

Present: The Deputy Mayor, Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor Miss K Gehrmann (substituting for Cllr M Akehurst)
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Miss L Hillier
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor Mrs P Phillips
Councillor I Reissmann (Chair)

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

103. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin, Councillors Mrs J Wood and M Akehurst.

104. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

105. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

No members of the public attended the meeting.

106. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management (FS&M) Committee held on 19 March 2013 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

107. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Bell St & Northfield End – Parking & Highway Issues

The Town Clerk confirmed no further information had been received on this issue and there was unlikely to be as a state of 'purdah' prevailed until after the County Council elections.

Estate Inspections

It had been suggested that the Inspections cease after the latest round was completed. A report would be submitted to the next FS&M meeting.

Electoral Review of South Oxfordshire

The Chairman explained that there were two reviews in progress, one covering the District Councils and the other focussing on Parish and Town Council arrangements. The final recommendations from the Boundary Commission had confirmed Henley would comprise one ward with three members. It was agreed that future Progress Reports would show a separate item to cater for the Town Council arrangements.

108. FINANCE

i) Management Accounts

The accounts presented were the final draft figures for the year 2012-13 and the HTC Accountant stated that she expected very little change when the final adjustments were made. The Chairman explained that the figure of £41k shown in the accounts, which was the results of share gains, had been shown as income on the advice of the auditor.

Concern was expressed regarding the deficit against budget for the permanent moorings and the Town Clerk was asked what action was being taken to rectify the situation. He confirmed that uptake had been below what was expected despite the moorings being advertised on the HTC website. The subject was being considered in greater detail by the Recreation and Amenities Committee. It was suggested that that Committee also consider keeping the current moorers satisfied, renting moorings on a weekly basis during the summer, reducing the overall rent and/or upgrading the current facilities.

Councillor Miss L Hillier joined the meeting at 7.35.

The observation was made that the surplus in 2012-13 was £124.7k. The Chairman explained that it was sensible to be prudent when setting the budget so that unforeseen events could be accommodated rather than having to deal with a deficit at the end of the year. However, he acknowledged that it was important that individual committees provide the HTC Accountant with as accurate estimates as possible for the budget setting process. The Chairman also recognised the efforts made by officers to keep costs under review and make reductions where possible. Their efforts had also increased the income generation stream e.g. weddings at the Town Hall. It was

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

ii) Investment Performance

The meeting was pleased to see that the Council's investments had reached £4.6m and had enjoyed an 11.5% increase over the year. One member queried what the acronym APCIMS stood for. (*Secretary's note: The Association of Private Client Investment Managers and Stockbrokers is a trade association that represents the investment community.*) The Accountant confirmed that the Council's investments were concentrated in safe assets that provided income generation. It was

RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

iii) List of payments

The list of payments was reviewed. There were no material comments and it was

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

iv) Cumulative suppliers 2012-13

It was noted that the cost of Windowflowers was the third highest cost to the Council. It was questioned whether HTC were making any money from the hanging basket initiative. It was confirmed that £5 was received from every basket sold and where planters were sponsored, this reduced the overall cost to the Council. There had been a lot of work put in to promote the hanging basket scheme this year which had been extended to private residences and its success (or otherwise) will be examined at the end of the year. It was

RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

109. **FINANCIAL PLANNING & SCRUTINY GROUP**

The Chairman confirmed that the 2013-14 budget for the Neighbourhood Plan was £40k although there was £10k in the Contingency Fund should this be required. It was acknowledged that estimating a precise cost of producing the Plan was extremely difficult and depended, to a large degree, on whether a consultant was employed or use was made of community volunteers. The Chairman re-inforced the point that the Joint Neighbourhood Planning Governance Committee needed to supply a breakdown of the proposed spend so that it could be included in the Management Accounts and be transparent to Full Council and the public. A Member undertook to relay this point to the Governance Committee. It was

RESOLVED that the notes of the meeting be received and noted.

110. **COST OF REPLACEMENT CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

A Member wished to clarify that where a replacement of an item was made, the cost should be met from capital whilst repairs would be met from normal running costs. The Town Clerk confirmed this was the case. He also confirmed that a 'repair and renewals' fund did exist but there was no budget for this particular item. However, the Recreation & Amenities Committee will make provision in next year's budget under the earmarked reserves. It was

RESOLVED that

£1,595 of the total cost be taken from capex, with the balance of £1,045 being taken from the earmarked reserve brought forward in 2013-14.

111. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

The Town Clerk introduced a paper and requested a steer from the Committee as to how they wished to proceed so that a more detailed report could be presented to the next Finance meeting and considered further at Full Council (as necessary). SODC hoped to complete the review by April 2014 but HTC would want to provide input as the process developed.

The first item that was considered was the parish boundaries. It was acknowledged that this was not the best time for wholesale changes as this would confuse the issue with the work being carried out in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, there was a case for Henley's parish to absorb part of the Harspden parish. The boundary could follow the natural demographic and physical features of the town rather than those artificially drawn as at present. Any proposed boundary change should encompass the inclusion into Henley of Gillots School, the Sports Centre and Highlands Farm.

The second item was the warding arrangements within the Town. The Town Clerk had produced three options for consideration. Each had their merits and supporters. A fourth option of reducing the number of Councillors was debated. The meeting was against this additional option as all recognised that this would represent additional workloads, and as the Town Councillors carried out their work on an unpaid basis, it was felt that it would not be a positive step forward for either the Councillors or the local residents. Moreover, Councillors were reminded that the Council had opposed a reduction in the number of district and county councillors for this very reason. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the Town Clerk produces a more detailed report for the next Finance Committee to include:

- a) **Parish boundary - exploring the realignment of the parish boundary to include Gillots School, the Sports Centre and Highlands Farm, and**
- b) **Warding arrangements – further detail covering:-**
 - i) **Retaining the existing north and south wards each returning 8 town councillors;**
 - ii) **Creating a single town ward that would return 16 town councillors;**
 - iii) **Dividing the Town boundary into smaller wards each with its own identifiable names instead of compass points such as Badgemore; Newtown; St Mary's; Northfields; Gainsborough. Each ward would cover its own discreet neighbourhood that residents would more easily identify themselves with, creating a greater sense of community returning fewer councillors, say 2/3 which in turn should increase accountability and hopefully voter turnout.**

112. 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 APRIL 2013.

113. CONFIDENTIAL

i) LEGAL UPDATE

First Chapel

The Town Clerk confirmed that the lease had been completed.

Henley Rugby Club

The Town Clerk had recently spoken to the President of the Club who confirmed that there had been no developments concerning the mast and there was some doubt whether the project would actually reach a successful conclusion.

AFC Henley

The Club has agreed to the proposal whereby it allows the Parks Service to traverse its land if HTC take back responsibility for maintaining part of the boundary vegetation. It is hoped that a signed letter of agreement will be put in place rather than an amendment to the lease.

The Kiosk, Mill Meadows

The Town Clerk updated the Committee with the outcome of the meeting he had with the Battista brothers on 22 April. The meeting had been very productive and covered a number of issues that will enable to draft documentation to be produced. It was agreed that a professional valuation of the site be carried out to determine an acceptable level of rent.

The Battistas had asked whether they could have 'first refusal' to provide catering when events were held at Mill Meadows. This topic was not part of the lease negotiation and a full report would need to be presented to the Mill Meadows Sub Committee for their consideration.

Leaver Road

It was confirmed that the valuation report was still awaited.

The meeting closed at 8.50.pm.

Chairman
24.4.13