

Present: The Chairman, Deputy Mayor Councillor Will Hamilton
Councillor Sara Abey
Councillor Miss L M Hillier
Councillor David Nimmo Smith (substituting for Cllr M Akehurst)
Councillor Ian Reissmann
Councillor Jane Smewing
Councillor Dylan Thomas
The Mayor, Councillor Julian Brookes (ex-officio)

In attendance: Janet Wheeler – Town Clerk
Liz Jones – HTC Accountant
Hilary King – Committee Administrator
1 member of the media
6 members of the public

34. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Martin Akehurst and Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Will Hamilton – Min 45 VFM notes, Civic allowances – Deputy Mayor.
Councillor David Nimmo Smith – Min 48 - Henley Rugby Club – Member
Councillor L M Hillier – Min 40 – Grants – Supplier to Aliquando Choir & Bowls Club member. (The Chair did not believe Cllr Hillier's interests were pecuniary but she requested they were recorded and indicated she would leave the room for the discussion on those items).

36. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

James Barr

Mr Barr, who is a representative of Park Run UK, spoke in support of the Henley Park Run grant application. He explained the event provided a healthy, social activity for participants and was open to all as the event was free.

Jo Dickson (Co-Chair HYF)

Jo explained that the Festival will be running its 24th annual Festival in March 2017. The Festival itself costs in the region of £20k to put on. It provides the opportunity for the youth in Henley to attend workshops, perform at the Kenton Theatre and get involved in a number of other events. Overall, approximately 3000 children are involved in the Festival which maintains good links with participating schools. Jo had requested that an annual grant be approved both to give the Festival security for the future and to assist with their forward booking and payment for venues.

Mike Trethewey (Henley Rugby Club Chairman)

Mr Trethewey referred to item 15 on the agenda and expressed his hope that the Council would support the application for the Club to sub-let part of the Dry Leas site to Physiologists.

Clint Botha (Physiologists)

Mr Botha also spoke in support of the Rugby Club request. He explained that the organisation had to vacate their current premises in Greys Road and the allocated part of the site at Dry Leas would be ideal.

Gary Fulbrook

Mr Fulbrook spoke in support of the grant application from the Golf Club. His son had benefitted from coaching supplied from the Club and they had been supportive of his activities even when the coaching had ceased. He believed other children would also benefit from this scheme and hoped the Council would agree to the grant request.

David Eggleton (Town Councillor)

Mr Eggleton asked why all Councillors had not been invited to the opening of the new Rugby Club facility and how, in particular, the attendees were chosen. The Chairman responded stating that this particular issue was not on the agenda and no further discussion would take place.

The Chairman thanked the public for their contributions to the meeting.

37. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 5 July 2016 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

38. **PROGRESS REPORT**

Councillors examined the progress being made against all the items listed and made the following comments:

Bell Street

It was recognised that funds needed to be put in the budget if it was agreed that the Georgian pavement needed to be re-instated. At present no budget existed. It was agreed that this item should be moved to the Town & Community Committee for progression.

No response had been received from Chesterton Commercial to the Town Clerk's letter of 3 August regarding change of ownership. It was agreed that the company be chased for a reply.

Councillor's identification badges

The delivery of the badges was expected shortly and the Planning Administrator would be asked to check the exact delivery date.

Corporate Plan objectives

The Chairman pointed out that the dates the various papers were to be presented to FS&M had been included in the progress. These dates had been agreed with Officers and should help smooth out the required workload.

It was RESOLVED that the Progress Report be received and noted.

39. **FINANCE 2016-17**

i) **Management Accounts**

The meeting reviewed the dashboard and accounts and no queries were raised.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

ii) **Investment Performance**

A comment was made about the chart where it was difficult, on some occasions, to differentiate between the various lines. It was agreed that the Accountant would investigate whether the symbols used could be changed to improve matters.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

iii) **Payment Listing**

No comments were made on the listings.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

iv) **HTC's Own Grant Applications to SODC**

It was unknown, at this stage, whether SODC's Oct-Dec grant scheme will run. The funding for the scheme had yet to be secured. It was agreed that the District Councillors should make further enquiries and report back as soon as there were any indications of SODC's intentions.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

40. **GRANTS**

The Chairman explained that the annual budget was £10,000 and it was obvious that not all the applications could be met in full. In addition, the March 2017 meeting will also be considering applications, so it would be prudent to retain part of the budget for that meeting.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Each of the application requests were reviewed and discussed, taking note of the organisations' provision of benefits to Henley residents and also their financial reserves.

It was RESOLVED that the following grants be awarded:

Park Run ⁽¹⁾	£1,700
Henley in Transition	£121
Oxfordshire Animal Sanctuary	0
Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire	£250

(Golf tuition for Badgemore School provided by) Henley Golf Club	£400
Henley Bowls Club	£1,000
Aliquando Chamber Choir	£645
Allotment Association	£88
Berks MS Therapy Centre	0
Henley Drama Festival	£796

The grants awarded totalled £5,000.

In particular, the meeting made the following comments:

Henley Golf Club

The Club should be encouraged to apply to Henley Educational Trust as the type of activity (golf coaching) sat comfortably under their remit as well as the Town Council's.

Henley Bowls Club

The meeting felt that as the rent on the pavilion was set at a very low level, this already represented a subsidy by the Council and therefore only part of the grant request was met. The Bowls Club should apply to the SODC capex grant scheme when it reopens. The meeting noted the Club's request for a new lease but as this was still a number of years away the matter would be reviewed nearer the time.

Berks MS Therapy

Although no grant was awarded to this organisation in this round, it was agreed that they should re-apply in March. Their application should include greater detail regarding how the Council's grant money is spent in Henley and who would benefit from the funding.

ANNUAL GRANTS

The Henley Youth Festival had received a grant from the Council over a number of years and it was felt that agreement to an annual grant would provide greater certainty for the organisation.

It was RESOLVED that the Henley Youth Festival be granted £1,500 for a period of 3 years. (The grant for 2016-17 would be taken from the Community Grants budget for the time being with a new line being added to the annual grants for 2017-18 and 2018-19).

41. **BUDGET MACRO CONSIDERATIONS**

The meeting discussed the issues of running a balanced budget, whether Council Tax should be raised and the likely (but not yet quantified) increase in the tax base. The Town Clerk informed the meeting that a new consultation was due out to review the possibility of capping the precept for the highest spending Town and Parish Councils. After a debate on the various figures to be included in the 2017-18 budget,

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the following macro parameters are used for the 2017-18 budget:

- 2.5% inflation rate for income and costs where applicable;
- 1% pay increase for staff salaries;
- A guide of £250k for capex, or other amount as discussed.

With the following amounts to be included:

- A limit of £55k for planned maintenance;
- A limit of £10k for contingencies;
- A limit of £10k for grants to local organisations

and that Councillors note that figures for investment income, support for the local bus service and any new or amended lines will be further considered at the FSM meetings prior to finalization of the budget.

42. CHRISTMAS LIGHTING SCHEME

The Town Clerk explained the background to the lighting scheme and the benefit of purchasing the lights as opposed to hiring them. The Company (Light Angels) could offer a bespoke, flexible scheme which will include the use of LED lights. The Company will install the infrastructure and lights at the start of the season, then uninstall, check, label and store. The work is guaranteed for five years (the length of the payment plan) and after this time, the lighting would be owned by the Council. Other local authorities had used Light Angels and were happy to recommend them. It was also suggested that there may be an opportunity to generate income from the lights by making some illumination available outside the Town Hall for wedding parties.

The Accountant then gave a breakdown regarding the budgets that would be affected. Though the costs for having these lights will increase the Council's expenditure on Christmas Events, there will be some savings which had been budgeted in 2016/17 for the installation and removal of street lights. Although the proposal would include using capex monies allocated to the installation of solar panels on the Town Hall, it was agreed this did not mean that the possibility of having solar panels could not be reconsidered in the future. It was recognised that the return generated by the panels on the other Council buildings did generate a healthy 16%pa return.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the new Christmas lighting scheme be purchased under the five year plan (total cost £46,580 of which £16,125 is capex and £30,445 is I&E over 5 years), to be budgeted as follows;

- £10,000 taken from capex 2016-17 – the £10,000 budget for the Town Hall Solar panels to be vired for this purpose; and
- The remaining capex of £6,125 to be allocated in the 2017-18 capex budget, and
- To cover the on-going maintenance costs of £9,455 in 2016-17, the costs to be taken from the Christmas Events and Decorations Sub-Committee budget 2016-17 and its earmarked reserve brought forward of £8,430; and

- **The on-going maintenance cost of £5,250 from 2017-18 to 2020-21 are covered by an increase of £3,000 in the Christmas Events and Decorations Sub-Committee budget (there are savings of around £2k pa).**

Post meeting note: This item is to be resolved at the Special Full Council meeting on Tuesday 27th September 2016.

43. **RESOURCE FOR TOWN MAINTENANCE**

The Town Clerk explained that it had been suggested that the Council employ a 'handyman' to deal with maintenance issues that appear around the town. She explained that this was not a straightforward proposition as there were many aspects to consider including volume of work, lone working, H&S, training, requirement for specialist skills, knowledge of the Council's estate and responsibilities etc.

The meeting agreed that the cost and the difficulties inherent in such a position would not make the proposal worthwhile. It may be more cost effective to either provide training for the Parks Service for specific jobs or share a local company's resource.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the employment by the Council of a general handyman not be pursued.

44. **IT DISASTER RECOVERY**

Councillor Reissmann had been discussing the data recovery aspects with MFG (the Council's IT Supplier) and the need to produce a comprehensive quote based on the Microsoft option. An Amazon comparable quote would also be obtained. The resulting report would be presented to FS&M when available.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the notes of the IT Working Group meeting be noted and that the quotes be presented by the Accountant when available.

45. **VALUE FOR MONEY WORKING GROUP**

The issue of the Mayor's allowance was raised in relation to expenses incurred by the Deputy Mayor when undertaking duties on behalf of the Mayor. It was confirmed that if the Mayor requested the Deputy Mayor to attend a function/incur expenses, then a claim could be made against the Mayor's allowance and there would not be a separate line for this in the budget.

Concern was raised that staff were not able to take TOIL very easily due to their heavy workloads. Staff should be encouraged to take the time they were due and an explanation should be provided if this impacted on a particular item of work.

The number of Working Groups had grown over time and it was felt that there were too many. Councillors should examine the merits of setting up additional groups before they were proposed and also to examine if any could be discontinued.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the notes of the meeting held on 8 August be noted and that each of the Standing Committees include

an agenda item for their next meeting to examine their respective Working Groups and confirm which ones should be pared back.

46. **TOWN GREEN ACCESS POINTS**

A question was raised regarding whether the access from Highlands Farm would be on to registered/recognised footpaths. Patrick Fleming would be asked to provide more detail on the subject.

Action: Planning Committee Administrator.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the report be noted and Council may be minded to create recognised access points in the boundary between the future Highlands Farm development and the Town Green (Gillotts Field) subject to detailed arrangements.

47. **CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS**

It was acknowledged that the Council have agreed to these requests on a year to year basis and there was a general consent to them being granted again. Consequently,

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

- **the Town Hall is closed from Monday 26 December 2016 through to Monday 2 January 2017 inclusive, 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 required to provide cover during the normal working hours of 28 December 2016 to 2 January 2017 i.e. Park Services, Caretakers and Parking Wardens be granted time off in lieu on a straight one for one basis.**
- **the Council considers making a contribution of up to £500 (+ VAT if applicable) towards the staff Christmas team event as a token of the Council's thanks and appreciation for their work throughout the past year.**

48. **HENLEY RUGBY CLUB**

The Chairman invited Mr Trethewey and Mr Botha to the table to answer any questions from members. Mr Botha explained that SODC had given planning approval for the new Physiologic building at Dry Leas and their occupation at Greys Road site would end on 28 November 2016. The meeting was generally supportive of the move but wished to see sight of the OCC legal opinion on sub-letting in the lease before making a recommendation to Full Council. The Town Clerk stated that the Rugby Club were able to sub-let and that permission could not be reasonably withheld. Considering the time constraints Physiologics were operating under, it was suggested that a Special Full Council meeting held in a week's time would be the most productive way forward.

It was agreed that a Special Full Council be called on 27 September 2016 (in advance of the normal Full Council scheduled for 11 October) to review the relevant paperwork and make a decision on the application.

49. **BUS WORKING GROUP**

The Town Clerk explained that the Agreement had been drawn up to cover the funding HTC was to provide to Whites Coaches up until July 2017. Future funding for their bus services was being examined by the Bus Working Group.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Agreement with Whites Coaches is signed for the year from July 2016 – July 2017.

50. **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 would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2016.

51. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

95, 97 & 99 Deanfield Road

The District Valuation Office (DVO) had quoted a figure of £1,500 to carry out the valuation. Members were not inclined to spend this amount and were content with the original valuation. However, it was believed that the householders had commissioned their own valuation and should be asked to submit this to the Town Clerk for review.

357 Reading Road

The Town Clerk advised that the initial 5 year lease with rolling break clause will be replaced with a 2 year fixed term lease which will end on 30 June 2017. The tenant had been advised of this and was in agreement.

Fairmile cross-over

The DVO's quote for assessing an easement charge was £1,500. The applicant's agent has been informed and confirmed they were willing to meet the cost.

YMCA

The YMCA had submitted its application to HCA for registered provider status.

353-357 Reading Road

An issue was raised concerning the treatment of VAT on this project and the correct process for disposal of Council-owned land. The Town Clerk felt that a consultant should be engaged to provide advice on this subject, how it is reflected in the accounts and what additional information the auditors may wish to know. They would also be consulted on whether HTC should carry out a valuation of the site (as per the quote by the District Valuation Office) for comparison purposes.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to engage a consultant to look at the VAT implications of the site sale, the disposal process of Council-owned land and also question the validity of an independent valuation.

ii) **SALTERS STEAMERS**

The meeting was happy for Salters to keep their landing stage at Mill Meadows for a further five years as it attracted more visitors to Henley and provided more competition on the river.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the draft Licence is approved and sent to Salters Steamers for comment/approval.

iii) **TILEBARN LEASES**

It was noted that the tenants had not approached the Council at this stage to renew their leases. However, no objections were raised on the renewal.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

- **the property owners are advised that the Council is prepared to offer further ten year leases.**
- **the rent for the first year to be set at £400 with annual RPI rises.**
- **the tenants will be equally responsible for the Council's proper legal costs.**

iv) **40 ACRE FIELD**

It was recognised that the tenant had been at 40 Acre for a number of years without any complication and there was no objection to renewing the tenancy for a longer duration.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

- **a new 5 year farm business tenancy is approved and the relevant documentation drawn up by the tenant's agent.**

- the tenant to be responsible for the Council's proper legal fees incurred by reviewing the agreement.
- the first year's rent to be set at £2,400 (representing an increase of c4.3%) with an annual RPI increase in subsequent years.
- the rent shall further be enhanced (annually on a retrospective basis, depending on payment windows) by 50% of any agricultural subsidy received by the tenant.
- approval is given for new fencing to be erected along the footpath (the specification to be determined by the Parks Manager) to a maximum cost of £5,000 (ex VAT) with the cost being allocated to "balance for unknowns" in the current year's planned maintenance. Any increase in potential cost would be referred to FS&M.

v) **RENT REVIEW - KIOSK**

It was agreed that applying an RPI increase would maintain the value of the rent and a market valuation at this stage was not necessary. However, the tenants would be consulted on the Committee's recommendations.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the rent increase is determined by the RPI adjustment and this revised amount (when known) is communicated to the tenants for approval.

vi) **HTC PROPERTY**

vii) **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERIM STAFF REVIEW**

As both these issues (addressed in vi) and vii) above) are ongoing plus the confidentiality of the subject matter, the discussion and subsequent recommendations have been detailed in a Confidential Note which is to be circulated to Councillors but will not be in the public domain.

Post meeting note: The recommendations from vi) and vii) were resolved at Full Council on 27 September 2016.

The meeting closed at 10.20pm

Chairman
21.9.16