriate.

Page 8 – Henley Partnership. It had been agreed at the recent Town Management meeting that a £500 subscription payment should be paid by the Council. The Chairman pointed out that no budget existed for this payment and reminded the meeting of the recommendation made in F&A Min 1704 iii) 18.12 07 which stated:

“that in order to improve budget management throughout the year, no committee is able to approve additional budget expenditure i.e. recommendation directly to Council unless compensating savings are identified elsewhere, within that Committee’s budget and a corresponding transfer of budget made”

Councillor Dr Skolar also pointed out that Council had agreed a zero deficit budget and therefore overspends should not be approved.

Councillor Follett argued that times had moved on since that recommendation and thought there was a good case for making the payment. He believed that the subject would be discussed at Full Council. Councillor Zakss also supported the payment

Councillor Dr Wood was concerned re. the handling of budgets and felt that the discipline that had been previous agreed was being disregarded.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the Committees should at all times adhere to the principles of effective budget management including identifying the necessary savings where potential overspends are identified.

Page 6/8 – Gas and Electricity bills – Councillor Zakss noted that the gas and electricity bills appeared very high and speculated there may be some scope for reduction.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the Carbon Trust be invited to inspect the Council buildings, that consume the greatest energy, to see if advice can be given on how to be more energy efficient.

Action: Town Sergeant to contact the Carbon Trust to make the necessary arrangements.

Councillor Zakss also commented that the cost of mobile phones seemed expensive especially as companies have been advertising more cost effective deals so there may be scope to reduce these costs.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that this issue is examined by the VFM Working Group as part of their remit.

Page 9 – Townlands and Youth Council. Councillor Follett queried whether the budgets for the year would actually be spent in full. If this was not the case, then the expected outturn for the year should be reduced accordingly.

Action: Accountant to review the position and adjust expected outturn figures as necessary.

Councillor Zakss highlighted the award of capital grant amounting to over £100,000 and asked that the Committee's congratulations be extended to all those involved in their procurement.

It was RESOLVED that the Committee's thanks and appreciation to those people responsible for the procurement of c£100,000 worth of capital grants be recorded in the minutes.

ii) Cashflow Position

Members had before them the Cashflow Report and Balance Sheet for the 10 months to January 2009, copy having being issued.

It was RESOLVED that the Cashflow Report for the 10 months to January 2009 be noted

iii) Investment Performance Update

Members had before them the Investment Performance Update Report for the 10 months to January 2009, copy having being issued.

It was RESOLVED that the Investment Performance Report for the 10 months to January 2009 be noted.

iv) List of Payments

v) Members had before them the List of Payments for the 10 months to January 2009, copy having being issued.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and approved.

Councillor Miss L M Hillier entered the meeting at 19.50.

1825. **HTC MOORINGS**

Members had before them a report on the River Terrace moorings.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

1826. **HR POLICIES**

The Town Clerk explained the necessity for having up to date policies in place to safeguard the interests of both the Council and the staff. However, since the policies were drafted, ACAS had introduced a new code of practice which materially changed the content of both the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures. Consequently, the committee was not required to review these documents as they would be re-drafted and submitted to a future F&A meeting.

The Committee RECOMMENDS the adoption of the following policies:

- Bullying & Harassment
- Capability
- Equal Opportunities
- Whistleblowing
- Redundancy and Reorganisation

Action; Town Clerk to produce revised policies on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures based on the ACAS Code of Practice.

1827. **HTC ESTATE INSPECTIONS**

The Town Clerk explained that now the guidance notes had been circulated, the material supplied to Members represented the ‘final package’. The estate inspections were to be regarded as part of the Council’s asset management process. The list of land/property may be extended in future as further areas are identified.

The list of responsible Councillors by area was updated at the meeting and will be circulated with all other relevant material in advance of the inspections taking place.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that the estate inspection schedule be received, approved and adopted.

Action: Committee Clerk to initiate the process of inspection in liaison with the Snr Parks Asst.

1828. **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

Councillor Follett introduced his paper and talked through the background and rationale of changing the structure of the Committees from the start of the next mayoral year. The Town Clerk and Committee Clerks had already had to opportunity to comment on the changes.

Councillor Skolar said it was unclear how the restructuring would affect the number of sub-committees. Councillor Follett explained that each Committee would need to review each of their sub-committees and decide how their responsibilities should be handled.

Councillor Zakss asked whether ‘Youth Liaison’ covered the ‘Youth Council’. Councillor Follett confirmed that it did. It was agreed that it would be more appropriate if this item was moved to the Town & Community Committee. The restructuring of the Committees in no way affected the procedure that all recommendations had to be approved/ratified by Full Council.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that the revised Committee structure for the 2009-10 mayoral year is adopted with the amendment that 'Youth Liaison' is transferred to the Town & Community Committee.

Action: Senior Committee Administrator to prepare draft schedule of meetings for 2009/10 based on the new committee structure for presentation and adoption at the Annual Meeting of Council in May.

1829. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

It was moved by the Chairman and RESOLVED

that the public and the press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as matters which were about to be discussed are considered to be confidential.

1830. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 MARCH 2009.**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

The content of the legal update was received and noted. In particular:

Moorings

The Town Clerk explained that the Planning Dept of SODC had queried the installation of a gate and anti-climb barrier at the River Terrace moorings as the planning application did not include these features. The gate was installed as a security measure to prevent unauthorised access. The Town Clerk has pointed out the reasoning to SODC and is currently awaiting clarification of the position but the worst case scenario would mean the removal of the gate and barrier.

36 Market Place – Rent Review

The Rent Service was due to visit the property on 25 March. The tenant had requested that the Committee Clerk is in attendance.

CAB

The main reason for the current impasse is the inclusion in the draft lease of a mechanism for rent reviews. The CAB felt that if the Council put the rent up to commercial levels, even if termination notice was given, it would be obliged to pay the increased amount for 6 months. It was agreed to include a clause that would release the CAB from paying the higher figure for the notice period.

West Street Stores

Councillor Hillier advised the meeting of the correct spelling of Miss Bleackley's name. The Town Clerk is currently awaiting references before commissioning the formal letting legal documentation.

ii) **OUTSTANDING HTC LAND REGISTRATIONS**

The meeting reviewed the paper prepared by the Town Clerk and the report submitted by Blandy & Blandy. There was agreement that the registration of the Council's land should be a priority and that resource should be made available to locate the necessary documents that would enable the Land Registry to accept the voluntary registration applications.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

- (i) the appointment of a former member of staff on a part time basis within a budget of c£500 to complete the necessary research;
- (ii) the appointment of HM Land Registry to assist in the voluntary registration of the remaining Council land for those holdings where the relevant deeds and supporting documents are found;
- (iii) the appointment of Blandy & Blandy to assist in the voluntary registration of the Council land for those holdings where the relevant deeds and supporting documents cannot be found.

It was confirmed that the cost of the first recommendation would be met from the salaries budget whilst the other two would be met from the professional fees budget.

iii) HTC LOANS

The meeting reviewed the paper produced by the HTC Accountant which detailed the loans made by the Council.

Councillor Pye pointed out that the Tennis Club were on course to make their final payment this year which will clear the loan

Councillor Hodgkin told the meeting that the Eyot loan was covered by a strict legal agreement and their moorings were put up as collateral to protect the Council's interest.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

- (i) that permission is given for the Accountant to write to the Chairman of each of the above organisations, requesting a copy of their latest audited accounts.
- (ii) that representation is sought, on the management committees on each of the organisations listed in the report, by a Councillor or a representative, whose role it would be to seek assurance that the organisations are making arrangements to fulfil their repayment obligations under the terms of the loan agreements.

iv) HENLEY CRICKET CLUB

The meeting reviewed the letter from the Cricket Club and their request for funding and also noted that there would be an approach to the CIF for additional funds. Although the Club had a large Council loan outstanding it was felt that other funding bodies would not look favourably on any request from the Club if their local Council were seen as not supporting them. In view of this it was agreed that £500 should be made available from the grants budget as a gesture of good faith.

As the money needed to be spent in this financial year, the Finance & Administration Committee would need to resolve the decision as Full Council would not take place until the next financial year. It was proposed that delegated power should be given to the Committee to resolve this item. All 9 Councillors attending voted in favour.

It was RESOLVED that £500 is made available from the grants budget and paid to the Henley Cricket Club.

It was felt that the Council should write to the Cricket Club extending its support for their venture.

Action: Town Clerk to respond to David Winter's letter of 24 February 2009.

Councillor Dr Wood suggested that the Council may be able to act as guarantor for loans in future rather than having to actually fund them. However, Councillor Bland sounded a note of caution as it was felt that, especially at the present time, the Council's financial assets should be protected. Councillor Dr Wood accepted the views expressed and withdrew his proposal.

v) CCTV

Councillor Dr Wood explained the latest position with the proposed payment to SODC for the cameras. He had been in telephone conversations with Andy Rogers (Town Clerk of Wallingford) and it had been suggested that the 4 Council involved offer SODC £750/camera. If this was accepted, this would represent a saving against budget. This approach appeared to represent a sensible negotiating strategy.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that SODC are advised by letter in association with the other Town Councils involved of the proposal.

Councillor Dr Wood reassured the meeting that the current contact was being complied with and there was no question of any payments being stopped. It was pointed out that the budget set for 2009-10 for CCTV was not sufficient to meet the full current cost.

Councillor Zakss expressed concern that Councillor Dr Wood had been progressing the issue on his own without the involvement of the Town

Clerk or other Councillors. Her preference was that the issue be progressed at officer level i.e. by the Town Clerk and not a member of the Council.

Councillor Hillier reminded the Chairman that Council had agreed that council business should not be conducted by a single member.

Councillor Follett confirmed that he attended the initial meetings where the subject was covered (along with the future of the OSS).

Councillor Bland praised Councillor Dr Wood for the work he had undertaken so far but believed that SODC needed to persuade the police to do more towards paying for this aspect of security.

Councillor Skolar reported that the feeling from OCC was that they too were funding items that should more properly fall to the police. However, he was appreciative of the efforts Councillor Dr Wood had made although concurred with the previous comments concerning members working alone.

Following this item the Committee Clerk left the meeting at 21.00.

vi) STAFF APPRAISAL/INCREMENTS

Members discussed the private and confidential report of the Town Clerk copy having been circulated by e-mail to all Councillors.

The report gave details of all Staff employed by Henley Town Council as at March 2009, their designation, completed years of service, their spinal column range, spinal column point as at April 2008 and recommendations for incremental payments.

Following a lengthy debate, the Committee RECOMMENDS

- (i) that a comprehensive review of all contracts of employment is undertaken;
- (ii) that job descriptions for all staff are brought up to date;
- (iii) that a comprehensive review of those staff who are not on an incremental scale takes place in 2009-10 and that a further report be presented to Committee by 1 October 2009 on this;
- (iv) that a further report be presented to Committee on staff training needs in 2009-10;
- (v) that the Committee is minded to defer the payment of annual increments until the Town Clerk has completed the comprehensive review referred to in (iii) above, having regard to honouring those members of staff where a contractual obligation exists;
- (vi) that the payment of additional merit increments to two members of staff referred in the Clerks' report be also deferred until the comprehensive salaries review is completed;
- (vii) that in expectation of the National Salary Award for local government employees for 2009-10, a 1% increase in all staff salaries be applied from 1 April 2009 as an interim pay award; and

- (viii) that following the Town Clerk's appraisal by the Town Mayor, the Mayor elect will produce a report to Committee in May 2009 on the Town Clerk's salary in accordance with the provision set out in the Town Clerk's contract of employment and following completion of six months service with Henley Town Council.

Note: The Town Clerk having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in (viii) above left the Council Chamber at 21.30 and took no further part in the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Chairman

25.3.09