

**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 Mrs J Wood  
Councillor Dr P Skolar  
Councillor C Pye

**In attendance:** Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk  
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator  
A member of the press  
Two members of the public

1831. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Miss L M Hillier.  
Apologies for a possible late arrival was made in advance by Councillor Dr B Wood.

In the absence of the Chairman, the vice Chairman, Councillor A Follett took the chair.

1832. **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 – Day Centre – Min 1841 –personal and prejudicial – member of Management Committee.

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin – Day Centre – Min 1841 – personal and prejudicial – member of Management Committee. Lease extension (legal update) Min 1844 – personal and prejudicial – employee of TYA.

Councillor Mrs G Zakss - Day Centre – Min 1841 – personal and prejudicial – member of Management Committee. Lease extension (legal update) Min 1844 – personal and prejudicial – trustee of TYA.

Councillor Dr Skolar – Min 1834 – Moorings – personal – boat owner.

1833. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2009 were received and approved with the following amendment:

Min 1824 i) Page 6/8. The Committee recommendation should have read

‘that the Carbon Trust be invited to inspect all buildings owned by Henley Town Council, to see if advice can be given on how to be more energy efficient.’

1834. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Inspections

The Town Clerk advised that no inspections had yet taken place. To clarify the situation, he reminded Councillors that it was their responsibility to contact Gareth Bartle to arrange a mutually convenient date to carry out the inspections.

*Action: Committee Clerk to resend the e-mail giving contact information.*

Moorings/Jetties

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that the retrospective planning application was due to be heard by the District Council on 13 May. As a jetty is considered a structure, permission was required. In addition, an enforcement action would be threatened if permission was not gained. The District Council had received a couple of objections to the building of the jetties and these were being considered. Councillor Follett agreed to keep an eye on the agendas and a decision would then be taken as to whether a Councillor should attend the relevant planning meeting.

*Action: Town Clerk to keep the Chairman (and vice Chairman) apprised with any developments.*

1835. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

Page 2 – it was noted that Bank Interest showed a positive variance from budget. A well received outcome considering the difficult prevailing economic conditions.

Page 4 – Mill Meadow Parking – the graph showed an increase in revenue for March. It was speculated this had resulted in better collection rates allied to the better weather. Councillor Dr P Skolar was pleased to note that the revenue figures could now be split between mooring and parking.

Note 4 detailed the value of the rates refund. The Town Clerk explained that the Accts Asst has been tasked to look critically at the rateable value of all the Council buildings. This would involve employing a consultant whose fee would be based on a percentage of the saving achieved.

*Councillor Mrs J Bland entered the meeting at 19.40.*

Page 5 – Other Expenditure – Wages – it was noted that the outturn was significantly under budget. The Town Clerk explained that this was due to the reduction in the Parks Service workforce. The Service was operating 1 person light during the week as there had been no replacement for Alan Webb. One weekend member of staff had recently been recruited but another was still required.

*Councillor B Wood entered the meeting at 19.45*

Page 6 – Barn insurance – it was pointed out that there was no separate line for insurance and the question was raised as to whether the building was insured. The Town Clerk assured the meeting that it was. *(Secretary's note – the Accountant has confirmed that the Barn is insured for c£424k)*

Page 8 – Councillor Dr P Skolar noted that savings had been made on items such as public toilets, maintenance, health & safety etc and speculated on the wisdom of making savings in such important areas. Councillor A Follett suggested that when the final end of year accounts were finalised that each committee looked at their expenditure and that appropriate budgets and priorities were set for 2009-10.

*At this point Councillor Dr B Wood took over the role of Chairman from Councillor Follett.*

Financial report:

Page 1 – (2). Reasons for Improvement. Councillor Dr P Skolar pointed out that the savings identified represented mainly one-off costs and therefore would not be carried forward into next year.

Page 3 – (5). Capital Expenditure. Councillor A Follett reported that the figures quoted in the text were not supported by those in the table and did not read across to those on the Capex sheet.

*Action: The Town Clerk (via the Accountant) to provide an explanation of the discrepancies/re-issue the relevant part of the report.*

ii) Cashflow Position

Members had before them the Cashflow Report and Balance Sheet for the 12 months to March 2009, copy having being issued.

The cash balance figure of £36.9k at the end of March 2010, and the fact that no drawdown from investments would be needed, was noted. The Chairman was optimistic that with the planned controlled costs and stimulated income, this figure could be achieved.

It was RESOLVED that the Cashflow Report for the 12 months to March 2009 be noted

iii) Investment Performance Update

Members had before them the Investment Performance Update Report for the 12 months to March 2009, copy having being issued.

It was RESOLVED that the Investment Performance Report for the 12 months to March 2009 be noted.

iv) List of Payments

Members had before them the List of Payments, copy having being issued.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and approved.

1836. **STRATEGIC RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Value For Money Working Group had spent a long time reviewing and updating the document originally produced in September 2008. Councillor Dr B Wood explained that one of the Council's main priorities next year would be to focus on strategic risk which, by its very nature, would be an ongoing process.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the notes of progress to date were accepted with a further report being submitted to the Finance Strategy & Management meeting on 2 June.

1837. **REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Value For Money Working Group had also reviewed this document. It had become apparent that the Council would benefit from procurement and investment policies being in place. A renewal/repairs fund will also need to

be set up to ensure continued maintenance of the Council's buildings. Greater emphasis will be paid to risk management e.g. by increasing and targeting internal controls as well as ensuring good governance.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the Value For Money Working Group's review into the effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal audit is accepted.

1838. **STAFF TRAINING**

The previous Town Clerk had been tasked with producing a training plan but due to time constraints this had not been accomplished before she left. A Skills Advisor has been asked to visit in March 2009 and following discussions with the current Town Clerk had produced an action plan. Although comprehensive, it was felt to be 'light' on training for Councillors. The Town Clerk explained that there were not any 'Chairing Skills' courses being run at present for Councillors. However, there was nothing to preclude engaging an external trainer and inviting attendees from other Councils (which would help meet the cost). There was also the possibility that the council could 'piggy back' onto courses run by larger local councils. He recommended courses run by CiLCA.

It was generally felt that training for Councillors would be beneficial. Councillor A Follett pointed out that next year's budget should make adequate provision for the increase in demand. He also pointed out that training should be given (hopefully) within the next six months to ensure maximum benefit as there was no guarantee that Councillors would be re-elected.

The Town Clerk explained that he acted as a mentor for the 'Working with your Council' course and would be happy to act in this capacity for the two committee clerks who would be undertaking the course this year.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the Council adopts the Training Needs Assessment

1839. **HR POLICIES**

The meeting noted the Acas Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance procedures and agreed that they should be adopted without amendment.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the Acas Code of Practice covering Disciplinary and Grievances procedures should be adopted by Henley on Thames Town Council.

1840. **MARKET RENTS**

Two letters had been received concerning the markets and each was discussed and considered separately.

a) Letter from John Fisher dated 12 March 2009.

The Town Clerk had reviewed the market agreement which specifically says that the Council would not be liable if trading could not take place due to adverse weather conditions. The licence to trade actually covers 40 dates but payment is only made for 38. In view of this, the meeting believed that there was no case to concede to John Fisher's request to have credit notes issued for the two lost days trading.

*Action: Town Clerk to write to John Fisher advising of the Committee's decision.*

b) Letter from Diane and Paul Harris dated 18 March 2009.

It was noted that the increase in costs for the stallholders had already been agreed by a previous F&A Committee and ratified at Full Council. The increases (in monetary terms) had been minimal and the market is able to operate for 40 dates a year whilst only paying for 38. Again the Council could not be held responsible for the weather. It was agreed that no change should be made to the level of rents charged.

*Action: Town Clerk to write to Diane and Paul Harris advising of the Committee's decision.*

Councillor Mrs G Zakss said that she had been talking to a number of the stallholders and felt that they too were experiencing difficult times in these economic conditions because they are predominantly a cash based industry. The Committee agreed to take a view on rent levels when the next fees and charges were set.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that no abatement in rent be granted due to adverse weather and against 2009/10 rents

1841. **DAY CENTRE REPAINTING**

Councillor Follett gave an update. The painters had finished the painting sooner than anticipated and all had agreed that they had done a good job. They had also carried out woodwork repairs on the roof, porch, windows and window sills. The back door had also been replaced with a fireproof door. The only outstanding work (from that agreed) was to repaint the sign and this is expected to be completed shortly. The Day Centre had already agreed to make a full contribution towards the cost. It was noted that the windows, although now repaired, were in an overall poor state and it was expected that they would need replacing in the next couple of years.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the report be received and noted with pleasure.

1842. **LOCALITY PRIMARY SCHOOL REVIEW**

The meeting reviewed the letter from OCC. Councillor Dr B Wood advised that he would like to attend the meeting on 21 May. Councillor A Follett said he was unable to attend but would fill out the form attached to the OCC letter so that Councillor Dr B Wood could take his comments to the meeting.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that Councillor Dr B Wood attends the meeting on 21 May on behalf of Henley on Thames Town Council (and informs OCC accordingly)

1843. **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.

1844. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 APRIL 2009.**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

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

36 Market Place

The meeting sought reassurance that the tenant was content with the rent increase. The Town Clerk was able to give that reassurance. This item was now complete and could be removed from the legal update.

CAB

The Town Clerk gave an update on the limited progress on the lease. The issue remained that the CAB was unhappy with the rent review element which (in theory) exposed them to having the rent increased to a commercial level. A meeting had already been scheduled with Mike Hamblin (CAB trustee) and Nigel Stanbrook (colleague solicitor) for 30<sup>th</sup> March to discuss issues and move the process forward. The meeting felt

that if the rent review was the stumbling block then the Council should be prepared to limit the rent increase by the RPI inflation rate.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the CAB rent be increased in line with increases in RPI and that the Town Clerk be mandated to expedite matters to ensure the lease is finalised.

#### Registration of HTC Land

The ex-member of staff had started to look for the relevant paperwork but had not yet found anything significant. It was agreed that it may be productive to contact Mrs J Pickett (a previous Town Clerk) to see if she could shed any light on the problem.

*Action: Town Clerk to discuss the issue with Mrs Pickett.*

#### Bath Site

John Farmer had advised that the draft lease was 95% complete and should be ready to send to the Council in the next two weeks. It was agreed that it should be reviewed by the Finance Strategy & Management Committee before being forwarded to the Council's solicitors.

#### AFC Henley

The Town Clerk explained that the issue of the new lease had been complicated by the fact that the Henley Hockey Club had been leased part of the same land as AFC Henley. There needed to be a dialogue between the two clubs which would see AFC granting the Hockey Club permission to use the land for a limited period during Regatta. It was hoped that the matter could be resolved by the end of next month.

#### West Street Stores

Councillor Mrs J Wood expressed concern that the faults identified by the tenant (rotten floorboard and blocked gutter) were not being repaired. She felt it was good practice to keep buildings maintained. The Town Clerk pointed out that the Store was 'sold as seen' and the tenant was fully aware of its limitations. Unfortunately, there was no routine maintenance plan in place that covers all the Council's buildings.

## **ii) VALUE FOR MONEY (VFM) WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin was disturbed by the suggestion that the CCTV cameras may be turned off during the winter due to budgetary constraints. Councillor Dr B Wood said that that was only one of the options under consideration. Councillor Ducker (SODC) had been sent a letter by the Town Clerk outlining the cost that Henley Town Council was prepared to meet for the provision of CCTV cameras. The outcome of the proposal to SODC will determine the action that will need to be taken and any resulting budget implications will have to be discussed by the Finance and Administration Committee.

It was RESOLVED that the notes of the VFM meeting be received and noted.

*At this point Councillors Mrs G Zakss and Mrs E Hodgkin left the meeting.*

**iii) LEASE EXTENSION**

The meeting considered a letter from Headway and was sympathetic to the request for an extension of the lease term as it was appreciated that the organisation was committed to the site and the current term was detrimental to its fundraising ability.

It was unclear what the intentions were of the Thamesfield Youth Association (TYA) and what commitments had been given by the Council when it was first proposed that they move onto the Makins site. The Committee did not feel it could automatically agree to the Headway lease extension until a) the TYA had confirmed their intentions and b) the Council had considered its overall strategy for the site (which may be dependant on who the proposed users were).

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that the Town Clerk:

- speaks to Brian Pyle (Headway) to determine his exact requirements inc his preferred new term.
- discusses with Oliver Makower what the TYA propose to do about relocating their youth centre and what the results of their survey will mean for the project.
- discusses the Headway letter with TYA to gain feedback.
- suggests a meeting between the three parties involved so that everyone is aware of developments and that both TYA and Headway are aware of the views and sentiments of Councillors.
- presents a further report to Committee

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman

29.4.09