

Present: The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor A Follett (Vice-Chair)
Councillor C Pye
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor Dr B G Wood (Chair)

In attendance: Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator
A member of the press
A member of the public

27. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors Mrs E Hodgkin, Miss L Hiller and D Nimmo-Smith had offered their apologies prior to the meeting.

28. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are hereby reminded that, under the provisions of Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 (The Code of Conduct), a member with a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent. A member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest. A member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting is being held whenever it becomes apparent that the matter is being considered at that meeting, unless he has obtained a dispensation from the standards committee of the responsible authority; and not seek improperly to influence a decision about the matter. For the purposes of this Part (of the Act), "meeting" means any meeting of the authority; or any of the authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees.

Councillor A Follett – Min 32 Grants – personal & prejudicial – member of Town and Visitors Regatta, Lions and Wildlife Group.

Councillor Mrs G Dodds – Min 32 Grants and Min 42 Legal Update (Headway/Brunner Hall) – personal & prejudicial – trustee of TYA.

Councillor Dr B Wood – Min 32 Grants – prejudicial – TYA – member of management committee.

Mr M Kennedy (Town Clerk) – Min 42– staff Christmas arrangements– personal & prejudicial – staff member

Mrs H King (Committee Administrator) – Min 42– staff Christmas arrangements – personal & prejudicial – staff member

29. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 7 July 2009 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Dr B Wood.

30. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Estate Inspections

It was noted that only 8 of the 16 areas had been inspected despite Full Council's wish that they should have all been completed by 1 September. Councillor Dr B Wood volunteered to take on Councillor T Bucket's area (Fairmile Verges) who was currently unavailable to undertake his inspection. Councillor I Reissmann would be covering the area previously allocated to Councillor A Elliott.

Action: Committee Administrator to e-mail those Councillors who have yet to carry out their inspections reminding them that they must be completed as soon as possible.

Energy Use

All three energy companies which had originally given presentations had now submitted formal written proposals of how the process could be progressed. These proposals will be evaluated at the next VFM Working Group which will be held at 10.30 on 30 September in the Committee Room. It was agreed that any Councillors who were interested in attending the Group to review the documentation would be welcome to attend.

Highlands Farm

Neither the draft section of the Sustainability Report nor the Report itself had been received. The Town Clerk was asked to contact SODC to enquire regarding progress.

Action: Town Clerk to make appropriate enquiries.

This item would remain on the Progress Report until resolution.

31. **FINANCE**

i) **Budget Monitoring Report**

Page 2 – the Angel on the Bridge. The budget showed an expected outturn of £1k. However, this should be amended to £750 to reflect the agreed amount.

Page 3 – Councillor A Follett pointed out that (as at 31 July) £3.2k had been spent on office training against a budget of £4k. With new staff joining and further training planned, the budget would very soon come under pressure and the Accountant should monitor the situation and make any necessary provisions.

It was also noted that 'Note 4' referred to an accounting error but there was no explanation as to how this occurred. It was requested that the Accountant provide the necessary information.

Action: Accountant to provide details.

The meeting agreed that the cash flow statement showing a positive figure (£24.9k) at the end of March '10 was very pleasing.

Councillor A Follett reaffirmed his previous comment that the 'dashboard' provided a valuable commentary to the budget figures. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the report be received and approved.

ii) Investment Performance Update

Members had before them the Investment Performance Update report for the period 1 April – 31 July 2009, copy having being issued.

It was RESOLVED that the Investment Performance Report for the period be noted.

The Chairman informed the Committee that a meeting with the investment managers, Rathbones, would be held in the very near future.

iii) List of Payments

Members had before them the List of Payments, copy having being issued. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the report be received and approved.

iv) 2010-11 Budget parameters

The Committee noted the content of the paper. Councillor Dr P Skolar pointed out that greater provision may need to be made in future to cover the deficiency in pension contributions. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the report be received and approved.

32. **GRANTS**

The Chairman advised the meeting that £4,559 remained in the grants budget and a decision was needed as to how much should be spent in the September '09 tranche (leaving any balance for the February '10 grants).

It was agreed that the remaining budget should be spent on the applications submitted to the current meeting and an examination of the overall budget would

take place in the New Year to see if any additional funds could be identified to allocate to the February grants consideration.

Councillor A Follett left the room during the discussions on grants for Henley Town & Visitors Regatta, Henley Wildlife Group and Lions Club of Henley. Councillors Mrs G Dodds and Dr B Wood left the room during the discussion of the Thamesfield Youth Association application. It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the following grants be awarded:

• Henley & District Theatre Organ Trust	£ 450
• Henley Women's Regatta	£ 500
• Henley Town & Visitors Regatta	£ 750
• Headway	£ 142
• Rotary Club	£ 259
• Thamesfield Youth Assoc	£1,000
• Henley Wildlife Group	£ 346
• Lions Club of Henley	£ 250
• Henley Arts Trail	£ 200
• Thames Valley Police (Mrs Battista)	£ 80

Dr P Skolar asked that the application from Ryder Cheshire Volunteers (which was unsuccessful) be rolled forward to the February meeting when further funds may be available.

Action: Committee Administrator to advise the successful applicants accordingly and arrange for the Ryder Cheshire application to be added to the February agenda.

33. **REFURBISHMENT OF THE PUBLIC TOILETS AT MILL MEADOWS**

The Chairman gave the background to the item which had been a priority of the Council for quite some time. He explained that the papers put forward were setting out the required steps as opposed to signing up for the work to commence.

Councillor Mrs G Dodds expressed concern that the cost of the project had been estimated at c£200k but it was unclear what the refurbishment actually entailed. It did not seem sensible to apply for that size loan before knowing details of the exact requirement.

Councillor Mrs J Wood felt that it would not be good enough just to 'patch up' the existing toilets and that the job needed to be completed properly to drastically improve the existing conditions. If there was an increase in tourist numbers during the Olympics then the Town needed to have acceptable toilet facilities. She also felt that boat moorers in Mill Meadows deserve better facilities (possibly including showers) considering the high mooring fees paid.

Councillor Dr P Skolar pointed out that the refurbishment could absorb the Council's capital budget for the next five years which would limit any other future capital projects. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the cost of the Mill Meadows toilet refurbishment scheme should be met through a loan from the Public Works Loan Board.

that the project is passed back to the Mill Meadows/River Sub-Committee to decide the preferred way forward in respect of agreeing the requirements, appointing project managers and obtaining tenders etc.

34. **DEPRECIATION AND MAINTENANCE OF COUNCIL ASSETS**

The prescient Accountant had produced a comprehensive paper covering the subject. Councillor Mrs J Bland felt that the report was part of good housekeeping and it addressed those issues that were not necessarily apparent from the financial reports.

Councillor Dr B Wood felt that there may be scope for selling some of the Council's assets but this would have to be considered very carefully and would not involve 'selling the family silver'. Councillor A Follett felt that Appendix 1 (Asset Valuations) was very informative and asked whether an additional column could be added which showed the income (if any) from each item.

Action: Accountant to amend Appendix 1 to show additional information.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Council needs to be aware of the costs associated with maintaining buildings when considering business plans and similar proposals.

that the Accountant is authorised to appoint Keith Douglas to undertake a building survey of Council buildings to determine the costs of potential repairs, renewals and renovations over the following time periods: immediate, 1 year, 3 years, 5 years.

that the Council agrees to undertake such a survey every 5 years.

that the Council agrees to review (via the VFM Group) the list of assets – land, buildings and artefacts – with a view to disposing those that neither generate income nor have civic significance.

35. **IT REVIEW**

The Town Clerk explained that an IT review was long overdue and this had been highlighted by the upcoming transfer of the VIC into the Town Hall. Incompatible telephony was only one issue that needed to be resolved. Councillor Dr P Skolar suggested that it may be worth looking at the Oxford County Network to see if it could provide any benefit to Henley Town Council. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Council agrees to a review of the Council's IT and telecom needs to be undertaken by MFG UK Ltd at a cost of £1,440 and to await a report on the review prepared by the Working Party.

that an IT working party is set up consisting of Councillor Reissmann, the Town Clerk, the Senior Committee Administrator and the Accountant.

36. **EMPLOYMENT LAW, HR AND HEALTH & SAFETY SUPPORT**

The Town Clerk introduced the paper and explained that the number of regulatory changes in the fields of employment law, HR and H&S had been numerous in the last few years. With all the changes, it was unlikely that the Council had absorbed and documented all the necessary amendments, which meant that the Council was potentially vulnerable to litigation. Employment of an outside firm to prepare all the necessary documentation (including staff contracts) would also relieve pressure from office staff.

It was agreed that, to provide consistency, a consultant should be employed for a three year period even though the majority of the work could be carried out in the first twelve months. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Council appoints Ellis Whittam for a three year period (at £3,829pa) to provide consultancy on employment law, HR support and health & safety systems.

37. **CCTV**

The Chairman advised that a meeting was to take place on the subject the following day and negotiations had already produced a slight cost saving. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Council was locked into a contract with SODC but a clause in the contract did exist which allowed for a reduction in cost if the service supplied was deemed less than satisfactory. This is currently being explored. It was

RESOLVED that the correspondence be noted.

38. **OSS/VIC WORKING PARTY**

The Town Clerk's paper proposed a working group which would address the scope of the service that may be provided by the One Stop Shop and had been supplemented with the information provided via a meeting with Tourism Southeast.

Councillor Dr B Wood stated that it would be important to establish the exact role of the OSS from 1 April 2010 and whether it would still deal with SODC queries etc. The Town Clerk confirmed he was having a meeting with the Chief Executive of SODC on 16 October concerning the OSS and would report the outcome back to the subsequent FS&M Committee.

It was agreed that two working groups need to be established:

(i) VIC Working Group:

Remit: the role of the VIC and the service provided once located in the Town Hall.

Membership: Cllr Mrs J Wood (rep. from Town & Community)
Cllr Mr A Follett (rep. from Finance Strategy & Management)
2 further Councillors (to be nominated at Full Council)
Mrs D Thompson (VIC)
Mr P Mainds (Henley Partnership – Leisure Group chair)

(ii) OSS Working Group

Remit: to agree the scope of the service provided after 1 April once OCC funding ceases.

Membership: Value for Money Group

One further Councillor (to be agreed at Full Council)

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Council agree to appointing the VIC Working Group and the OSS Working Group, the outputs from both being reported to the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

39. **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN**

Councillor Dr P Skolar pointed out that the Local Transport Plan was an important issue and the Council should put in a response to the various consultations (the timetable for which had already been published). It was the opportunity for the County Council to obtain capital for infrastructure projects and it was in a good position to have items included in the plan. It was noted that Councillor D Nimmo-Smith was on the ITS Committee and would be able to provide feedback.

It was agreed that the FS&M Committee should take ownership of this item and updates should be provided via the progress report and

RESOLVED that the correspondence be noted.

Action: Committee Administrator to add item to the progress report.

40. **NORTHFIELD END HIGHWAY**

The Chairman explained the background to this issue which involved determining the status of land which had previously been considered as highway. However, the Town Council did not appear to be part of the current consultation process. Despite this it was agreed that the Council should make representations to OCC along the lines suggested by Councillor Reissmann.

Councillor Mrs G Dodds wondered if there was any scope for involving the Land Registry in the dispute. However, Councillor A Follett pointed out that if the land was originally highway then it would not be registered and therefore not on the Land Registry database.

As the Town Clerk was not familiar with the history and issues associated with this area, it was suggested that he meet with Councillors Gibson and Nimmo-Smith to be properly briefed. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that following the Town Clerk's meeting

- (i) Henley Town Council requests time from OCC to make its response as part of the current consultation;
- (ii) Henley Town Council ensures the facts are gathered and made known to OCC as part of its response to OCC;
- (iii) Henley Town Council formally repeats its request that OCC makes clear as a matter of urgency its plans to return the land to being publicly maintained;
- (iv) OCC is asked to ensure that land illegally sold is returned to its control; and
- (v) OCC is asked to produce a plan to manage the land effectively in the public interest

41. **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.

42. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2009.**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

The content of the legal update was received and noted. In particular:

Citizens Advice Bureau

The Town Clerk reported that following a meeting on 14 September with Nigel Stanbrook (who had been facilitating the CAB legal process), it appeared that the last remaining issues had been resolved. It was hoped that the lease would now proceed to the signing stage.

Registration of HTC land

Blandy & Blandy were now investigating the possibility of registering the Town Hall using the 1974 Transfer Order.

AFC Henley

The Town Clerk advised that the updated draft lease had just been received from Blandy & Blandy and would now be forwarded to AFC's solicitors.

Barn

It was expected that the lease would be signed off this week with KVB Designs moving into the building during the last weekend of September.

ii) **VALUE FOR MONEY WORKING GROUP**

Members had before then the Minutes of the Meetings of the VFM Group held on 15 and 22 July. It was

RESOLVED

that the reports be received, noted and approved.

iii) **HENLEY CRICKET CLUB**

Following the publication of the agenda, the Town Clerk had received an e-mail from the Cricket Club advising that the ECB had made an award of £120,000 towards the new pavilion project and consequently would expect to take a charge on the ground/club. It was agreed that this request could be considered along with the original charge request.

The Legal Group had already met to consider the original request and agreed that consent should be given. It was

RESOLVED that the decision made by the Legal Group, to consent to a second charge being placed by SODC on the ground/property, be accepted; and

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that consent is given to a further (3rd) charge being placed on the ground/property by the ECB.

iv) RENT REVIEWS

Scouts

Although the current rent charged was minimal it was felt that to apply no increase at all would not convey the correct message. It was recognised that the Scouts had made a concerted effort to tidy up the site in the past but they should be encouraged to maintain the high standards as it was all too easy for the site to become untidy. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the rent is increased by £10pa to £60pa.

The Kiosk, Mill Meadows

The Town Clerk had yet to speak to Mrs Battista due to her recent illness. The meeting agreed that that an RPI based increase would be preferable and the Town Clerk should progress the issue. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

- (i) that the appropriate level of increase should be based on the RPI
- (ii) that the Town Clerk is given delegated authority to negotiate with Mrs Battista directly to discuss the increase and agree an acceptable figure bearing in mind the direction of the Committee
- (iii) that if no agreement is reached with the tenant then the Town Clerk is authorised to seek a commercial valuation from a recognised valuer.

v) ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT

The meeting acknowledged the input the Accountants Assistant had made since her arrival and was fully supportive of the recommendations in the report. It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the Town Clerk amends para 6.1 of the contract of employment of the Accounts Assistant to read 'Your salary is in accordance NJC salary point 25-28 (*rather than salary point 26*) and if part-time is calculated by pro-rata reference to the standard working week of 37 hours.'

that the salary of the Accounts Assistant is increased to salary point 27 after 6 months of service (16 September 2009). This equates to £394 pa

vi) STAFF CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS

The meeting noted the content of the report covering the Christmas arrangements for the staff.

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

that the Town Hall is closed from Tuesday 29th December 2009 through to Thursday 31st 2009, 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 who do not normally work on these days are not granted any additional compensatory leave.

that staff required to provide cover during the normal working hours of 29th, 30th, 31st December 2009 i.e. Park Services and Wardens be granted time off in lieu on a straight one for one basis.

that the Council considers making a contribution of £300 towards the staff Christmas festivities.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Chairman

16.9.09