

**Present:** The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin  
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor S Gawrysiak  
Councillor M Akehurst (Vice chair)  
Councillor W Hamilton  
Councillor Miss L Hillier  
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith  
Councillor Mrs P Phillips  
Councillor I Reissmann (Chair)  
Councillor Mrs J Wood

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

78. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

79. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

80. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

*Mr K Rawlingson – Burser, Rupert House School*

Mr Rawlingson advised the meeting that, a number of years ago, the School had benefited from 4 parking spaces outside their premises and following the Inspector's report regarding Bell Street was hoping that the spaces could be re-instated. The Chairman stated that decisions regarding this area were the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority.

81. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 18 December 2012 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

*Councillor Mrs P Phillips joined the meeting at 7.32*

Due to the interest generated by the result of the Public Inquiry and members of the public that were in attendance to listen to the debate on Northfield End. It was

**RESOLVED that the order of business be varied in accordance with Standing Orders and that Agenda item 11 (Bell Street – Public Inquiry) be moved forward to the item following the Progress Report (Agenda item 5).**

82. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Estate Inspections

It was acknowledged that a number of inspections remained outstanding and Members were reminded that they should be completed as soon as possible.

Electoral Review of South Oxfordshire

The Chairman confirmed that although the changes to the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies was no longer being progressed, the local review was still continuing.

83. **BELL STREET – PUBLIC INQUIRY**

The Chairman pointed out that the Inspector's report had supported the Council's concerns regarding safety issues, retaining the heritage of the site and preserving a public amenity whilst trying to be fair to the parties affected. He had also confirmed that the Inspector's report had confirmed that there was little or no public interest loss resulting from his ruling.

*Councillor Miss L Hillier joined the meeting at 7.35*

It was recognised that the issue of Bell Street had produced a split along party lines and the outcome of the inquiry had not been welcomed by all Councillors. However, the Chairman confirmed that the Secretary of State's decision was final and there was no right of appeal.

Some members re-iterated their opinion that the outcome was unfair on those people who had legitimately purchased a parking space. In addition, the opportunity to reach a negotiated settlement which could have resulted in the 'green triangle' coming under Henley Town Council (HTC) ownership had been lost. This stance was countered with the view that the decision protected residents' rights, had due regard to safety, maintained the look of a picturesque Georgian street and protected the existing trees.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith was asked (as an OCC councillor) why OCC had chosen not to attend the Public Inquiry. He reminded the meeting that the application had been submitted by Chesterton and not the County Council but in retrospect it may have been that Cllr Rodney Rose had been badly advised in respect of the attendance issue. Councillor Nimmo-Smith advised the meeting that OCC were holding an internal meeting on 6 February to discuss the available options following the Public Inquiry report being published. The next step will be to hold meetings with Council representatives before holding a further meeting involving all stakeholders. Discussions will cover not only Bell Street but also the 'green triangle' and the land on the opposite side of the road outside Northfield House.

**It was UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**

**Henley Town Council notes the Inspector's report on Bell Street. In particular, the clear statements on public safety, amenities and protection of heritage.**

**HTC calls on OCC to lead in working with all stakeholders in consulting to develop a plan for the area in front of 94-102 Bell Street. The proposals must be safe and carry the support of the whole community.**

**HTC calls on OCC to take action to resolve the encroachment onto public highway on the land in front of Sydney House and the area in front of Northfield House, 11 Northfield End.**

**Councillor S Gawrysiak should act as HTC's representative at the OCC meetings.**

*Post meeting note: A meeting has been called to consider the issues on 13 February 2013.*

84. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring

There were no material comments made on the dashboard or the management accounts. It was

**RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.**

ii) Investment Performance

The meeting noted that the value of the investments continued to rise. It was

**RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.**

iii) List of payments

A query was raised regarding the payment associated with the removal of 3 windows at the Parks Service depot. The Accountant confirmed that this was as a result of the recent break in. The equipment stolen was replaced on a new for old basis under the Council's insurance policy but further security measures had been put in place. A container and portacabin had been purchased as part of these measures. It was

**RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.**

85. **COUNCIL TAX LEAFLET**

The Chairman confirmed that the Leaflet had been referred back to FS&M from Full Council, with delegated powers to act, to examine grammatical changes only. A Member wanted to table a revised leaflet but the Chairman said it could not be considered as the proposed amendments made changes to the substance not just the grammar. However, in view of the extensive debate that ensued and the general feeling that the leaflet should be acceptable to all Councillors, it was agreed that next year's draft should be included in the budget plan thus giving enough time to reach a consensus on the wording. The Chairman requested proposals for grammatical corrections. Only one was forthcoming. It was

**RESOLVED that the Council Tax Leaflet be approved with the addition of one comma. The relevant sentence to read; "Other highlights include installation of solar panels so reducing energy bills and carbon emissions, winning Gold at Britain in Bloom, and providing a building for the new George Orwell museum."**

86. **LOANS FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS**

It was recognised that Councillor Mrs J Wood had instigated this potential opportunity and thanks were expressed for the efforts she had made as well as the Town Clerk for his input. The meeting was reassured that the legality of these loans for the purposes intended would not be called into question. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that a Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) is considered as a funding option for major capital schemes in 2013-14, such as the refurbishment of the public toilets at Mill Meadows and the replacement of equipment at the toddler play area.**

87. **LOCALISM OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT**

The Town Clerk introduced the paper. He explained that SODC had acted extremely fairly by dispersing the grant (of which HTC had received £26k) down to town and parish councils. This had not been the case in other parts of the country and this had put some local councils in severe financial difficulty. The grant HTC had received had cushioned the Council tax rise but it was unlikely this level of grant would be available next year. It was agreed that the change to the calculation of the council tax base had been ill-conceived and its implementation had produced unexpected difficulties. There was agreement with the NALC proposal that the local MP should be contacted so objections could be registered. However, it was felt that a joint letter to include Eric Pickles was preferable. It was

**RESOLVED that the Town Clerk write a letter**

- **jointly to John Howell MP and Eric Pickles MP (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) to express the Councils disappointment over the implementation of the 'Localisation of Council Tax Support' and**

- to SODC to express thanks for the fair and reasonable way it has conducted the grant distribution

88. **COUNCILLORS' MILEAGE RATES**

*[Note: a dispensation was agreed at Full Council on 15 January 2013 (Min 68 refers) which enables Councillors to debate and vote on this item.]*

The meeting felt that pegging the Councillors' mileage entitlement to the limit set by HMRC was a sensible move and negated the need to keep referring the matter to Committee every time the rate changed. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that Councillors are authorised to claim mileage at a rate per mile equal to the tax-free allowance rate, currently 45p/mile, approved by HM Revenue & Customs.**

89. **COMMITTEE MEETING TIMETABLE**

The committee timetable was examined and it was noted that a Special Full Council was scheduled in January 2014 to agree the precept. Although the meeting may not be necessary, it was a sensible approach to make that provision. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Calendar of Meetings for 2013 and 2014 be accepted.**

90. **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 5 FEBRUARY 2013.**

91. **CONFIDENTIAL**

**i) LEGAL UPDATE**

Makins & 18 Harcourt Close

The meeting considered the offer to purchase part of the site. It was agreed that obtaining an accurate valuation for the land (considering its history) was not straightforward. However, on the basis that the Council did not have a policy to sell off parts of its estate it was felt that the offer should be rejected. Consequently, it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the proposed purchaser be advised that his offer is rejected.**

Statue at Red Lion Lawn

The initial comments provided by HTC's solicitor was circulated to all councillors for information. A full report and updated agreement will be considered by the R&A Committee at the meeting on 12 February.

**ii) HENLEY & DISTRICT CAB**

The meeting noted the draft Licence to Assign prepared by the Council's solicitor and approved the content. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Licence to Assign be approved and presented to Full Council for signing and sealing on 26 February.**

**iii) BATH SITE**

The Chairman advised the meeting that this item had been deferred from two previous FS&M meetings and there was now insufficient time for either a sale or a lease to be completed before the existing parking licences ran out. The general feeling was that the Council should not be considering a sale as there was no financial need to liquidate assets. However, the valuation of the site showed that its rental income could be more productive. This was an important site and the meeting did not want to be rushed into a decision on its long term future and preferred to grant licences for a further year while the future of the site could be fully debated. It was proposed that the annual rent should be raised substantially for the 2013-14 licence year having regard to the commercial valuation received. The licence holders should be advised in writing that should they wish to extend their licence for another year, a rent increase would be applied. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that a further licence (valid for 1 year following the expiry of the current licence) at an annual rent of £550 (+VAT) be granted to the existing licence holders.**

**iv) RENT REVIEW – 36 MARKET PLACE**

The meeting noted that a rent review was due and the proposed level of the increase. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the rent on the property is increased to £8,086 per annum from 1 April 2013 and the Registration of Fair Rent documentation is lodged accordingly.**

**v) SUCCESSION PLANNING – HENLEY INFORMATION CENTRE**

The report had been submitted to examine staff changes that were expected at the end of 2013. It was recognised that the latest member of staff in the Henley Information Centre was proving to be a very valuable asset and it was pleasing that she had sought additional responsibility. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the arrangements for succession planning, within the Henley Information Centre, is progressed as set out in the Town Clerk's report.**

**vi) PARKS SERVICE REVIEW**

The Town Clerk was commended on producing a clear report. The proposed re-organisation of the Park Service was well received by the meeting and no objections were raised. Members had noticed that Mr Bishop had grown into his role of Leading Hand and had developed into an effective and efficient member of the team. Mr Bartle (Parks Manager) should take credit for the successful development of his staff.

A suggestion was put forward that of sponsorship on the Parks Service uniform should be considered. It was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that**

- **the post of Leading Hand be deleted from the establishment and that a new post of Senior Park Warden SCP 25-28 be created;**
- **Karl Bishop be appointed to the new post of Senior Park Warden from April 1 2013 on SCP 25 £21,519pa;**
- **the current vacancy of Park Warden be advertised as an Assistant Park Warden within an extended grade of SCP12-21, £15,039 to £19,126pa.**

**vii) FINANCIAL PLANNING & SCRUTINY (FPS) GROUP**

The Chairman explained that the reason for the notes being in the confidential section was due to them containing detailed information on leases. Where non-legal and/or non-sensitive information was contained in the notes, then they would, in future, be presented in open session.

A Member reminded the meeting that there was still a potential 'funding hole' in 2014-15 and this should not be lost sight of. It was

**RESOLVED that the notes of the FPS Group meeting held on 22 January should be received and noted.**

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Chairman  
6.2.13