

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P Phillips
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin
Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor S Gawrysiak (Vice-Chair)
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor D Silvester (substituting for Councillor Miss L Hillier)
Councillor Ms L Meachin
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor I Reissmann (Chair)

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

19. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Miss L Hillier.

20. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith – Min 20 – Progress Report (Northfield End) – personal (OCC Councillor) – Min 26 – Astropitch – personal (Governor of Henley College).

21. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Chris Baker (Lauds Close) - as president of the Henley Hockey Club [HHC]) spoke on the item concerning the replacement astropitch. He explained that the Club had been going since 1952, had a good membership level and was financially viable. The state of the current pitch was a concern and there was a fear of losing players to other clubs with better pitches. If there was no pitch replacement, then there was a possibility that the Club may not be able to continue. The option of playing on grass was not acceptable (in fact only one club, Epsom, plays on grass). He very much hoped that the Council would agree to the funding of the replacement pitch and expressed his thanks to the Councillors (past and present) for their support. Special thanks were given to the Town Clerk for devoting so much time and effort to the issue.

Patricia Heggie (as Director of Youth Development HHC) also spoke in support of the need for the new astropitch. The youth section (ages 4-17) comprised c200 members, 75% of which were girls and represented the biggest sport for girls in the area. The youth division was fully integrated into the Club which made the transition into the senior side easier which maintains interest. England

Hockey's initiative is to drive up participation in sport (including offering coaching) which underlined the importance of having a new pitch.

Jenny Buckham (as Director of Ladies Hockey) joined HHC from a national league club and reinforced the views of the previous two speakers. Henley was a very community based club who worked hard to maintain their membership e.g. successfully encouraging back members after periods of absence (e.g. university).

In answer to a question from a Member, Chris Baker confirmed that the current specification of the pitch was suitable for both hockey and football but believed that the surface would become unplayable after Christmas this year due to the rate of deterioration.

22. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 31 May 2011 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

23. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Northfield End

It was reported that the Chesterton application would now not be considered until Monday 18th July.

Corporate Plan

The meeting originally planned for 23 July has been postponed and will be re-arranged for a date in September or October.

Red Lion Lawn

The Town Clerk confirmed that the survey to examine the north west wall will result in a written report with recommendations for action.

24. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring

The meeting reviewed the Monitoring Report and Dashboard. No material comments were made.

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

ii) Investment Performance

It was noted that the return figures for the two Investment Managers differed significantly. The Accountant explained this was often the case with a snapshot view and the two figures would be much more closely aligned when the average was taken over the year. She confirmed that both companies were obliged to follow the Council's Investment Strategy Policy.

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

iii) List of payments

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

No comment was made on this item.

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

25. **FINANCIAL PROCEDURES MANUAL**

The Town Clerk explained that the Accountant had spent a considerable amount of time compiling the manual. The Council was now able to demonstrate it had sound systems in place which was all part of good governance. The Chairman also expressed his thanks to the Town Clerk for his involvement.

It was **RESOLVED** that

Councillors note that the Financial Procedures Manual has been completed by the Accountant, and that the Accountant will prepare a report annually to confirm that the Manual has been properly maintained and updated.

26. **FUNDING A REPLACEMENT ASTROPITCH**

The Town Clerk introduced this item and talked through the content of the report and the various options that had been put forward. The report itself was extremely comprehensive and was the result of extensive investigation. He had also brought samples of the 18mm and 30mm surface for Councillors to examine.

This item produced a great deal of debate. In general, the Committee was in agreement that a new pitch needed to be put in place before the end of the year to ensure the continuity for users. However, the question was raised as to the necessity of the additional facilities i.e. the sprint track, jogging track and street snooker. Although it was recognised that not all these facilities could be used at the same time (especially during hockey matches) they had been included in the original proposal to SODC as a demonstration that the Council was encouraging the installation of new equipment to widen participation levels. In addition, the results of the questionnaire produced by the Hockey Club had shown a high level of interest in having a sprint track.

As far as the actual playing surface was concerned, it was agreed that the most suitable would be the 18mm which would satisfy the need for competitive Hockey and also allowed recreational football to be played. Henley College has stated that they preferred the deeper pile surface but, as they were not the primary user, their views should not win the day.

Although there was some discussion on relocating the street snooker to another venue or stripping out some of the less expensive items, it was agreed that the Council should support the full funding of the replacement pitch to ensure the Town had a high class playing facility. It was recognised that the pitch was fully booked between 6 – 10pm every day and Town Clerk was asked to investigate if there was any scope to negotiate a reduced management fee payable to Nexus following the installation.

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

the Council reaffirms its continued commitment to provide an Outdoor Sports Centre in Henley; confirms the specification for a replacement synthetic 18mm pitch suitable for competitive hockey and recreation football; meets the shortfall on the original scheme of £100,000 by investment drawdown to bridge the funding gap; proceeds with the procurement of the scheme for completion at the earliest opportunity and authorises the Town Clerk to negotiate with Nexus a reduced management fee;

27. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE VALUE FOR MONEY & RESOURCES WORKING GROUP**

This item had been referred back to Committee by Full Council as it was considered that a membership of 7 was excessive. It was agreed that the VFM&R Group should be reduced in size but it was emphasised that Councillors should make every effort to attend meetings as no substitutes were allowed as this Group was not a Standing Committee or Sub-Committee. As this could potentially cause problems, the Town Clerk was asked to present a paper to the next Finance meeting with proposals for change.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Value for Money & Resources Working Group should now comprise:

Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Miss L Hillier
Councillor Mrs P Phillips
Councillor I Reissmann; and

that the Town Clerk prepares a report the next meeting on the appointment of substitute members for meetings of sub-committees and working groups.

28. **MILL MEADOWS CAR PARKING**

The meeting was pleased to see that the income from the Mill Meadows car park had increased and that revenue was being monitored. A member advised the meeting that the Vale of White Horse was no longer carrying out surveys on their car parks in the Town.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors note the Mill Meadows parking income figures, and consider the observations above when recommending the 2012-13 parking charges.

29. **10:10 CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

The reduction in energy costs for the Council's two building (Town Hall and Old Fire Station Gallery) was proof that the energy saving method employed had been successful. However, it was felt that there may be further scope for additional reductions and the VFM&R Group was asked to investigate further.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors note the overall reduction in energy usage (due mainly to the installation of energy saving measures) and request that the VFM&R Group continue to explore additional energy saving initiatives.

30. **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 12 JULY 2011.

31. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

The Town Clerk gave a brief explanation of the status of the outstanding legal cases.

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

ii) BARN LEASE RENEWAL

The Town Clerk explained that, two years ago, the previous administration had taken the commercial decision to lease out an area of the ground floor of the Barn as part of its income generation strategy. The Barn was underutilised and did not realise sufficient income. The income from the existing lease provided the funding for the move of the Tourist Information Centre into the Town Hall and its transformation into the Henley Information Centre. The lease contained an option for the tenant to renew for another 5 years and this option had been exercised. The initial level of rent was set after consultation with an independent valuer. The new lease would have a new rent applicable for 5 years.

The meeting was keen to better market the Margaret Day Room to increase the uptake of bookings. It was a community asset and the community should be encouraged to use it. It was suggested that the Council's website should be updated to encourage usage. Concern was expressed that the door to the Barn was locked which prevented free passage between Millennium Court and the car park, this stopped the public reading the displayed information items concerning this listed building.

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

in accordance with the terms of the current lease, notice having been given to the Council of the tenant's desire to exercise its option to extend the lease term, that a further lease of the ground floor of the Kings Arms Barn for a term of 5 years be granted to KVB Design Limited, on the same terms and conditions as set out in the existing lease subject to the revised rent and service charges. However, the tenant should be informed of the strength of feeling within the Council that greater use should be made of the Margaret Day room and the wish to re-open the access through the barn to the general public.

iii) HTC LEGAL SERVICES

The meeting was in agreement that the services of OCC's solicitors should be utilised as it appeared to represent a potential substantial saving on the Council's professional fees budget. In answer to a query, the Town Clerk

confirmed that the County solicitors would have plenty of experience of commercial work as OCC has a bigger land/property portfolio than the Town Council. It was recognised that a Service Level Agreement needed to be signed and performance closely monitored with the results reported back to a subsequent Finance meeting. Obviously, if there were any legal matters which could produce a conflict of interest between the two Councils, then the Town Council will use an alternative provide (in essence, Blandy & Blandy)

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

- The Council employs OCC's solicitors to act on its behalf in respect of new legal work.
- Existing work remains with Blandy & Blandy until completion.
- The Town Clerk reserves the right to use Blandy & Blandy for new work where previous involvement means that it would be advantageous to maintain continuity.
- The Professional Fees budget for 2012-13 be reviewed to take account of this change.
- The situation is reviewed after 6 months to provide Councillors with the reassurance that the quality of service received has not, in any way, been diminished.
- As normal practice states, the Town Clerk writes to Blandy & Blandy to advise them of the change and gain their acceptance to undertaking only a limited range of work on behalf of the Council.
- Alternative legal services are sought where there is any potential conflict of interest between the two Councils.

iv) **STAFFING**

The Town Clerk explained the situation (outlined in his report) as to why the creation of the post of Relief caretaker had become necessary. It was acknowledged that the present incumbent was already undertaking this work but on an informal basis. A rationalisation of this position would benefit the Council at no additional cost. The meeting accepted the need for this additional resource to ensure that the functions held at the Town Hall were properly covered by staff and to maximise bookings.

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

- i) a new post of Relief Caretaker is created from 1 September, employed for 30 hours per month within the salary range SCP 18-22 £17,160 - £19,621 full time equivalent, that the post be ring fenced and advertised internally and that the present incumbent be invited for interview.
- ii) As a special concession, the Town Sergeant's accrued hours be paid as overtime at his plain time rate; thereafter hours worked over 37 hours per week must be taken as time off in lieu within a reasonable period (agreed between the Town Clerk and Town Sergeant).

The meeting closed at 10.00 pm.

Chairman
13.7.11