

Present: The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Lorraine Hillier
Councillor Sara Abey
Councillor Ken Arlett
Councillor Julian Brookes
Councillor Donna Crook (sub for Cllr H Chandler-Wilde)
Councillor Will Hamilton
Councillor Glen Lambert
Councillor Ian Reissmann (Vice Chair)
Councillor Jane Smewing (Chair)

In attendance: Janet Wheeler – Town Clerk
Hilary King – Committee Administrator
1 member of the public
1 member of the media

74. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology was received from The Mayor, Councillor Kellie Hinton and Councillor Julian Brookes offered apologies for Councillor Ms H Chandler-Wilde.

75. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

A Member took the opportunity to congratulate Councillor Donna Crook on her recent election victory.

76. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

There were no questions from the public.

77. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 12 December 2017 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

78. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

SODC Funds from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

It was confirmed that a response from John Cotton had still not been received despite a reminder being sent earlier in the month.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

It was agreed that Councillors Sara Abey, Ken Arlett, Lorraine Hillier and Jane Smewing should meet with Kester George (Chairman, Harpsden Parish Council) to discuss how the CIL monies arising from Highlands Farm should be spent.

Boundary Review

No apparent developments had taken place on this issue and it was agreed that Councillors Sara Abey, Ken Arlett, Lorraine Hillier and Jane Smewing should meet with Steven Corrigan (SODC) to progress the matter.

Post meeting note: Steven Corrigan responded to the Town Clerk on 24 January and stated that SODC took the request to the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee meeting on 30 October. The committee agreed to undertake a review and they are currently finalising the terms of reference before commencing the consultation. The report and minutes are available from the following link:

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=335&MIId=2083&Ver=4>

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the Progress Report be noted.

79. **FINANCE**

i) Management Accounts

The Chair advised that there was £12k of unbudgeted expenditure comprising £8k for the May by-election and a further £4k for the by-election the previous week. Although the Council's budgets do take account of the normal 4 year local election costs, by-elections are not reflected. It was agreed that provision should be made for by-elections.

Action: HTC Accountant

The Chair also advised that the income from 357 Reading Road will increase producing an additional £3.4k.

A Member enquired whether the Council was likely to make a contribution towards the Regatta Fireworks this year (as £3k was granted the previous year). It was generally felt that further fund raising efforts need to be made by the organisation first including asking the Regatta to contribute more money, placing collecting tins in shops, approaching Phyllis Court for funding etc. The Council's first priority had to be the reduction of the current budget deficit and the fireworks could not take precedence.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

ii) Investment Performance

The meeting noted the latest investment figures.

It was RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

iii) List of payments

A Member queried the expenditure on Mill Meadows Grass Disposal (£1,494) and Gillotts Grass Disposal (£2,862). He wondered whether there was an opportunity to sell any resulting bales. However, the Gillotts grass will contain ragwort and therefore would be unsuitable for sale. It

was agreed that the Recreation & Amenities Committee should look at the potential revenue opportunities this grass collection presents.

Action: R&A Administrator

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

- iv) HTC's own Grant Applications to SODC
No comments were made on the application details.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

80. **TREE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**

The Committee had been asked to approve expenditure following the R&A recommendation that Arbortrack software be purchased in order to manage the Council's tree stock. The Council currently has c1000 trees on its land. It was felt that the annual licence fee (£2.5k) was large and was likely to increase every year and, as the Council would be 'locked in' with the supplier, would have little option to pay the fee. The initial cost of the software itself would be £15k. Although having the software was a good idea, it was hoped there could be a less expensive way of achieving the same result. The Town Clerk confirmed that no other Councils she had contacted used Arbortrack. It was suggested that HTC may be able to piggyback on Reading Borough Council's current system or even contract out the whole scheme.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that before any final decision could be made, officers should provide further details on:

- **How the current system works,**
- **What data is currently provided,**
- **What is provided by RBC,**
- **What range of alternatives exist and the associated cost (e.g. contracting out)**

The resulting report should be referred back to the R&A Committee.

Councillor Glen Lambert confirmed he would be willing to talk to Arbortrack on any technical issues if requested.

81. **REPLACEMENT OF CAR PARK STREET LIGHTS**

The meeting considered the report from the HTC Accountant and accepted the need for the lights to be replaced. The use of LED lights would also have the advantage of being environmentally friendly. It was noted that only one quote had been received to date but alternative quotes were currently being obtained. The Town Clerk was given details of local suppliers who may be interested in quoting for the work.

The report suggested the expenditure be met from the Planned Maintenance budget but the meeting felt that the enhancement the project provided would qualify it as a capital cost.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

expenditure of up to £4,500 on LED lighting at Mill Meadows Car Park be approved subject to additional quotes being obtained which should be circulated to Councillors for review.

that the expenditure should be met from the capital budget. (However, if the HTC Accountant confirmed this was not appropriate then the viring of £4,500 of the budget for planned maintenance on the Old Fire Station Gallery (under the Town & Community Committee budget for 2017-18) to Car Park Expenditure under the Recreation & Amenities Committee budget be approved.)

82. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The proposed meeting schedule for 2018-19 was reviewed. Two main issues were raised, Planning meetings that had been scheduled on a Monday and the fact Committee meetings were scheduled in August (peak holiday time). A number of suggestions were discussed and agreed.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the current calendar of meeting be accepted with the following changes:

- 14 August Full Council to be moved to at least to 31 July (and preferably within the school term), and previous meetings of committees to be moved to accommodate this;
- 19 November Planning to be moved to 27 November;
- 21 January Planning to be moved to 15 January (with R&A)

The revised version of the calendar will be reviewed by Councillors Julian Brookes and Ian Reissmann before being presented to Full Council.

83. **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 23 JANUARY 2018

84. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

YMCA

The meeting was advised that the YMCA Trustees would be meeting the following day to sign off the relevant paperwork.

Land at Blandy Road

The Town Clerk was asked to write to the agents (Haslams) asking for an update of the situation. A response should be requested in time for the next FS&M meeting on 6 March.

357 Reading Road

The Town Clerk gave verbal update.

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Valley Road

Councillor Ken Arlett gave a verbal update on the current situation.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Legal Update be noted.

ii) HR/LEGAL GROUP

The meeting reviewed the notes of the meeting but offered no further comment.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the notes of the meeting held on 9 January 2018 be noted.

iii) 353-357 READING ROAD

Councillor Ken Arlett gave a verbal update to the meeting.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the notes of the meeting held on 19 December 2017 be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Chairman
24.1.18