

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

In attendance: Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator
3 members of the public
1 member of the media

The Chairman opened the meeting and advised Members that proceedings would be recorded (audio only). Standing Orders 1(o) had already been amended to reflect the change required by the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulation 2014.

88. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors Mrs E Hodgkin and Miss L Hillier.

89. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood – Min 95 Grants – member of the Town & Visitors Regatta.

90. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Mr Colin Brathwaite

Mr Brathwaite spoke in support of his grant application requesting reimbursement of the fee to carry out the noise impact assessment (requested by SODC) for the new skate park at Makins. He pointed out that the Town Council owns the land and the facility will be owned and managed by the Council and as such he felt it only fair that the cost of the assessment be met by the Council.

91. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 20 January 2015 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

92. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Estate Inspections

It was noted that Councillor Bland's inspection (carried out by Cllr D Nimmo-Smith) and those of Councillors S Gawrysiak and Mrs P Phillips had now been completed. The Chairman urged the remaining councillors, who had yet to carry out their inspections, to do so as soon as possible.

A question was raised concerning Road Reports and whether they were continuing. The Town Clerk suggested Councillors were at liberty to use the 'Fix My Street' facility on the OCC website but accepted this did not cover issues such as trees and hedges. The Road Reports were under the remit of the Town & Community Committee and as such would be requested to confirm the current arrangements.

Action: T&C Administrator

Henley Summer Fireworks

The meeting felt that there should not be a requirement for 'proof of purchase' before the grant was made. It was also suggested that the Mayor meet with representatives from the Regatta and Phyllis Court to see if a better venue or additional financial contributions could be achieved. The Mayor indicated he was happy to do so. The item could now be removed from the Progress Report as the grant action had now been completed.

Joint Henley & Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan – Transport Study

The Town Clerk advised that the tender documents were due to be dispatched on Friday 6 March. The resulting bids would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town Clerk after Easter. It was expected that before the preferred consultant was engaged, respective presentations would be made to the relevant committee. There was some debate as to which committee would receive the presentations e.g. FS&M or the Neighbourhood Plan Governance Committee. The latter group was favoured. However, the recommendation from either would need to be approved by Full Council.

Elections

The Chairman explained that Full Council had agreed to hold the count at the Town Hall and the associated cost was not a factor. SODC were still to provide likely costs. However, earmarked reserves were in place to ensure all potential costs would be covered. The Town Clerk advised that seven unpaid volunteers had put their names forward to assist with the count on Saturday 9 May.

Councillor Mrs P Phillips joined the meeting at 7.30pm.

93. **FINANCE 2014-15**

i) Management Accounts

The meeting examined the accounts and the following comments were made.

A question was raised as to why not all the Parks Service staff were in the pension scheme. It was confirmed this was as a result of personal choice.

It was noted that repairs were required at 36 Market Place. It was accepted that due to the age of the building, there will be ongoing costs and these should already be reflected in the Planned Maintenance programme (constructed from the Keith Douglas survey). £75k is allocated to the Planned Maintenance programme each year to ensure the fabric of all the Council's buildings is kept in good repair. Despite the expenditure incurred, 36 Market Place did produce a net income to the Council.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

ii) Investment Performance

Members were pleased to see that the overall value of the investment portfolio continues to increase.

It was RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

iii) List of payments

No comments were made on the listings.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

94. **GRANTS POLICY AND FREE USE**

The meeting reviewed the document and updated list of those organisations that qualified for free-use. Riverside Counselling were now carrying out their counselling sessions at Magoos but were still keen to benefit from the free-use status. It was agreed that this organisation and the Henley Branch User Group be added to the list. It was also felt that the Town Clerk should have delegated powers to grant this facility to emerging groups. It was therefore,

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the updated grant policy be approved and that Riverside Counselling and Henley Branch User Group be added to the free-use list. (Riverside Counselling should also be advised of the free-use times.)

the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to grant free-use (in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of FS&M) to emerging organisations without having to refer the matter to Committee.

95. **GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

The report being considered had suggested the unused balance of the Youth Council budget be transferred to the grants budget as there was no further call on the outstanding amount. The meeting was agreeable to the virement which would effectively increase the remaining grants budget to £6.5k.

It was RESOLVED that there be a virement of £1.5k from the Youth Council budget to the budget for grants to local organisations bringing the total available budget for grants to £6.5k.

The Chairman highlighted the fact that although the budget had been increased to £6.5k, the applications amounted to over £28k and therefore it would not be possible to satisfy all the requests.

Following a debate on the methodology for determining each request, it was agreed that every application be considered and discussed before any vote was taken to ensure that each received equal attention and opportunity for funding. All of the applicants represented worthy causes and each would benefit from additional funding to further their work. The following comments were made:

NOMAD

The meeting was advised that (notwithstanding the excellent work carried out by the organisation) NOMAD had already received their annual £10k and the £5k residue from the Youth Centre budget this financial year.

Henley Town Football Club – Hang Out Club

There was concern expressed about the ongoing financial status of the Club. It was noted that progress was obviously being made with the Club now involved in talks with AFC Henley and the YMCA. The Club's planning application for their new stand had been submitted to SODC. The Hang Out Club seems to be a positive way forward with the opportunity to increase revenue. However, the meeting felt it would like to receive more details on the initiative.

Town & Visitors Regatta (TVR)

This was felt to be an event which was fundamental to the Town and it was suggested that rather than TVR submitting a grant application each year, provision should be made via the budget setting process to provide on-going funding. However, it was recognised that as the 2015-16 budget had been set, it was not possible at this stage.

Henley Skate park Initiative

It was suggested that the funding of this application should be met from the professional fees budgets rather than grants. Although a point of order was raised (as only the grants budget was part of the agenda), this was overruled as it was the grant application that was being considered.

Upper Thames Rowing Club

It was noted that this application had been withdrawn prior to the meeting.

After full consideration, it was RESOLVED that the following grants be awarded:

NOMAD	£ 500
Oxfordshire Assoc. for the Blind	£ 500
Henley Wildlife Group	£ 200
Henley Youth Festival	£1,000
Open Spaces Society	£ 100
Henley Town Football Club	£1,000
South Oxon Mencap Society	£ 500
Riverside Counselling	£1,079
Town & Visitors Regatta	£1,500
Henley in Transition	<u>£ 121</u>

Total = £6,500

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that £1,890 be granted to the Henley Skatepark Initiative which would be payable from the professional fees budget.

Due to the limitations of the budget, it was not possible to make meaningful contributions to Sue Ryder, Riverside Counselling and the Henley Town Football Club. However, it was suggested that each of these organisations be invited to the Town Hall to explain how the Town Council may be of assistance (if possible) which may result in separate applications being made outwith the twice-yearly grants process.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that Sue Ryder, Riverside Counselling and Henley Town Football Club are invited to the Town Hall to give presentations on their work and to discuss possible options for further financial support.

96. **ADJUSTMENT TO FINANCIAL PROCEDURES MANUAL**

There was no debate on this matter as Members had no objection to the proposed change.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the figure of £20 be increased to £50 in the Financial Procedures manual regarding authorisation for petty cash expenditure requiring the Town Clerk's signature.

97. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The Chairman confirmed that the 2016-17 budget would be agreed by Full Council at the 5 January 2016 meeting.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the new calendar of meetings be approved with the Full Council date of 5 January 2016 being annotated with the additional wording of 'including approval of the Precept for 2016-17'.

98. **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 3 MARCH 2015.

99. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

The Legal Update was noted and in particular:

Deanfield Road

The meeting considered the notes the Town Clerk had produced as a result of the meeting with the householders. It was accepted that the Council's land was landlocked and not accessible except via the householders' rear gardens or across the land bordering the road. It was suggested that ownership of the roadside land be determined before any further decisions were made.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Clerk approach the Land Registry to determine ownership of the land between that owned by the Town Council and the road.

ii) MILL MEADOWS NURSERY

The request from the Nursery to renew their lease was considered and received agreement. However, it was felt that the tenant only break clause was not acceptable and should also be available to the landlord. In addition, the meeting wanted the premises to be regularly inspected to ensure the fabric of the building was not being damaged in any way. It was also pointed out that the new lease should only cover the current demise and not include any part of the putting green.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that a new 5 year lease is granted (on the expiry of the current lease) on similar terms as those in force with regard to the following:

- **The initial rent to be that in force in September 2015 (after the rent review)**
- **Annual rent reviews with an RPI uplift**
- **Service charge uplift (no reduction) as informed by the costings for the whole building and latest costings**
- **Mill Meadows Childcare to pay the Council's proper legal costs.**
- **Mill Meadows Childcare's solicitor to draw up the new agreement which will be reviewed by the Council's solicitor**
- **The rent deposit be reduced to the equivalent of 3 months rent once the new lease is signed**
- **A 2 year break clause (on both sides) to be included in the new lease.**

iii) 353-357 READING ROAD AND ADJOINING LAND

The agenda paper was introduced by the Town Clerk and he also advised the meeting that he had received, the previous day, an approach from another developer expressing interest in the site. There were a number of factors that needed to be considered before any decisions could be taken. The Working Group had met with other potential developers and there appeared to be a number of options available.

The most immediate concern was the occupation of the building at 357 Reading Road when the tenant's lease expires on 30 June 2015. There were two sub-tenants operating out of the building who wished to continue operating from the site beyond the July date.

The impact of the Neighbourhood Plan and the sale of the site was discussed. It was believed that the Council needed professional advice to ensure that it achieved the best value for the site but also to examine the issues of relocating the clubhouses (AFC Henley and the Hockey Club) to Jubilee Park as well as the Parks Service Depot. The engagement of a consultant with the necessary skill base should be able to provide expert advice on all the disparate issues associated with the site. It was also suggested that AFC Henley and the Hockey Club should be involved in discussions to identify their needs and how they could be accommodated in the various proposals.

It became clear that the discussion on this agenda item would not be concluded within the time limit of the meeting. As it was considered irresponsible to rush discussions, no proposals were made.

Due to the lateness of the hour, it was agreed that the remaining agenda items i.e. 357 Reading Road and adjoining land and Staff Appraisals be deferred to a reconvened meeting on 16 March following the rearranged meeting of the Special Full Council (which commences at 7.30pm).

The meeting closed at 10.05 pm.

Chairman
4.3.15