

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

In attendance: Janet Wheeler – Town Clerk
Liz Jones – HTC Accountant/RFO
Hilary King – Committee Administrator
7 members of the public
1 member of the media

61. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms H Chandler-Wilde.

62. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Julian Brookes – Min 73 i) – Legal Update – Personal – YMCA – Trustee.

63. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Russell Robinson (Mile Edge Fairmile)

Mr Robinson (who has lived on the Fairmile for 20 years) stated that he supported the broad aims of the proposed policy for the Fairmile verges in order to retain the current scenic view on the approach to the town. However, he had noted the recommendation that no further access points be allowed. He had applied for and been granted planning permission for an additional access from his property onto the byway. This would obviate the need for him to exercise his right of way over his neighbour's property and drive 150m along the byway (between 1 and 2 on the map on page 52 of the agenda), but instead use a 10m section of the verge onto the byway before exiting onto the unmarked lane that has access onto the Fairmile at 2 on the same map. He hoped that the Council would still permit this type of access.

Ian Clark (Cromwell Road)

Mr Clark asked whether the Council would be spending any money on river safety after a recent incident. He believed that access out of the river (by way of a ladder) should be made available in case someone fell in. Also the mooring rings

should not be on the ground as they represented a trip hazard. The Chair advised that this would be a matter for the Recreation & Amenities Committee to pursue.

Mr Clark also enquired why so much money was being spent on Makins recreation ground as opposed to Freemans Meadow. The Chair confirmed that plans were in place to upgrade Freemans Meadow.

Mr Clark suggested that residents should be consulted to ask if they would be prepared to pay 50p for using Whites bus even if they had a concessionary bus pass. He was advised that this item fell under the remit of the Bus Working Group but all users with concessionary passes could choose to pay instead of using their passes if they so wished.

Paul Sykes (Henley Town Football Club Committee Member)

Mr Sykes and fellow members of the Club [John Hooper (HTFC Chairman), Mick Keane (HTFC Deputy Chair) and Geoff Briggs (HTFC Treasurer)] were at the meeting to support the Club's request for a loan. He explained that the Club's bar revenue over the last 6 months amounted to £25k, equal to income for the whole of the previous year. The Club had instituted a business plan and had set strategic objectives as well as succession planning. The partnership with AFC Henley had provided a co-ordinated approach to football in the town which had increased community based participation. He was happy to answer any questions Councillors may raise when discussing the relevant agenda item.

64. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 31 October 2017 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

65. **HENLEY TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB (HTFC) REQUEST FOR A LOAN**

The meeting reviewed the notes of the meeting of the Value for Money Working Group which was convened on 4 December specifically to discuss HTFC's loan request. Mr Sykes was invited to the table to discuss the issue. Items covered included:

- Confirmation that the expenditure (as forecast in the Business Plan) did include paying off existing debts;
- Electricity debt of £7k had now been reduced to £6k;
- Tarmacking debt down from £8k to £7k;
- Personal loan debt is also reducing;
- The Club has committed members and volunteers;
- There were no costings for the improvements in the business plan as a tender process had yet to be undertaken. It was envisaged that members (with appropriate skills) would carry out the majority of the work so the loan monies would be directed towards material costs rather than labour;
- Governance is provided by the new management committee;
- Although the Club has left the Hellenic League (to reduce the drain on the finances and encourage local participation in matches) there is no reason why it could not re-join at some time in the future when it is on a more stable footing;
- Improved facilities at the site will encourage greater community use e.g. for darts matches, tea/coffee meetings etc. with the extra income being used to repay the HTC loan;

- It would be helpful if the loan was forthcoming in time for works to be undertaken and completed before the start of the playing season;
- The priority expenditure would be on the facilities, bar, clubhouse but pitch maintenance would also be part of the investment;
- An application would be made to SODC at a later date (if possible) to cover future structural works on the clubhouse;
- Further revenue opportunities should be explored including use of the toilets for the public and use of the car park.
- The £1.5k contribution from the District Councillor will not be spent on legal fees (which the Club will meet) but on improvements;
- The HTC accountant will liaise with Mr Sykes on a couple of points she had raised.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that (in principle) a loan of £22k be made to Henley Town Football Club. (Should this recommendation be ratified by Full Council, HTFC to complete the loan application form for review by the FS&M meeting on 23 January 2018).

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the notes of the Value for Money Working Group be noted.

66. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

SODC funds from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

John Cotton's response was considered and it was noted that SODC would be giving the monies to specific projects as opposed to allocating it to revenue. It was pointed out that this was out of line with the content of The Secretary of State's speech to NALC. The view of some Councillors was that Government monies did not belong to SODC and should be made available without restriction to the Town and Parish Councils. The meeting agreed that HTC should submit applications to SODC for festivals and the re-write of the Neighbourhood Plan in order to benefit from the resource.

A question was raised as to whether a response had been received to the Planning Administrator's letter to SODC concerning the proposed boundary review. The Town Clerk undertook to check. It was suggested that any review should look at Henley in total to resolve any anomalies such as the 4 properties on Swiss Farm that are the Bix parish. It was also acknowledged that the Council needed to work closely with Harpsden to address infrastructure stresses associated with the Highlands Farm development. The Neighbourhood Plan group needed to address this issue in conjunction with any CIL receipts/proposed expenditure.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the Progress Report be noted.

(Post meeting note – the RFO has written again to John Cotton stressing previous references to the Secretary of State's speech to NALC and asking if this will alter SODC's allocation of CTRS funds in 2018/19)

67. **FINANCE**

i) Management Accounts

The meeting reviewed the papers but no queries were raised.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

ii) Investment Performance

The meeting noted the latest performance figures.

It was RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

iii) List of payments

No comments were made on the payment listings.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

iv) HTC's own Grant Applications to SODC

The latest position regarding the list of projects for grants was noted. It was suggested that Councillors should work closely with the HTC Accountant to ensure all preparations were undertaken in readiness for when the SODC grant window opens, meaning applications could be submitted straight away. However, it was recognised that timing was an issue as there is a delay between the opening of the grant window and payment date, circa 6 months. Projects could not be started in the meantime as grants are not made retrospectively. The HTC Accountant confirmed that she is working with the LEADER program (for rural projects that have cultural or heritage benefits for the local community) to source possible funding towards the refurbishment of the first chapel at the Fairmile Cemetery.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

68. **PARKS SERVICE VEHICLE**

A discussion took place on the type of replacement vehicle for the Parks Service and whether it should be diesel, hybrid or electric. Although an electric version of the preferred vehicle was available, the cost was substantially higher and doubts were cast on its ability to perform tasks as well as the diesel model. The current vehicle needed to be replaced as soon as possible otherwise a new clutch would be needed at considerable expense. It was noted that outright purchase of the vehicle was significantly more cost effective than leasing. After further debate,

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the approval of the purchase of the Cabstar SWB Diesel to come from the 2017-18 capex budget for replacement Parks equipment.

69. **2018-19 DRAFT BUDGET**

Since the draft budget was produced and circulated, it had been announced that public sector workers would receive a 2% pay rise. When included, this would add £6k to the deficit shown making it around £36.7k. It was also acknowledged that further staff costs may be incurred after the Chris Rolley report is reviewed.

It was generally agreed that having a neutral budget was preferable but there was little option, even with the increase in the precept, but to run a small deficit. Each Committee Chair had reviewed their individual committee expenditure budgets and where practical had approved reductions. There were also possible projects in the pipeline that could reduce spending or increase income, looking further ahead.

Concern was raised that the Capex sheet contained a number of 'to be confirmed' entries rather than £values. It was confirmed that, at this stage, it was not possible to provide quotes but the items had been included as they were projects that may be undertaken during the period. However, each project would need to go through the relevant committee before progressing. The Town Clerk confirmed that the provision for the Town Hall audio visual and lighting enhancements could be achieved in stages. However, until listed building planning permission is obtained for the structural alterations, no business case would be produced. The Town Clerk said she would look into the availability of an SODC grant for this project.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that Councillors

- **note the significant variations in the 2018-19 budget against the 2017-18 budget at Schedule 1;**
- **recommend for approval the draft overall Income & Expenditure Budget for 2018-19 detailed in Schedule 2 (attached and now includes the additional £6k to take account of the national pay rise for staff but does not include any adjustments that might result from the review of the Chris Rolley report);**
- **recommend for approval a Precept of £530,734 to be collected from SODC;**
- **note the draft Capex budget for 2018-19 detailed in Schedule 3;**
- **note the draft Planned Maintenance figures for 2018-19 detailed in Schedule 4;**
- **note the cash flow forecast at Schedule 5.**

70. **FAIRMILE VERGES POLICY**

The meeting noted the Accountant's report and agreed that it was worthwhile having a policy to protect the verges although it was recognised that the policy should not be so prescriptive that it restricts the Council's decision making process. It would be better to set the principle (e.g. to maintain the current look and ambiance of the Fairmile) rather than hard and fast rules (e.g. no additional access points).

It was felt that the parking issues both at the town end and on the verges was an issue that should be addressed by the Town & Community Committee and setting up a cross-committee working group was not required though the T&C Committee should take into account the principles in the policy.

Town & Community Administrator to note.

It was agreed that allowing further access points onto the Fairmile was not desirable and the general feeling was that no further requests should be

considered at this stage. [The potential access required for the development outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan had already been agreed in principle subject to further negotiation on price.] Additional access points onto the restricted by-way would also be an issue as any by-way does not normally permit motorised vehicle usage.

Deciding on the exact wording of the recommendation was seen as difficult and it would be left to Full Council to put forward the general principles to be incorporated into a policy document.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the following principles apply to the Fairmile entrance to Henley:

- the unique and special nature of the Fairmile entrance to Henley is recognised as of high value to the town and its residents;**
- the "look and feel" to be preserved as a high priority;**
- changes to the Fairmile must be in keeping with and sympathetic to this special nature and**
- changes such as additional access points (other than those previously agreed) which adversely affect the area to be wholly exceptional and only when universally considered to be of significant benefit to the town.**

71. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

The Financial Regulations document is submitted to FS&M for an annual review. The HTC Accountant had only made a number of small changes to bring it up to date. No comments were made on the amendments.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the updated Financial Regulations document be approved.

72. 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 12 DECEMBER 2017

73. CONFIDENTIAL

i) LEGAL UPDATE

Land at Blandy Road

The Town Clerk reported that she had received an acknowledgement letter from the agent (Haslams) but there was no suggestion of a meeting date from the school.

Fairmile Access

It was agreed that the Town Clerk should write to the developer requesting that HTC's future legal fees associated with this project are met by the developer in full. A response should be requested by 3 January 2018 so that it may be reported to Full Council.

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

ii) 353-357 READING ROAD

The notes of the meetings held on 22 and 30 November were reviewed but no comments were made.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the notes of the meetings held on 22 and 30 November be noted.

EXTENSION TO MEETING

The meeting was on-going at 10.00 but not all the business had been concluded.

It was RESOLVED that the meeting be extended until 10.10 so that the remaining agenda items could be completed.

iii) LEASE AT MILL MEADOWS

There was no objection at the meeting to the renewal of the lease should it be requested.

iv) 357 READING ROAD

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update regarding the latest position with the remaining tenants and her recent meeting/discussions.

v) TILEBARN LEASES

No queries were raised on the draft documentation which will now be progressed by OCC Legal.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the draft leases be approved.

The meeting closed at 10.05pm.

Chairman
13.12.17