

Present: Mayor, Councillor M S Akehurst  
Deputy Mayor, Mrs Councillor J Wood  
Councillor Mrs J Bland  
Councillor D Clenshaw  
Councillor D Hinke  
Councillor Miss S Evans  
Councillor S Gawrysiak  
Councillor W Hamilton  
Councillor Miss L M Hillier  
Councillor D Hinke  
Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin  
Councillor D R Nimmo Smith  
Councillor Mrs P A Phillips  
Councillor I Reissmann  
Councillor D Silvester

In Attendance: Mr M W Kennedy - Town Clerk  
Mrs P Price-Davies - Minute Taker / Committee Administrator  
Mr C Austin - Town Sergeant

Also Present: 4 members of the public  
1 member of the press

**71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apoloiges for absence were received from Councillor Ms L Meachin.

**72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**73. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Mr K Arlett, Elizabeth Road*

Mr Arlett spoke on the Expenditure Budget urging Councillors not to support the grant of £8 k to the Henley Summer fireworks and questioned whether they were for the enjoyment of the residents of Henley or for the visitors of the Henley Royal Regatta. Instead, he suggested Henley Town Council (HTC) looked for alternative ways of funding this event by forming a working partnership with the Regatta under the new Chairmanship of Sir Steve Redgrave. He also questioned the recent additional capital expenditure recommended by the Finance Strategy and Management Committee (FS&M) to earmark £50 k towards the cost of public tennis courts.

*Councillors Mrs J Bland and Miss L Hillier entered the meeting at 7.34pm and 7.36pm respectively.*

**74. 2015-16 BUDGET**

Members had before them a report on the revenue and capital budgets for 2015-16. A Member addressed the Council on the proposed budget for 2015-16 and suggested that in the light of it being an election year, this budget before the Council was the right one, carrying the right figures and would take HTC forward with due diligence, placing the next Council in a workable, prudent position. Responding to the recent additional recommendation from FS&M to award a grant of £8 k towards the Summer Fireworks, in his opinion these fireworks were enjoyed by the people of Henley and that this event should continue.

A Member proposed the acceptance of the Revenue and Capital Expenditure figures and the level of precept to be levied on South Oxfordshire District Council for 2015/16 as set out in the report.

Speaking to the motion, a Member aired her opinion that this was not a prudent budget and that it required further scrutiny. She disagreed with the proposed increase in both the mooring fees and weekday car parking charges and suggested it would be more sensible to increase the precept figure and omit both the estimated capital expenditure towards the public Tennis Courts and the cost of a replacement building for the Henley 60+ Club.

An amendment was proposed that both the mooring and weekday car parking charges at Mill Meadows be not increased but that the precept figure should be increased to reflect this and that both the £50 k capital estimated expenditure towards the public Tennis Courts and the £50 k estimated expenditure towards the cost of a replacement building for the Henley 60+ Club omitted.

A discussion ensued regarding the precept for 2015/16 remaining at the same as the current level. A view was expressed that HTC should increase the precept and several members supported a modest increase and remarked that compared to the precept of other major Oxfordshire towns Henley was still the lowest offering residents value for money and it was suggested that if the precept was not increased then Henley was in danger of falling behind other towns. Several Members spoke in agreement of the parking and mooring charges at Mill Meadows not being increased as these additional costs would fall to the residents of Henley who were the users of these facilities on weekdays and therefore this suggestion was deemed a false sense of economy.

There was concern from several Members that the suggested estimated capital expenditure towards both the tennis courts and the re-building of the Henley 60+ Club were additions to the budgets that had not been fully investigated and were not part of a wider strategy. This additional £100k expenditure carried a risk but it was pointed out that although this was earmarked, it would not necessarily be spent within the allocated financial year.

Several Members were in agreement that alternative sources of funding for the Summer Fireworks should be investigated further before a decision was made. A Member spoke of the responsibility of the Council to ensure that public funds were being awarded to organisations where charitable donations were made. He called for further discussions with the organisation in question and that sight of their accounts was imperative to obtain the facts before awarding such a grant.

An amendment to the original proposal was made in that the budget be accepted, save for the adoption of:

1. The £8 k grant towards the cost of the Summer Fireworks be removed
2. The £50 k estimated capital expenditure towards the public Tennis Courts be removed
3. The £50 k estimated capital expenditure towards the cost of a replacement building for the Henley 60+ Club be removed.
4. Retain the Mooring fees at Mill Meadows.
5. Retain the weekday Car Parking charges at Mill Meadows.

The motion was lost.

A further amendment was subsequently proposed that the Revenue and Capital Expenditure figures and the level of precept to be levied on South Oxfordshire District

Council for 2015/16 be accepted, save for the inclusion of the £8 k grant towards the cost of the Summer Fireworks.

Further discussion surrounding the enjoyment of the summer fireworks and the concern of the possibility of the demise of this annual event ensued. A vote was taken and the motion was lost. There being no further debate on the subject, it was **RESOLVED**

that HTC approve the:

- **Precept of £488,070 to be levied on South Oxfordshire District Council for 2015/16**
- **Final Income and Expenditure budget for 2015/16**
- **Draft Capital Expenditure budget for 2015/16**

**75. POWER OF COMPETANCE**

Members had before them a report on the General Power of Competence prepared by the Town Clerk. It was **RESOLVED**

**that the Town Council resolves from 3 February 2015, until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council, that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence)(Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, to adopt the General Power of Competence.**

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

*ppd*

*Mayor*