

Present: The Chairman, Councillor Mrs J Wood
The Mayor, Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Miss S Evans
Councillor D Hinke (substituting for Councillor D Clenshaw)
Councillor I Reissmann

In attendance: Mr M Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs B Walker – Committee Administrator/Minute Taker

Also Present: 2 members of the public
1 member of the press

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the Councillors M Akehurst, D Clenshaw (Councillor D Hinke substituting), Miss K Hinton and D Silvester.

53. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

54. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

None.

55. MINUTES

- i. The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 29 October 2013 were approved and then signed by the Chairman, Councillor Mrs J Wood as a true record.
- ii. The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Henley in Bloom/Civic Pride Sub Committee held on 22 November 2013.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the Henley in Bloom/Civic Pride Sub Committee held on 22 November 2013 be received, approved and adopted.

- iii. The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Christmas Decorations and Events Sub Committee held on 5 November 2013.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the Christmas Decorations and Events Sub Committee held on 5 November 2013 be received, approved and adopted.

A member congratulated the Chairman of the Christmas Decorations and Events Sub Committee and the Committee Administrator, Mrs Paula Price-Davies for organising such a splendid Christmas Festival this year.

- iv. The Committee received and considered the notes of the Toilet Refurbishment Working Group meetings held on Wednesday 13 and Wednesday 20 November 2013. The Committee noted the tender process had commenced for the refurbishment of the public toilets at Mill Meadows and that sealed envelopes would be opened at noon on Monday 13 January 2014 in the Town Clerk's office. Robert Rigby Architects Ltd were praised for the excellent service they were providing.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the notes of the Toilet Refurbishment Working Group meetings held on 13 and 20 November 2013 be received, approved and adopted.

The Mayor, Councillor S Gawrysiak left the meeting at 7.46 pm to attend an event as Mayor.

56. HENLEY RUGBY CLUB

The Committee received a report regarding the Henley Rugby Football Club and welcomed Mr Mike Trethewey, Chairman of the Henley Rugby Club, to the table.

Mr Trethewey thanked the Committee for allowing him to speak at the meeting and distributed to members additional information including a match day programme, a new member's leaflet and his CV in order to show his background.

Mr Trethewey explained he had been in the post of Chairman for six months and unlike previous Chairmen, was retired, which enables him to dedicate a considerable amount of time to the role. He also explained he was from a commercial background, as outlined by his CV, which he felt he could draw on to benefit the Club.

Mr Trethewey outlined the ethos of "Henley Rugby Club" as follows:-

- first and foremost it is a centre of rugby playing for children (300 plus) and adults. This requires the club to have certain facilities for instance pitches, changing rooms, a club house etc.
- the Club operates a number of commercial activities in order to provide the above facilities e.g. advertising, sponsorship etc.
- the Club is community based and focused, for instance the Club works with schools, the facilities are used by the wider community and supports local charity work

A major problem with the Club, however, is that it is not currently self-sufficient. The Club has lost money over the past 3 years and is likely to again for this financial year (which runs June to May). The Club has made a considerable effort to raise revenue by for instance increasing membership and spectator numbers, increasing the income from the car park and from sponsorship, carrying out a utilities review, instigating a charge for the match day programme etc. These efforts are working

however they require time to reach their full potential and in the meantime, the Club needs help particularly in the short term. In the long term, Mr Trethewey, explained that he is confident the Club can become self-sufficient by implementing a number of measures which have already been identified and looking for new opportunities.

Mr Trethewey suggested 4 ways the Town Council could help the Club financially, which would provide the Club with short term relief as follows:-

- as landlord, the Town Council charges £4,000 per annum ground rent (£2,000 in January and £2,000 in June). Would the Town Council consider a rent holiday for 2 years (forego not defer the rent)?
- the rent review is due in 2015. Assuming the rent would be increased - would the Town Council defer any increase for 3 years e.g. until 2018?
- the current £30,000 loan to the Club is due to be repaid in full in April 2016. Would the Town Council consider extending the loan for a further 10 years?
- the all-weather pitch is now 10 years old and is perfectly serviceable however it now requires a technical inspection and associated certificate which costs £2,000. Would the Town Council either loan or grant this money?

During a general discussion and question and answer session the following points were made:-

- the presentation should have been made to the Finance, Strategy and Management Committee due to the financial nature of the requests
- in the past the Club has asked the membership for additional donations to cover the shortfall (which is in the region of £20 - £30,000 per annum on a turnover of approx. £650,000), however the membership is weary of this and it is not a viable option anymore
- there are many sports clubs in Henley who struggle financially who are equally deserving of financial help
- helping one sports club does not preclude the Town Council from helping another sports club
- the Club is also applying for grants e.g. from the RFU Legacy Fund (£10,000 maximum)
- the Henley Rugby Club is recognised as an important asset to the town and its success is recognised, e.g. being one of the top 40 rugby clubs in the country and playing in division 1 nationally
- the question of whether to pay the players less was asked – Mr Trethewey explained what you pay the players directly correlates with how successful you are which directly correlates with the ability to garner sponsorship and therefore is part of a bigger picture. However this “bigger picture” may be considered e.g. what level rugby to play at and players’ pay
- It has been suggested in the past the Town Council should have a scheme for helping clubs e.g. a “Sports Bank” to provide low interest loans, however it was noted the Town Council does in effect already provide this service to clubs but on a case by case basis

After further discussion members recognised this Committee was unable to offer any help this evening however the Town Council should consider these requests in more detail and suggested a Working Party be set up at Full Council to investigate various options. The timing was noted as the budgets for 2014/15 are about to be set and the Council may want to consider amending the budget to enable the Council to help

the Club in 2014/15 should it wish to. It was suggested the Town Clerk, the Chairman of the Finance Committee plus two Councillors meet with Mr Trethewey and key members of the Rugby Club (e.g. Treasurer) to gather more information and get a better understanding of the situation. The Town Council would also want to have sight of the audited accounts to May 2013, the latest unaudited accounts for the year 2013/14 (which may show signs of financial improvement following measures already taken) and short/long term proposals to date.

The Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that a Henley Rugby Club Working Group be set up at the next Full Council, to consist of at least three Councillors and the Town Clerk

that the Working Group meet with representatives from the Henley Rugby Club to investigate and consider ways the Town Council could assist the Henley Rugby Club financially and to report to the Finance, Strategy and Management Committee with recommendations for their consideration

Mr Trethewey thanked the Committee for allowing him to come and speak and left the table.

57. PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received and noted the progress report and made the following comments:-

Toddler Playground at Mill Meadows - the Committee noted two consultation days will take place (Saturday 18 January and Wednesday 22 January 2014) regarding the type of equipment to be installed

Makins Recreation Ground – the Committee received an updated report following a site visit in September 2012 by Councillor Ms L Meachin, Councillor Mrs J Wood and the Town Clerk. It was noted the pram walk, which was refurbished approximately 7 years ago, is now looking rundown along with the car park area. It was noted the landowners are the South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA) and the South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and it was suggested, in the first instance, contact be made with them to ask what plans they have for the area and to possibly work with them and residents to improve the area.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that a letter be sent to the owners of the pram walk and car park, the South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA) and the South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to ask what their plans are for improving this area.

58. BUDGET

- i. The Committee received, considered and noted the management accounts to October 2013 and parking income graph to November 2013.
- ii. The Committee received, considered and noted a report on updated budget figures for 2014 / 2015 which included amendments to the budget

recommended at the meeting of this Committee on 29 October 2013 and ratified by Full Council on 12 November 2013.

The Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the adjusted budget figures as presented and the capex items under Recreation and Amenities be approved

59. TREE PRESERVATION ORDER – OAK AT MAKINS RECREATION GROUND

The Committee received and considered a report regarding the placing of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on an oak tree at Makins Recreation Ground. This follows an approach made by a resident of Henley, Mrs P Petter to the South Oxfordshire District Council asking that a TPO be placed on the tree which was planted as a memorial to her son. The Forestry Officer had advised Mrs Petter to approach the Town Council as landowners for their view as a courtesy.

After discussion the Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the Town Council supports the making of a Tree Preservation Order on the oak tree at the north west end of Makins Recreation Ground

The meeting ended at 8.53 pm

bw

Chairman