

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 C W Gibson
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor I Reissmann (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Dr B Wood

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

145. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Dr P Skolar.

146. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith – Min 149 – Progress Report (Northfield End) -- personal – (OCC Councillor).

Councillor Mrs G Dodds – Min 154 (Youth Centre) – trustee – personal & prejudicial.

Councillor Dr Wood - Min 154 (Youth Centre) – Town Council representative – personal & prejudicial.

Councillor Mrs J Wood - Min 154 (Youth Centre) – Town Council representative – personal & prejudicial.

147. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Pippa Hare (New Street)

The question was asked as to the status of the 'triangle' at Northfield End i.e. whether it was in private ownership or had been designated as highway. A member confirmed that the land in question was not highway.

Councillor Dr B Wood (Blandy Road)

Dr Wood advised the meeting that, following a hearing at SODC, the licence for 'Diamonds and Pearls' had been revoked. The decision (in part) had been based on 106 reported incidents that had taken place. The Club had 21 days to appeal to an Oxford magistrate.

148. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 8 March 2011 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

149. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Northfield End Highway

(Councillor D Nimmo-Smith, as an OCC councillor, declared he would not take part in the discussion of this item.)

A member enquired of the Town Clerk whether the copy OCC letter, dated 15 March 2011, was the extent of the latest correspondence as it did not appear that all outstanding questions had been resolved. He was told that the committee had seen all correspondence to date. The member also referred to the piece of land known as the triangle and hoped SODC would not grant planning permission for any alteration to its current state (HTC had already registered its objection). He failed to see why this land was not designated as highway when the adjacent land was recognised as highway and felt that OCC needed to provide some sort of justification.

It was proposed that the Town Clerk write to OCC referencing the 1980 Highways Act and asking for justification for the triangle not being designated as highway. A recorded vote was taken:

For

Councillor C W Gibson
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor I Reissmann
Councillor C Pye
Councillor Mrs J Wood

Against

Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor A Follett
Councillor Dr B Wood

The motion was carried.

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

that the Town Clerk write to OCC referencing the 1980 Highways Act and asking for justification for the triangle not being designated as highway.

IT Review

The minutes of the IT Working Group were noted. It was felt that the group may benefit from the inclusion of more Councillors especially if the content and structure of the website was to be revised in conjunction with the progressive move towards electronic storage and distribution.

150. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

The size of the positive variance (£134.5k) was noted with the figure being larger than originally expected. The figure had been inflated by larger than expected receipts from Mill Meadows parking and cemetery fees in particular which could not have been originally forecast. Taking a prudent approach to budgeting could produce these unexpected 'windfalls' which were always useful for funding other projects. The final variance figure has yet to be calculated and would be done so when all the end of year invoices/receipts were processed. The expected net surplus (£95.7k) was noted as a pleasing outcome.

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

Arising from the foregoing, the Town Clerk reported that the new Display Energy Certificate had revealed that the Town Hall had moved up a category from Band D to Band C. This had been due in no small part to the installation of the roof insulation and good housekeeping measures following the energy audit survey. It was also apparent from the reduced expenditure on utility costs.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted with satisfaction and that a news release be issued for publication on the Council's website.

ii) Investment Performance Update

The latest performance was reviewed and it was noted that the value of the Council's investments had indeed risen to the level predicted by the Investment Managers.

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 been issued.

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

iv) 2010-11 Supplier Costs

There was a short discussion as to whether there was any scope to push for discounts from the Council's biggest cost suppliers. This was felt unlikely in most cases the majority were under existing contracts.

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

151. **INTERNAL AUDITORS ANNUAL REPORT**

There was no material discussion on the item and it was agreed that the auditors comments were noted and the HTC's accountant's responses be approved.

It was **RESOLVED** that the HTC Accountant's comments on the auditor's letter be received approved and adopted.

152. **MONIES ON SHORT TERM DEPOSIT**

It was recognised that the Council's Annual Treasury Management Strategy document needed to be amended to allow the accountant the facility to invest temporary working capital cash.

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

the Annual Treasury Management Strategy document be amended with immediate effect to read A1/A+ in place of AAA, allowing the HTC Accountant to obtain the best rate of interest from deposit-takers .

153. **FUNDING REPLACEMENT ASTROPITCH**

The Town Clerk gave the background to the paper and an explanation of the additional sport items that were to be included in the project. He explained that he will be giving a presentation to SODC in support of the Council's £100k grant request and wished to be in a position to give the assurance that HTC was committed to funding the shortfall (c£85k). Members congratulated the Town Clerk on his paper which gave councillors clear and achievable objectives with well laid out proposals. The opportunity to introduce additional sports equipment was also seen as a positive step forward.

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

funding the shortfall in the cost of the replacement astropitch of c£85k, assuming the application for CIF funding from SODC is awarded, is achieved from surplus working capital initially, then drawdown of investments if/when cash flow requires;

154. **HENLEY YOUTH CENTRE**

[Councillors Mrs G Dodds, Mrs J Wood and Dr B Wood left the room for this item as they had declared personal and prejudicial interests.]

The meeting noted the content of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the suggested alterations. It was appreciated that the agreement should not be so restrictive that the slightest variance to the conditions would lead to the withdrawal of funding. It was agreed that the wording of Clause 3a1 should be re-worded and two further requirements included. The updated MoU would be presented to Full Council on 3 May for approval and signature.

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

the draft MoU with Thamesfield Youth Association be accepted with the following amendments:

1. Clause 3a to read –
“Make all reasonable efforts to keep the Youth Centre open for 3 nights per week;”
2. Clause 4 to be expanded to include –
“If, during the duration of the agreement, TYA receives sufficient external revenue funding in any one year from all sources excluding Henley Town Council, then the Council shall reserve its position not to give the grant.”
3. Additional clause inserted –
*“5. Progress Reporting:
Arrangements are to be set up for the Council to receive a written report from TYA in December 2011 and 2012 on the progress and functions of the Youth Centre so that the use of the Council’s grant can be monitored and that the spirit of this agreement, in providing a good facility and opportunity for Henley’s young people, is being met.”*

[Councillors Mrs G Dodds, Mrs J Wood and Dr B Wood rejoined the meeting.]

155. **EXTERNAL REDECORATION – TOWN HALL**

A member enquired of the Town Clerk as to how long the external decoration was likely to take and how long the scaffolding was likely to remain in place. The Town Clerk undertook to find out and report back before Full Council. It had been noted that the paint on the ceiling in the Large Hall was cracking and it was suggested that whilst the scaffolding was in place, then the opportunity should be taken to inspect the roof for leaks. Although the roof was not necessarily the cause of the flaking paint, it could at least be excluded if this was not the case.

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

the Committee approves the quotation received from Company C in the sum of £13,490.

156. **FESTIVAL GRANTS**

It had previously been agreed that these two festivals (Literary and Fringe) be treated equally and the Town Clerk's report was written to reflect that stance. He was thanked for producing a thorough and clear report which detailed the costs and implications. A member did ask about those organisations that had been displaced by the festivals block bookings. The Town Clerk reassured him that there were only two – the Karati Club who were new hirers and had already been told of the non-availability that week and had not raised any objections and – CEROC, whose dance class had been moved to the Large Hall.

It was **RESOLVED** that

the arrangements agreed with the Literary Festival for the use of the Town Hall and the application of the grant previously awarded in the sum of £643 towards the hire of the Council Chamber and Main Hall be noted; and

that a grant of £643 be awarded to the Henley Fringe Trust from the 2011-12 budget towards the cost of room hire for the 2011 Festival in July.

157. **VARIATION TO STANDING ORDERS**

It was noted that a lot of work had been undertaken on the re-write of Standing Order 17 and the Town Clerk was congratulated on the clarity of his latest report. Although some disquiet was expressed concerning the ability to spend and vire monies up to the prescribed limits, in general it was felt the additional delegated powers would lead to more efficient and effective working.

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

the revised Standing Order 17 (Delegation of Authority to Committees) is presented to Full Council on 3 May for adoption with the addition of one additional paragraph which requires a status report to be submitted to Full Council in six months time to assess how the new Standing Order is operating in practice. The report to cover the percentage decisions taken under delegated powers across each committee so that Councillors can be assured the authority is applied in a consistent fashion.

158. **EXPRESSION OF THANKS**

A member expressed her thanks, and that of the whole committee, to the outgoing Chairman (Councillor A Follet) for all his hard work over the previous twelve months. He had chaired a difficult committee and had always performed his role to a very high standard and as he would not be standing for Council again, would be missed. He, in turn, passed on his thanks to Councillors, the Town Clerk, the Committee Administrator, HTC Accountant and all the staff for their support.

159. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 APRIL 2011.**

160. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

The meeting was pleased to note that the number of legal issues was reducing and it was hoped that by the next FS&M meeting there may only be one matter outstanding.

It was **RESOLVED** that the legal update be noted

ii) LEAVER ROAD

The Town Clerk was tasked with moving this issue forward at a pace he felt was most sympathetic to the needs of all the parties involved.

It was **RESOLVED** that the notes and the recommendation of the Legal Group meeting on 2 February be noted and approved.

iii) AFC HENLEY

The meeting had seen the application from the football club requesting a contribution towards their legal bill. The bill covered the Council's proper legal costs which the club had given an undertaking to pay and were the result of a new lease being granted to the club. The response from the Council's solicitors concerning the level of the charge (and a breakdown of their costs) was also reviewed. It was agreed that the Council's solicitors had not charged more than had originally been quoted and the fact that the club's solicitor did much of his clients work pro bono was not relevant. However, it was recognised that this was not a straight forward lease renewal as other parties were involved and new responsibilities had to be covered. In view of this it was agreed that a contribution could be made.

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

the Town Clerk writes to AFC Henley advising that an exceptional contribution of £500 be made towards their legal costs (incurred by the Council and payable by AFC Henley). This payment is to be made 'without prejudice' and purely as a gesture of goodwill.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Chairman
20.4.11