

Present: The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor A Follett (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Miss L Hillier
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor C Pye
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor Dr B G Wood (Chair)

In attendance: Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator
Mrs L Jones – HTC Accountant designate
A member of the press
Two members of the public

55. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin.

56. **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 Mrs G Dodds – Min 69 Legal Update (Headway/Brunner Hall) – personal & prejudicial – trustee of TYA.

Councillor Miss L Hillier – Min 59 2010–11 Budget – personal & prejudicial – shop owner.

Councillor Dr P Skolar – Min 59 Moorings – personal – boat owner

57. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 15 September 2009 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Dr B Wood.

58. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Estate Inspections

Councillor Miss L Hillier was aware her inspection was still outstanding and confirmed it would be undertaken as soon as practicable. Once all inspections have been completed, a consolidated report would be submitted to the FS&M Committee.

Highlands Farm/Northfield End

No further updates had been received but it was agreed that both items should remain on the Progress Report.

Councillors' mileage rates

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Councillors' mileage rate is reduced to 40p/mile from 1 April 2010.

The expenses form (on which all claims must be made) will be updated accordingly.

59. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

Dashboard.

Page 1. It was noted that the CLS situation (where outstanding income has yet to be passed to the Council) was still unresolved. The Town Clerk was asked to progress a solution as soon as possible.

Page 4. Cash position. The Chairman explained that the interest rate (0.02%) for the sum placed on deposit was the best available without tying up the cash for an unacceptable length of time.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the report be received and approved.

ii) Investment Performance Update

Members had before them the Investment Performance Update report for the period 1 April – 31 October 2009, copy having being issued.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Investment Performance Report for the period be noted.

iii) Monthly List of Payments/Cumulative Invoiced Costs

Payments:

Members had before them the List of Payments and Cumulative Invoiced Costs, copies having been issued.

It was **RESOLVED** that the reports be received and approved.

iv) 2010-11 Revenue Budget

The Chairman confirmed that the revenue estimates had already been reviewed and accepted by the Value for Money & Resources Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be received and approved.

v) Capital schemes for HTC 2010-11

An updated paper was circulated at the meeting (copy attached) which superseded that attached to the agenda and detailed the capital expenditure requirements from all the Committees. It was accepted that the figure allocated to the OSS/VIC was an estimate as it was not possible to be precise at this stage.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith questioned why an allocation for allotments had been made when he was yet to see a report go through Committee. The Chairman explained that the entry contained a purely notional amount so that provision existed should the matter be progressed. If this was pursued, it would follow the normal committee process.

Councillor Dr Skolar asked how the £114k lease purchase would actually be funded. It was agreed that further detail would be provided nearer the time.

60. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROPER ACCOUNTING PRACTICES**

The HTC Accountant designate introduced the paper. Both she and the Town Clerk had attended a Larger Councils Accounting Update and Consultation presentation that day. One of the main changes was that properties would now be valued at cost rather than their market value being reported. The 2008-09 accounts would need to be FRSSSE compliant. Failure to comply would result in the accounts being qualified.

The Chairman enquired how long it would take to get the HTC accounts in good order and comply with the new rules. The Town Clerk confirmed that, in the absence of detailed guidance, it was not possible to be specific but it was estimated that the time required would be days rather than weeks. The cost of switching to FRSSSE compliant accounts for 2009/10 and restating the 2008/9 accounts is likely to be £4-5k. The Committee agreed that representations be made to JPAG that this additional cost should be reimbursed to those local councils.

It was **RESOLVED** that

the Town Clerk and HTC Accountant designate are delegated responsibility to be involved in the consultation process and make a response on behalf of the Council by the deadline of 27 November 2009.

61. **HENLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGY 2009-11**

The Chairman introduced his paper which was co-written by Councillor Follett and was designed to draw together a number of existing strategies. The Investments heading showed a maximum drawdown in the period of £100k and Councillor Dr Skolar hoped that this drawdown would not be necessary. He also reiterated his belief that a longer term (rather than annual) financial plan would be more beneficial for the Council and give a sense of continuity. Councillor Dr Wood stated that it would be for the next elected Council to decide the length of the financial planning cycle.

The Revenue heading showed a precept increase of 1.8%. This would have to be ratified by Full Council on 8 December.

Councillor Follett explained that the list under Specific Project Delivery Strategy had been substantially reduced from about 30 items to only 8. He hoped the document would be useful to officers as it detailed the Council's priorities.

Item 3.7 Transition Town Sustainability contained a typo and the first sentence should have read – "To work with other authorities and action groups to reduce energy consumption and raise residents' awareness".

62. **MAINTENANCE/REFURBISHMENT OF COUNCIL ASSETS**

The meeting reviewed the report produced by the appointed surveyor Keith Douglas and agreed it had been a useful exercise with the report containing some valuable comments and some pleasant surprise in terms of lower projected costs (certainly in relation to the Chapel store and lay lights).

It was felt that the Council should develop the relationship with Keith Douglas and it would be a worthwhile exercise to update the list on an annual basis. These return visits would require a 'lighter touch' as it would only be updating the initial (comprehensive) report. Councillor Nimmo-Smith confirmed that it was normal practice to carry out follow-up inspections on a rolling annual basis.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that

the budget for 2010/11 be amended to reflect planned and unplanned maintenance, and that the Town Clerk prepares a detailed work schedule for that year that will include inter alia the items on the Maintenance Report, and report to the Finance, Strategy & Management Committee by 30 April 2010;

the Town Clerk ensures that the schedule of works advised for the current financial year is completed before 31 March 2010, and that he submits a position report to the Finance Strategy & Management Committee by 30 April 2010 confirming that the work has been satisfactorily completed;

cognisance is taken of this report in the drafting of the 2011/2012 budget; and

the Town Clerk prepares a report outlining a proposal which includes the use of the preferred surveyor, the long term inspections of HTC properties and the rolling update of the maintenance plan.

63. **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3**

The Vice-Chair Councillor Follett gave an update on the situation. He confirmed that no additional entries had been added to the list supplied with the agenda. Councillor Nimmo-Smith reported that OCC's requirements had only just been posted on their website. He would provide the appropriate link to the Town Clerk and asked that it was forwarded to all Councillors. The information required by OCC was more detailed than expected. At present it showed there were 21 items in the Henley section but it was pointed out that the Reading Transport Innovation Fund needed to be added to the list as it would have an effect on Henley. Councillor Miss Hillier asked that improved bike holding facilities was included on the list as she felt that the present number needed to be increased.

It was noted that the return needed to be with OCC by 18 January 2010 but the Working Group (including the Town Clerk) will meet before Christmas to discuss the proposed response in detail.

64. **ENERGY SURVEY**

Councillor Mrs Dodds gave a verbal update on the situation. She had been in discussion with a local university and advised that a number of their MSc students (who are specialising in this field) would be willing to carry out the energy surveys on the Council's specified properties at no cost. The survey, in addition to looking at energy usage, consumables and equipment, would also consider the human impact on energy usage. However, the analysis stage would not start until April with the resulting report not being delivered until September 2010. It was agreed that the university offer should be pursued and

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

Councillor Mrs Dodds produce a paper for the next FS&M meeting which specifies the terms of reference under which the students will operate. The terms should also cover the buildings to be surveyed, the scope of the survey, deliverables and timescale. The university should be made aware that the Council will insist on a confidentiality agreement and no material can be reproduced/distributed to other parties without the Council's permission.

At this point (20.20), Councillor Mrs Bland left the meeting.

65. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the draft calendar of meetings for 2010/2011 be approved and accepted.

66. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The Town Clerk introduced the paper which he hoped would clarify the situation regarding participation at meetings. It was noted that OCC allowed public participation at all of their committees. Although, in principle, this appeared to be a good idea, as it would encourage community involvement, it could cause difficulties if planning meetings were inundated.

As the paper only addressed public participation at Full Council it was agreed that the Town Clerk should produce a further report which

proposed guidelines that could be put in place should participation be opened up to all Committee meetings.

Action: Town Clerk to produce the appropriate report.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that

Full Council replaces the Public Question Time Session with a Public Participation Session with respect to items on the agenda of up to but no longer than 20 minutes. During this session members of the public may also make representations to Council, make any comments or ask questions relating to any matter which affects the town.

67. **IT REVIEW**

The Town Clerk introduced the paper which had been written by the Accountant based on the findings from the MFG report. There was general agreement that updating the Council's IT was essential as there was a progressive move towards the 'paperless office'. Councillor Follett expressed concern that the report did not make mention of residents/public needs and was almost entirely inwardly focussed. Any new systems introduced should also be compatible with customer needs and all reports must bear in mind the customer interface.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith suggested that the Town Clerk may wish to approach SODC as they had gone through a similar upgrading process. It would be a useful exercise to see how they coped and the pitfalls to avoid. He could also enquire if/how HTC could join the Oxon County Network.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND**

that the Town Clerk is authorised to acquire a telephone system for up to £400 per month

that the Town Clerk is authorised to acquire a multi purpose unit at a cost of up to £200 per month

that the capital elements of proposals 1 and 2 above (together £2,112) are included in the capital budget for 2010/11

that the Town Clerk reviews and revises the Council's document management system and reports back to the Committee when the Council is ready to proceed with phase 3 of the project.

68. **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 were considered to be confidential.

69. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2009.**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

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

Registration of HTC land

Blandy & Blandy (B&B) had recently been in contact and advised that it would be beneficial (on cost grounds) if one application was made to the Land Registry covering all the unregistered land. A fixed fee of £700 had been agreed with the Land Registry for the process. B&B had estimated their fees for the work at £3,750 + VAT + disbursements. A councillor would be required to work with B&B to enable a Statutory Declaration to be prepared and signed. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that Blandy and Blandy be appointed to complete the task of registering the Council's unregistered land for a fee of £3,750 + VAT + disbursements along with the Land Registry fee of £700; and

that Councillors Mrs G Dodds and Pye work with Blandy and Blandy to enable a Statutory Declaration to be prepared and signed.

ii) VFM WORKING GROUP

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the minutes of the Value for Money & Resources Working Party held on 28 October 2009 be approved.

iii) LEASE EXTENSION

Councillor Pye restated his concern that a clear, long-term strategy for the Makins site was still not in place and that to extend the Headway lease could compromise any long term plans. Councillor Nimmo-Smith thought that as TYA position was still vague and no other plans were yet decided it seemed unfair to keep Headway in limbo especially as their fundraising ability was being hampered.

After much debate it was agreed that the lease should be extended but with an increased rent. Councillor Mrs Dodds asked the Town Clerk to bear in mind when negotiating the new rent that Headway was a charity and not a commercial organisation.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that

the Council grants Headway a new 10 year (from the date of signing) lease, with an increased level of rent to be negotiated by the Town Clerk and approved by the FS&M Committee; and that

Headway is reminded that it is required to meet the Council's professional fees incurred in the exercise.

iv) BATH SITE LEASE

The meeting reviewed the latest version of the lease which its currently with the other party's solicitors. No comments were made and it was expected that the lease would be completed without complication.

v) **OSS/VIC SERVICE REVIEW**

Members had before then the private and confidential report of the Town Clerk for developing the One Stop Shop (OSS) and the Henley Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and the staffing arrangements for the new combined service. Having regard to the Council decision to combine the VIC, formerly located in the Barn with the OSS from 1 October 2009 and the Council's continuing commitment to both tourism and the provision of an information point to deal with customer enquiries from Henley residents it was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the two functions are combined and a new Henley Information Centre (HIC) is launched from 1 April 2010.

The Committee proceeded to discuss the arrangements for enlarging the present office accommodation, having regard to the cramped temporary arrangements. Members were reminded of the original proposal presented to Full Council by KVB Designs on 11 August and having regard to the importance of completing the project by 1 April 2010, it was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Town Clerk be given delegated powers to re-approach KVB designs with a view to appointing them as both designer and project managers.

The report gave details of the hourly rates of pay for the VIC staff who had been transferred across from French Jones to the town council on the same terms and conditions of employment under TUPE arrangements. Members were asked to consider the assimilation of their current hourly rate of pay to a single spinal column point within the scope of the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Services for Local Government Services now that they are local authority employees. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Council assimilates the present hourly rate of pay for the visitor information assistants to Spinal Column Point 6, £12,489 or £6.491 per hour and for the senior assistant to Spinal Column Point 11, £14,733 or £7.657 from 1 December 2009.

Members gave detailed consideration to the revised staffing structure for the new Henley Information Centre. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the post of OSS supervisor be deleted from the establishment and that a new post of Henley Information Centre Supervisor be created, the position to be advertised internally on a grade to be verified by the Town Clerk;

that it is the Council's aspirations that the current staff structure be retained subject to the introduction of a new staff structure by 1 May 2010, meanwhile a flexible approach be taken to any staff leaving or retiring;
that opportunities for Saturday working be supported on the basis it is with the total agreement and full co-operation of the staff;

that the hours of opening to the public be curtailed to 3pm in December until 1 April 2010; and

that a Henley Information Centre Working Group be established to replace the OSS and VIC Working Groups, with delegated authority to proceed with the construction up to the budget allocation within the capital programme, and that the membership thereof be appointed at Full Council, to include Councillor I Reissmann.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Chairman
26.11.09