

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor A Follett (Vice chair)
Councillor Miss L Hillier
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor C Pye
Councillors Dr B Wood (Chair)

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

100. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Dr P Skolar.

101. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Town Clerk – personal and prejudicial – Min 111v) Staff Appraisals/Increments

102. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

There were no questions from the public.

103. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 16 February 2010 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Dr B Wood.

104. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Estate Inspections

Councillor Miss L Hillier expressed her thanks to Councillor Nimmo-Smith for carrying out the moorings inspection on her behalf.

Henley Information Centre

The Town Clerk confirmed that the completion date of 31 March was still on target. The official opening will take place on 7 April. The Mayor is in the process of deciding who should be on the list of invitees.

Paintings (basement corridor)

The curator of the Postal Heritage Museum will be visiting the Town Hall after Easter to inspect the paintings.

Dog Litter Bins

It appeared that the bins are no longer emptied on a weekly basis but on demand (when they are full). However, there was not a lot of information concerning the new system. The Chairman asked that Town & Community investigate the matter and report back under an agenda item.

Action: Town & Community Committee Administrator.

Angel on the Bridge

The Chairman asked that the FS&M Committee is kept abreast of developments in this case as it was originally a Finance item (but had subsequently been transferred to Town & Community).

Action: Town & Community Committee Administrator.

Parks Service Review

Two applications had been received, one for the post of Leading Hand and the other for the Parks Warden. Interviews will take place on Thursday 25 March.

105. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

Members had before them the Budget Monitoring Report for the period 1 April 2009 –28 February 2010, copy having being issued. The report gave details of the Revenue and Capital budgets, Cash Flow Statement, Balance Sheet and explanatory report.

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 2009 –28 February 2010, copy having being issued.

The Chairman pointed out that value of the Council's investments had risen to £3.96m with the recent rises in the stock market.

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

iii) Monthly List of Payments/Cumulative Supplier Costs

Members had before them the List of Payments and Cumulative Invoiced Costs, copies having being issued.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith asked why there were still numerous entries covering gas and electricity suppliers when he thought it had been agreed to consolidate these utilities under a single supplier to benefit from cost savings. The Accountant explained that investigations of having the utilities under a single 'umbrella' had not revealed any savings.

As each contract expires the Accounts Assistant, examines the latest deals on offer and achieves savings in that way. The Town Clerk believed

that there may be the opportunity to ally with OCC as they had significant buying power and therefore the possibility of discounts.

Councillor Miss L Hillier enquired why payment had been made to Windowflowers for the plant display at the Reading Road roundabout when she thought this was paid for by sponsorship. The Mayor confirmed that this was not an expense that fell to the Council as the sponsorship money had already been received to cover the cost.

It was **RESOLVED** that the reports be received and noted.

106. **REVISED LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

The Accountant introduced the paper and stated that the Council's auditors had recommended that the Council's corporate governance is reviewed and revised as necessary each year. The meeting then reviewed each of the principles listed and agreed their content.

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

the revised Local Code of Corporate Governance be accepted.

107. **IT REVIEW (PHASES 1 & 2 UPDATE)**

The Town Clerk gave the meeting an update on progress to date. He explained that a new system for data management had to be carefully considered and should not be rushed.

Councillor Follett volunteered to carry out a trial which would involve attending a meeting and just relying on his laptop and having no back-up papers. He emphasised that moving towards a paperless office could only happen if it was in the interest of/ benefit to both councillors and staff and should not create additional work. He suggested that the Town Clerk should speak to SODC or similar sized parish councils to learn of their experiences.

The meeting had differing views on the subject of the paperless office including the electronic distribution of agendas and minutes. Many felt that hard copies were advantageous as they could be read in situations where having a laptop was not convenient. There was also the question of whether the Council would fund laptops for all Councillors.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith stated that he thought it was right that the Council should be considering such a move but it would be premature to make any decisions before the data management exercise had been completed.

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

Councillors note the completion of Phase 1;

staff continue to examine their data management requirements, liaising with the IT group as necessary, with a view to completing the task by the end of May 2010;

Councillors agree that Phase 3 can be put on hold until the outcome of Phase 2 is agreed; and

the Town Clerk (with the assistance of the Senior Committee Clerk and the Accountant) produce a follow-up report to be presented to the FS&M Committee detailing the proposals with regard to data management.

108. **10:10 CAMPAIGN**

Councillor Mrs G Dodds explained that this campaign arose from an offshoot of the 2009 British film 'Age of Stupid' by Franny Armstrong which explored the result of climate change. She was pleased that the Council had bought into the green agenda and was taking steps to review its energy consumption.

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

the results of the NIFES report are considered by the FS&M Committee and on the assumption that a 3% saving can be achieved, then HTC should join the 10:10 campaign. (Although in theory this small reduction should be achievable, the age and structure of the buildings concerned may call this into question.

the electricity and gas consumption for the buildings are baselined at 30 June 2010 (or earlier if the NIFES report is actioned in advance of this date) and monitored on a quarterly basis by the Accounts Assistant.

the Accounts Assistant submits a report to FS&M at the end of the period detailing the outcomes.

109. **PINSENT REDGRAVE AWARD**

The Mayor had recently discovered the cups associated with these awards and was keen that the awards were reinstated. No award had been made since 2003 and it not known whether Messrs Pinsent and Redgrave would still be content for cups to be awarded in their name. Councillor Mrs G Dodds felt that nominations for the awards should not be limited to sports clubs as there had been some excellent sporting achievements within the local schools.

It was felt that a relaunch in the summer 2011 would be most appropriate which would give sufficient time for the scope of the awards to be examined but care would need to be taken that there was no overlap with the Town Medal.

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

a small project team is set up consisting of the Mayor and Councillor Mrs J Bland to look at the remit and scope of the award;

Messrs Pinsent and Redgrave be approached to establish if they are still content to have their name associated with this award; and

a further paper be presented to FS&M setting out the details of how the award would be made including the nomination process, selection criteria, judging, presentations and any other associated costs etc, the paper to be presented to Committee at the end of 2010 (but before the budget setting process was complete).

110. **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.

111. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 MARCH 2010.**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

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

Bath Site

Representations had been received from Mr & Mrs Lester concerning parking at the site under the new lease. The Town Clerk will be meeting Mrs Lester on Thursday 25 March to discuss the issue.

Leaver Road

Blandy & Blandy have reviewed the paperwork supplied relating to the properties in question. However, they are unable to provide a quote for the work as the picture regarding the properties was incomplete. Further documentation will be sought.

Greencroft Allotments

The Town Clerk reported that Mr Cook had visited the Town Hall to speak to him regarding his perceived encroachment onto allotment land. The Town Clerk was asked to review the matter in more detail and present a paper to FS&M.

Action: Town Clerk

ii) **STEPPING STONES LEASE**

The Town Clerk explained the background to the case and the fact that the Nursery had received a grant from OCC to pay for the majority of the improvement costs. However, Ms Bonham-Carter felt if she was going to make an investment in the building, then she would require a longer period of tenure. Presently Stepping Stones have a licence with the Council although it was envisaged that changes to the term would result in a lease being put in place.

Councillors felt uneasy being committed to a term of 12 years and favoured 6 years (comprising 2 years left on the current licence plus an additional 4 years).

The meeting examined the costs the Council carried on the pavilion and the income received and it was noted that only a small surplus was made. Councillor Hillier believed that the building may be better used as a public building and could be a 'home' for the Town's Festivals. However, it was generally felt that the pavilion would not be fully utilised in this way and that the occupation by the nursery was the best outcome.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith requested that if the alterations/conversions were approved then a clause should be inserted in the lease which required Stepping Stones to reinstate the present configuration at its own cost.

The main issue of discussion was the cost of running the pavilion none of which was being recharged to the Nursery. It was felt that any new agreement should take account of the occupants and their proportionate utility usage. This may necessitate the installation of appropriate meters.

Councillor Mrs J Bland also queried the high insurance premium and the Accountant was asked to investigate.

Secretary's note: Further investigation has revealed that in the past there has been a misallocation of the overall insurance costs (though the total for the year has been correct). The allocation given to the Town Hall has been understated, hence the allocation to the other properties was overstated. Pavilion should be £1,175 and not £7,700. The insurance figures in the budget will be amended to show the correct allocation provided that the total insurance budget is not altered.

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

approval be granted to the Stepping Stones Nursery to carry out the works set out in 3.3 and 3.5 of the report;

a new 6 year lease be granted until 2016 with a 4 yearly rent review;

the Council's legal fees in drafting the new lease be met by the licensee;

the Town Clerk be authorised to negotiate a revised rent, details of which should be brought back to FS&M;

disposables/utilities/cleaning costs should be re-charged;

a proportion (based on sq footage) of the pavilion's buildings insurance to be re-charged;

the Town Clerk to review the lease with the Henley Bowls Club with a view to ascertaining whether it is permissible to recharge for their energy consumption. Subsequently produce a paper for FS&M on the outcome and what possibilities may exist including the installation of meters.

iii) **GRAVE DIGGING**

The Town Clerk explained the background to the issue which had resulted in the loss of the gravedigger. The situation would have occurred in 2012 in any event when the M&C contract expired. A number of grave diggers had been contacted and the prices quoted varied substantially. The best price had been supplied by Tomalin & Son as follows:

Single depth grave	£320
Double depth grave	£340
Treble depth grave	£390
Cremated remains	£140

The prices quoted were for 2010-11. Tomalin & Son were prepared to organise the grave digging for all burials even those for which they were not acting as funeral directors. The grave digger they would use would be Les Tyler, who is currently contracted to M&C, and Keith Heybourn.

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

from 1 April 2010 Tomalin and Son are charged with the responsibility of finding a suitable gravedigger and meeting his costs in full;

appropriate controls be introduced as set out in 3.6 of the report;

the appropriate amendments be made in the 2010-11 budgets.

The Committee Administrator and the Accountant left the meeting at this point.

iv) **SENIOR COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATOR/REVIEW OF SERVICE**

A discussion took place concerning the vacancy of Senior Committee Administrator which had been created with the impending retirement of Mrs Gliddon. One application had been received for the post and the interview was to be held on Wednesday 24 March.

The paper had also addressed the increase in hours of the Recreation & Amenities Committee Administrator. It was felt that no decision should be taken on this at the current time and a staged approach should be adopted following the appointment of the new Senior Administrator. The Town Clerk was asked to produce a further paper for FS&M.

Action: Town Clerk

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

the Committee noted the arrangements for appointing a Senior Committee Administrator.

the Town Clerk presents a further report on the Committee Service once the post of Senior Committee Administrator is filled.

v) **STAFF APPRAISALS/INCREMENTS**

The Town Clerk updated the meeting with the results of the staffs' appraisals and the impact of their pay increments.

It was decided that staff who had already reached the top of their scale should not receive an additional spinal column point nor should there be any additional merit increments awarded.

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

the report and summary of staff employed by the Council as at March 2010 be noted;

in recognition of completing a satisfactory appraisal those members of staff not yet on the top of their salary scale be advanced to the next appropriate spinal column point within their

range and paid the appropriate increase in salary from 1 April 2010;

the Town Clerk's progression of one incremental point within his salary range SCP 61-64 to spinal column point 63, following his annual appraisal by the Mayor, be awarded;

an additional merit increment be awarded to A Gliddon in recognition of her exceptional work in all areas of office management throughout 2009-10.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Chairman
24.3.10