

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor C Pye
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor A Follett (Chairman)
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor I Reissmann (Vice chairman)
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor Dr B Wood

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

58. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor C W Gibson had sent his apologies. Councillor C Pye had given apologies for a possible late attendance.

59. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Dr P Skolar - Min 69 – budget/moorings -- personal (boat owner). Councillor Mrs J Bland – Min 66 – fees & charges (Market Rents) – personal & prejudicial – shop owner

60. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

There were no questions from the public.

61. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 21 September 2010 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

62. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Northfield End Highway

The response from OCC regarding the FOI request was noted. Councillor Reissmann had prepared a reworded version of the request which he undertook to forward to the Town Clerk.

It was confirmed that a letter requesting a meeting with OCC to discuss the issues of Northfield End had been sent on 27 October.

Strategy Document

The updated strategy document was noted. However, a number of the entries did not reflect current thinking especially in respect to the budget. It was felt that over-writing the entries each time changes were required was not correct and a critical look should be taken at the document as a whole to ascertain whether it was still relevant, in what format the strategy should be held and how updates should be reflected. It was agreed that a report be submitted to the next FS&M meeting.

Action: Town Clerk/HTC Accountant

Councillor C Pye joined the meeting at 7.45.

63. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

The meeting felt it was slightly mis-leading to show the budget deficit as -£88.8k in the current year as the figure included -£50k for the Parks Service Staffing which had been postponed until 2011-12. The current 2010-11 deficit remained at -£38.8k.

A query was raised concerning the £7k allocated to the public toilets and on what basis the figure had been constructed. It was explained that the figure represented 1 steam clean, the installation of a new urinal and associated necessary repairs.

It was agreed that a monthly cashflow statement should be provided as part of the budget reporting papers in future so that closer monitoring (and greater transparency) can be achieved.

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

ii) Investment Performance Update

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be received and noted.

iii) Monthly List of Payments

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

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

64. **INVESTMENT MANAGERS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting were examined but no comments were made.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the notes of the meeting be received and approved.

65. **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY DOCUMENT 2011-12**

Members reviewed the content of the strategy document but no substantive comments were made.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the strategy document for 2011-12 be received and approved.

66. **FEES & CHARGES**

Councillor Mrs J Bland left the room for this item.

Members debated the various rates of increase for the items listed and whether the increases were appropriate in view of the level of demand and the ability to pay.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the proposed fees and charges for 2011-12 be approved with the following amendments:

Old Fire Station Gallery – Hirers outside the town increased to £300.

Upper Market Place Parking increased to £750.

Councillor Mrs J Bland rejoined the meeting.

67. **CEMETERY FEES & CHARGES**

The Town Clerk introduced the paper and explained that this was the first time comparative figures with other Council's cemeteries had been seen. The paper addressed the issue of ex-Henley residents paying triple fees and these had now been graduated to take account of how long residents had left the area. The Council no longer had responsibility for grave digging as this had been passed to the funeral directors which had produced a small saving of c£3k/year. A meeting had recently taken place between the Town Clerk and the funeral directors (Tomalins and AB Walker) to discuss procedures and make sure everyone was aware and in agreement with the new process.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the grave digging function which is to be handed over to the funeral directors and replaced with a new cemetery maintenance charge from 1 January 2011 be approved;

the revised sliding scale for non-Henley residents' charges be approved; and

the recommended increases in all charges become applicable from 1 January 2011.

68. **POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS (PSCOs)**

Councillor Dr B Wood introduced his report and also made reference to PS Pink's paper on the same subject. Councillor Dr Wood's interpretation of the figures indicated that Henley, whilst having to fund half a PCSO, appeared to receive a less comprehensive service compared to those areas whose PCSOs are not funded by their town or parish council. He pointed out that the town's residents paid c£1m towards the policing of the town which seemed excessive and suggested that the aim was to have the funding for the current half PCSO transferred to the police budget. As the contracts for the PCSO is due to end in April 2011 it was an ideal time to enter into discussions with the police to look at the provision and funding of the two Henley PCSOs.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

a meeting should be arranged with the police to discuss the basis on which the PCSO service is provided in Henley (compared with other communities) as well as future provision and funding. The meeting should ideally take place in the next month involving the VFM group but having regard to the fact that this item falls to the Town & Community Committee representation from this committee should also be included.

Action: Town Clerk/Senior Committee Administrator.

69. **2011-12 BUDGET**

The summary sheet of the budget showed a deficit for 2011-12 of -£24k. concerned was raised that this may mean having to sell investments during a period when the stock market was low and therefore not realising the best return. It was always the committee's strategy to achieve a 'zero' budget but there was the recognition that 2013-14 may show a large deficit. In view of this, it was felt that the budget should get back into positive territory with a reduced need for a drawdown from investments. It was accepted that there should be a 0% increase in the precept but the VFM Group was asked to examine each line of the budget to see what expenditure could be trimmed. The Officers were asked to check with OCC to ensure that the parking warden and highway verge grass cutting recharges would still be in place from 1 April 2011.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the revised 2011-12 budget be noted and that the VFM group (to which all members of the Council be invited to attend) re-examines the budget and presents the revised (final) version to FS&M on 14 December.

Action: HTC Accountant/VFM Group

70. **SPORTSBANK**

The meeting noted the content of the report and agreed that the sportsbank was no longer appropriate.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the recommendation to place loan repayments in a ring-fenced sports and community bank account be overturned.

71. **HENLEY INFORMATION CENTRE (HIC) – POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW**

A discussion took place regarding the operation of the HIC now that it had been up and running for 6 months. It was generally felt that combining the One Stop Shop and the Visitor Information Centre had been successful and the staff were to be congratulated on all their efforts.

It was pointed out that the handling of enquiries had become more efficient over the years with an average query 10years ago costing £10, this had now been reduced to £1. The percentage of telephone enquiries had risen and it was questioned whether there was now a training need to provide staff with the required skills.

The footfall figures had shown a substantial reduction which was a worrying trend and it was felt that this should be investigated further. It was suggested that the HIC needed a higher profile and the Council's website could be put to good use to stimulate tourism.

The HIC still carry out a number of functions for SODC/OCC as well as fielding enquiries. It was estimated that there was a cost to the Town Council of c£7-8k on SODC and £5k on OCC enquiries. It was suggested that a negotiated handling fee could be charged.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

A small subgroup be set up (for a limited duration) to:

- engage with OCC and SODC to see if there is an opportunity to recharge them for some of the services the HIC perform on a handling charge basis;
- stimulate and promote tourism through the web;
- examine how to promote the hiring potential of all the Council facilities (not just the Town Hall);
- The composition of the subgroup to be decided at Full Council on 23 November; and
- a budget to buy stock and sell small tourist products in the HIC be agreed.

72. **REVISED STANDING ORDERS (SO)**

The Town Clerk introduced the paper and explained that the new SO were based on the NALC version. Councillors had already had the opportunity to raise queries when the paper was originally circulated (with tracked changes).

The meeting was unanimous in its praise for the effort the Town Clerk had expended on this extremely large task which had turned out to be an exceptional piece of work.

A member did ask that one small amendment was made to SO 11b. so that it read " ... no similar motion may be moved **on the same decision** within a further 6 months."

The Town Clerk confirmed he would update the paper and distribute a complete clean copy.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the recommended changes to the revised draft Standing Orders be approved (with the addition of the above change) and recommended to Full Council for adoption.

73. **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2011-12**

Members had before them a draft calendar of meetings for the Local Government year commencing in May 2011. A question was asked whether the recess period was beneficial or did it mean that the post recess agendas were too large and unwieldy. The Town Clerk confirmed that the committee administrators used this period productively on other tasks and would not like to see the recess discontinued. In addition,

August was the main holiday period and therefore disruption was kept to a minimum. The Town Clerk confirmed that a 'recess committee' of Full Council could be convened if any urgent business arose.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the schedule of meetings be adopted.

74. **PRESENTATION OF BUSINESS TO FULL COUNCIL**

The paper addressed ways to improve the management of agenda items and ensure that meetings are not unnecessarily prolonged. This item generated a lot of discussion mainly because the FS&M committee comprises town, district and county councillors each having different points of view.

Progress reports

It was felt that presentation of these reports led to unnecessary duplication with the relevant committees and only served to prolong Full Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the agenda item Progress Report be removed from the agenda and that all items debated at Full Council which need progressing should be referred to the appropriate committee for action.

District and County Councillors Reports

The County and District Councillors present felt it was not practical just to submit written reports. This would mean that if any developments took place after the report was submitted, they would be unable to give a verbal update.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the verbal reporting system should continue with the session only allowing 10 minutes for county reports and 10 minutes for district reports with items being restricted to matters which affect the town. Any questions then asked by councillors must be relevant to Henley. Responsibility would ultimately rest with the Chairman to keep proper order.

Order of Business

Although not universally popular it was considered that the Reports of Committee were more important to the Town Council than the District and County Reports even if this meant that county and district councillors would have to remain in the meeting until the end before presenting their report and, therefore, the order of business should be varied to take this into account.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the order of business at Full Council be varied in such a way that Council considers the Reports of Committees after the Public Participation Session.

Delegation

It had become apparent that a scheme of delegation needed to be introduced to allow committees the ability to progress certain matters without waiting for Full Council to ratify committee recommendations.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

a further report by the Town Clerk on the introduction of a formal scheme of delegation to committees be presented to a future meeting.

75. **DRAFT LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY CONSULTATION**

The meeting noted the 'Henley priority facility needs' identified by SODC. Only 2 priorities had been identified (1 for a football pitch and 1 for a rugby pitch) both of which were supported by members. However, there seemed to be no rationale as to why other sports had not been included, particularly racket sports. The document seemed to take a very limited and superficial view with no overall strategic direction. In addition, there were no details on pricing structures (youths/pensioners) or any disability strategy.

The deadline for a response (5 November) was extremely tight and the return would need to be made before the meeting of Full Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

The Town Clerk contacts SODC and advises them of the Committee's comments and emphasising the fact that the Council's six week committee cycle does not allow it to respond to such tight deadlines.

76. **OXFORDSHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW**

The meeting noted the content of the paper but no material comments were made.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

there was no suggested change

77. **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS & PLACES**

There was much debate on this issue and it was agreed that there should be two polling stations in each north and south ward. North ward had Town Hall and Valley Road School as the designated places. If, for any reason, Valley Road School was no longer available, then a suitable alternative would need to be found. South ward used Trinity Hall but needed an additional venue to overcome the high number of electors using the same venue.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

SODC should be advised of the Council's requirements.

78. **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2011-30**

The meeting noted OCC's invitation to the council to host informal discussions concerning the LTP strategy. It was agreed that selected councillors should take up the invitation.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the Town Clerk advises OCC (at the earliest opportunity) that Councillors Follett, Dr Wood and Reissmann would like to attend a meeting.

79. **EQUALITY ACT 2010**

The Town Clerk had produced a comprehensive report of the changes brought in by the Act and the meeting accepted the content especially in relation to the Council's application form.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the report be noted and that the proposed changes to the job application form to comply with the new Equality Act be approved.

80. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR**

It had become traditional for the Council to close the office between Christmas and New Year and allow staff discretionary time off. It was also felt that the contribution towards their festivities was also warranted.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the Town Hall is closed from Wednesday 29th December 2010 through to Friday 31st 2010, and that three days are granted to staff as additional, discretionary, non contractual leave, subject to any cover arrangements required by the Town Clerk. Staff who do not normally work on these days are not granted any additional compensatory leave.

staff required to provide cover during the normal working hours of 29th, 30th, 31st December 2010 i.e. Park Services and Wardens be granted time off in lieu on a straight one for one basis..

the Council makes a contribution of £300 towards the staff Christmas festivities.

81. **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.

**MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF
THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 2
NOVEMBER 2010.**

82. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

The Committee received and noted the report on the outstanding legal issues. In particular:

Registration of HTC Land

The meeting was pleased to note that this matter had now been completed and was grateful for all the work that had been undertaken.

Bath Site

Although this issue still continues, there have been further complications/delays. The Town Clerk reassured the meeting that the situation was being closely monitored.

ii) HENLEY ROWING CLUB

There was a large discrepancy between the District Valuers estimate of the appropriate commercial rent and the rent actually charged by the Council. Before any rent increase is decided, it was agreed that a meeting should be held with the Rowing Club to discuss matters. An examination of their most recent accounts should also be made.

The HTC Accountant would be asked to check the financial regulations to see how less than commercial rents should be shown in the accounts and if there was a requirement to show a compensatory grant.

Action: HTC Accountant

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that

the Town Clerk arranges a meeting with the Rowing Club to explore the issue of the rent and to bring a further report to FS&M including the proper accounting element.

The meeting closed at 22.05 pm.

Chairman
3.11.10