

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor M Akehurst
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
Councillor S Gawrysiak (Vice Chair)
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin
Councillor Mrs P Phillips
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor I Reissmann (Chair)

In attendance:

Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs L Jones – HTC Accountant
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator
1 member of the public
1 member of the media

The Chairman opened the meeting and advised that on Aug 6th, the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 amended the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. This meant that Henley Town Council Standing Order 1(o) could no longer be used. Therefore the meeting would be conducted with Standing Order 1(o) suspended. The meeting would be conducted such that item 3.3 from Agenda Item 10 as mandated under the 2014 Act was deemed to be operational.

Standing Order 1(o) states that 'Photography, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's consent'.

The announcement was necessary as National Legislation had overtaken the procedures laid out in the relevant Standing Order.

37. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Miss L Hillier and from Councillor Mrs J Wood for a possible late arrival.

38. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

39. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Mrs W Hawkins (19 Berkshire Road)

Mrs Hawkins spoke in favour of the grant application submitted on behalf of the Henley Youth Choir. She explained that this new project, which had been in existence since July, had been set up under the direction of Benjamin Goodson, the musical director of the Henley Choral Society and had already attracted 34 paid-up members with an expectation this number would increase. Mrs Hawkins explained that a Christmas programme was currently being prepared and she hoped that the Town Council would look favourably on the grant application as the financial assistance would be greatly appreciated. Mrs Hawkins also supplied an updated financial position statement for the Youth Choir Workshops for Councillors' information.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Hawkins for her informative presentation.

Councillor Mrs J Wood joined the meeting at 7.40pm

40. **MINUTES**

- i) The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 8 July 2014 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.
- ii) The notes of the Finance Planning & Scrutiny Group meeting held on 14 July were received and approved. It was agreed that, in future, the notes should be circulated to all councillors following the meeting, in addition to their inclusion on the FS&M agenda. It was suggested that the next meeting should include a further look at the procurement of the recent toilet refurbishment. The Town Clerk confirmed that this would be the subject of a full report to the Recreation & Amenities Committee (R&A) on 9 September. The issue of riverbed de-silting would also come under the R&A remit and has been identified in the budget considerations paper.

41. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Wi-Fi

The Accountant confirmed that a DLAN connection such as was used for the Henley Literary Festival launch event in July was due to be installed in the Town Hall on 11 September. This booster will improve the wi-fi coverage for a minimal cost whilst a free town centre wi-fi project is being undertaken by the Town Centre Manager, which should provide a better and more permanent solution.

Estate Inspections

The Chairman reminded Councillors that there was a commitment from Full Council that the inspections should continue. If, for any reason, a Councillor could not meet their commitment, then they need to arrange a substitute. It was important that the inspections were carried out during September as the results will inform the FPS report on potential budget considerations for 2015-16.

42. **FINANCE**

i) Management Accounts

The meeting examined the accounts but no material comments were made.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

ii) Investment Performance

The Accountant confirmed that the Investment Managers were to be invited to attend the October FS&M meeting to give their annual presentation.

It was RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

iii) List of payments

The listing was reviewed and noted.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

43. **GRANTS**

Each application was considered and it was **RESOLVED** that the following grants be awarded:

South & Vale Carers	£ 500
Henley Schools Envir. Science Comp	£ 500
Regatta for the Disabled	£ 400
Berks MS Therapy Centre	£1,000
Henley Youth Choir	£1,000
OCVA	£ 200
Aliquando Choir	£ 900
Total awarded:	£4,500

Aliquando Choir

It was suggested that the £900 could be met from the WW1 Commemoration budget (on the assumption it was underspent). The figures were not to hand to confirm whether sufficient budget existed. It was agreed that the Town Clerk investigate the position and confirm to Full Council from where the grant would be met.

Town Clerk's post meeting note: There is a remaining balance of £600 against the WW1 Commemoration budget which could be used in part or in whole towards the grant of £900.

Henley Summer Fireworks

It was noted that this application was dated 5th June 2014 and so by implication related to the 2014 summer fireworks which have already gone ahead. Prior to the event on Regatta Saturday (5th July) there had been newspaper reports that the firework display was to be discontinued. The application produced a lot of discussion as it appeared that in the past (2013) a surplus was made which was donated to local charities of the fireworks organisers' choice. This was not the

primary function of the Council's grant system. It was also suggested that the firework event should be considered to be a 'town event'. Currently it is perceived to be a Henley Royal Regatta event but in reality a lot of time and effort is taken by the organisers to obtain funding each year. If it were to be a town event the Council could have a greater input. It was agreed that the application be deferred and the Town Clerk was asked to look at the event in its entirety and report back to the relevant committee.

Henley Town Football Club (HTFC)

The meeting was advised that AFC Henley and HTFC had held a meeting recently to discuss closer co-operation. However, HTFC appeared to be looking at the creation of youth teams which would be in direct competition with AFC Henley. A further meeting between the two clubs is scheduled for 5 September and it was agreed to defer consideration of the grant application until the meeting had taken place, targets agreed and progress reported.

44. **DRAWDOWN FROM INVESTMENT FUNDS**

The meeting noted the requirement for a drawdown from investments to meet the expenditure incurred on the Toddler Playground and Toilet Refurbishment both of which were financed early in the financial year. Although a comment was made to the effect that it was a shame that the drawdown was necessary, it was agreed that both projects had produced very successful results.

It was RESOLVED to note the requirement to drawdown funds totalling £200k over August and September 2014 which had been actioned.

45. **BUDGET 2015-16 – MACRO CONSIDERATIONS & FSM BUDGET**

The Accountant advised the meeting that, to assist her in the budget preparations, Councillors need to identify the underlying factors to be used when compiling the figures. She also explained that the Standing Committees will need to identify and quantify their 'wish lists' so that all projects and any new on-going costs could be captured.

As well as the £75k which is allocated to 'planned maintenance' each year, there were also a number of ear-marked reserve provisions. However, a paper will be presented to the Finance Planning and Scrutiny Group (FPS) covering additional areas not covered by either of these two areas e.g. river dredging to ensure that all Council liabilities (both short and long term) are identified and recorded. The paper will need to include sufficient detail including type of liability, replacement v upgrade options, duration/life expectancy and cost.

A further report will then be presented to FS&M which will 'flesh out' details of all identified projects and will encompass the information from both Standing Committees and Working Groups.

It was not known at this early stage, the extent of the grant that will be received from SODC (as a result of the tax base changes). It was speculated that a 10% reduction may be applied but equally there was the possibility of SODC not passing down any of the grant to local councils.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

- a) **Councillors approve the following for inclusion in the 2015-16 budget:**
- **An assumed rate of inflation of 2% for CPI and 2.5% for RPI (depending on the budget item in question).**
 - **An assumed across the board salary increase of 1%.**
 - **An indicative £250k overall capex limit.**
 - **An assumption that the level of precept to be collected from SODC next year will remain the same as this year and that the council tax grant from SODC will fall by 10%.**
- b) **Councillors ask the Accountant to present a report to the next FSM Committee meeting giving further information and particulars of possible impending future costs to preserve the Council' assets, as are not included in the planned maintenance schedule. The report is to include the findings from Councillors' estate inspections, and due consideration as to whether items are replacements (and therefore precept-able) or upgrades (and therefore capital).**

46. **STANDING ORDERS**

The Town Clerk explained that any amendment to Standing Orders was automatically referred to FS&M. The full implications of the changes, and any resulting safeguards that need to be put in place, will form part of a comprehensive report scheduled to be considered by the Town & Community Committee. Consequently,

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that Standing Orders 1(o) be amended to reflect the changes to the 1960 Act as set out below:

On 6 August 2014, the 1960 Act was amended by the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014. The amended 1960 Act provides that a person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if he is present at the meeting of a parish council or its committees but otherwise may:

- a) **film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting;**
- b) **use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later;**
- c) **report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting.**

47. **HENLEY RUGBY CLUB**

The meeting reviewed the request from the Rugby Club for permission to undertake building work at Dry Leas, which required consent from the Council as landlord. There were no objections raised.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that consent is granted to the Rugby Club to refurbish their clubhouse and build some new changing rooms.

48. **FAIRTRADE STATUS**

It was apparent that the budget for the Youth Council would be underspent and therefore there was the opportunity to vire £500 to support the Fairtrade initiative. There was general agreement that this should take place.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that a budget of £500 in 2014-15 is approved to purchase Fairtrade publicity material in support of the Council's application for Fairtrade Status through a virement from the earmarked budget of £1,500 for the Henley Youth Council project.

49. **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 2 SEPTEMBER 2014.

50. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

No comments were made.

ii) LAND AT DEANFIELD ROAD

There was a long discussion concerning the potential sale of land and the reaction from the three householders who had been offered the land currently used as gardens. There were various options open to the Council should the sale price not be agreed. However, before exploring these in detail, it was suggested that the Town Clerk meet the householders (together as a group) to discuss a way forward and the possible implications should the sales not proceed.

iii) INSURANCE CONTRACT

The meeting noted the content of the paper, the service level of the current provider and the quotes obtained from them and a competitor for contracts providing either one or three year cover. The current provider had submitted the cheapest quote and as officers had been satisfied with their handling of on-going cases, it was felt that their contract should be renewed.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that Councillors re-appoint WPS to cover the Council's insurance requirements for a further three year period.

iv) BARN RENT REVIEW

It was noted that the lease of part of the Barn would expire in a year's time and consideration would need to be given to how the space would be used. This aspect would fall under the Town & Community Committee and a report would need to be presented in good time to ensure any resulting legal documentation is in place.

Action: T&C Committee Administrator to schedule in a report to T&C in June 2015.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the tenant is approached in order to gain agreement to an RPI rent increase to cover the period 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Chairman
3.9.14