

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P Phillips
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin
Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor S Gawrysiak (Vice-Chair)
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Miss L Hillier
Councillor Ms L Meachin
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor I Reissmann (Chair)

In attendance:

Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator
Mrs L Jones – HTC Accountant
Councillor D Silvester
1 member of the public
1 member of the press

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Mayor called for nominations.

It was proposed by Councillor W Hamilton and seconded by Councillor Miss L Hillier that Councillor D Nimmo-Smith be elected.

It was proposed by Councillor M Akehurst and seconded by Councillor S Gawrysiak that Councillor I Reissmann be elected.

There being no other nominations, and following a vote, it was **RESOLVED**

that Councillor I Reissmann be elected Chairman of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor I Reissmann took the chair.

2. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Councillor I Reissmann called for nominations.

It was proposed by Councillor D Nimmo-Smith and seconded by Councillor W Hamilton that Councillor Miss L Hillier be elected.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs L Meachin and seconded by Councillor M Akehurst that Councillor S Gawrysiak be elected.

There being no other nominations, and following a vote, it was **RESOLVED**

that Councillor S Gawrysiak be elected Vice Chairman of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3. **EXPRESSION OF THANKS TO PREVIOUS FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Chairman expressed his thanks for the work undertaken by the previous Finance committee, its Chairman, the Town Clerk and the HTC Accountant. The efforts of all those involved had ensured that the Council's finances, budgeting and monitoring systems had undergone substantial improvement over the years.

4. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Councillors received and considered the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference for the Finance Strategy and Management Committee be received and re-adopted for 2011-12.

5. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies.

6. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith – Min 11 – Progress Report (Northfield End) – personal (OCC Councillor)

7. **APPOINTMENT OF WORKING PARTIES, THE MEMBERSHIP THEREOF AND THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Value for Money & Resources Working Group

Councillor I Reissmann had submitted a revised Terms of Reference for the Value for Money & Resources Working Group. The main change involved recommendations on spending being referred back to the relevant committee rather than being agreed solely by the Finance Committee. The revision was considered by the meeting and was felt to provide greater clarity as well as being more appropriate to the function of the Working Group. It was also agreed that the Group should consist of 7 Councillors instead of the suggested 5. As meetings were normally held during the day, this change would help ensure that a quorum was always achievable.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revised terms of reference for the Value for Money & Resources Working Group be received and re-adopted for 2011-12. (An updated copy is attached)

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2011-12 membership of the Value for Money & Resources Working Group would comprise:

Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Miss L Hillier
Councillor Ms L Meachin
Councillor Mrs P Phillips
Councillor I Reissmann

Legal Group

Councillors received and considered the Terms of Reference for the Legal Group. It was agreed that the ToR should remain unchanged except for the number of Councillors should be increased from 5 to 6.

It was **RESOLVED**

that the terms of reference for the Legal Group be received and re-adopted for 2011-12 save for an increase in membership to 6; and

that the membership of the Legal Group would comprise:

Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor Miss L Hillier
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor Mrs P Phillips
Councillor I Reissmann

8. **APPOINTMENT OF AD HOC WORKING GROUPS AND THE MEMBERSHIP THEREOF**

Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3)

A member advised that this Group was no longer needed as the LTP work was virtually complete. If any matters did arise in the future, they could be handled by the Traffic Advisory Group as necessary.

It was **RESOLVED** that LTP3 Group would not be reformed for 2011-12.

IT Review Group

The meeting recognised the importance of this Group and felt that there should be more than one councillor involved (as had been the case the previous year).

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference of the IT Working Group be accepted and the 2011-12 membership of would comprise:

Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor Ms L Meachin
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor I Reissmann

9. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

There were no questions from the public.

10. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 19 April 2011 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

11. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Northfield End

A brief discussion took place on the situation at Northfield End. Councillor W Hamilton handed the Town Clerk copies of documents from 1977 that he hoped would provide some additional background information to the case. The meeting noted the letter from OCC dated 19 May and felt it would still be useful to hold face to face discussions with OCC on the subject. The Town Clerk had spoken to Dr P Skolar (OCC Councillor) who was intending to speak to the OCC cabinet Member to get a progress report. Feedback would be reported back to FS&M. It was also noted that further discussions/decisions may not be possible until the result of the Chesterton planning application was known.

It was agreed that once a substantive response had been received from OCC, a specific agenda item should be included on a subsequent FS&M agenda to discuss the situation more fully. It was confirmed by the Town Clerk that any decisions taken by the previous committee could be reviewed/alterd after the regulatory 6 month period had elapsed (or the suspension of Standing Orders or a 5 member motion).

Clerk's Post Meeting Note: CC Dr Skolar has spoken to the relevant Cabinet Member who has confirmed that whilst Chestertons are involved in planning issues with SODC, who also have the power to request a 'Stop' order, OCC is not intending to enter into any further dialogue until this issue has been decided one way or the other.

Corporate Plan

The Town Clerk confirmed that 12 Councillors would be attending the training day on 4 June and one of the items for discussion would be the Corporate Plan. Councillors would be asked to explore initial thoughts on the HTC strategy for the next four years and the timetable that would need to be put in place. Consultation with other stakeholders would also need to be considered.

It was pointed out by a Member that the resulting Plan would be primarily a Henley Resident Group (as the ruling party) document. The Chairman noted that the minority party would still be in attendance and expressed the hope that all Councillors would make constructive contributions.

The Town Clerk was thanked for the comprehensive induction pack supplied to all councillors.

Basement Ventilation

This item was still on-going. Monsons are to provide a revised specification for the equipment. This has been outstanding for the last couple of months and the company has been chased. Re-quotes for the work cannot be commissioned until the revised specification has been received.

12. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring

The HTC Accountant explained that the figures supplied represented 'month 13' which was effectively year end including all the adjustments. The budget figures were produced every month and circulated to councillors. However, their production cycle does/will not match that of the Finance committee and some meetings may have reports covering a two month period.

The meeting noted the size of the surplus (£138k) and complemented the Accountant on the clarity of the report.

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

ii) Investment Performance

Due to the rise in the Stock Market, the value of the Council's investments had risen to £4.3m. It was confirmed that the annual meeting with the Investment Managers would take place in October.

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

iii) List of payments

Members had before them the List of payments, copy having being issued.

A number of queries were raised by members:

- It was confirmed by the Town Clerk that the £2k cost for professional fees for the Henley Astro Re-surface report was the whole fee and not an instalment.
- The fee (of £300) paid to Mr Hooper was to cover the monitoring of the moorings in the Town Centre. As he was on-site and able to inform officers of any problems as they occur, it was a more productive arrangement than using the Parks Service staff who were based at Mill Meadows. However, there may be a case for bringing this element in-house and it would be reviewed before any renewal of the arrangement took place. The Town Clerk confirmed he would liaise with the Mooring Secretary (Mrs Robb) to see how many incidents had been reported and refer the matter to the Mill Meadows sub-committee.
- It was confirmed that the payment to Windowflowers shown on the report was a monthly charge.
- Although the utilities list showed that the Council paid for the electricity consumption at the Barn, the Town Clerk advised the meeting that the service charge element of the rent paid by the tenants included a (pre-agreed, calculated) contribution towards that cost.

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

13. **BUDGET TIMETABLE 2012-13**

It was noted that the timetable was based on the same pattern as in previous years but had been realigned to match the 2011-12 committee dates. In answer to a Member's question, it was confirmed that the annual Fees & Charges review was dealt with by the FS&M committee. The only exceptions were for those items that did not follow the financial year e.g. allotment charges (which were due to be reviewed at the following Recreation & Amenities Committee for application from 1 October 2012).

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

the timetable produced by the HTC Accountant be accepted and implemented.

14. **UNAUDITED ACCOUNTS 2010-11**

It was explained that the Town Council is no longer considered a 'larger authority' under the FRSSE requirements as its turnover is under the £6.5m threshold. This enables the accounts to be produced with a lighter touch without the need for extensive detail.

Although the detail had been provided for committee, these documents would not be audited as only the Annual Return is required to be submitted. The Accountant talked through the main points of interest on the balance sheet and offered to talk through any particular issues with Councillors should they wish to do so at a later date.

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

the attached Annual Return (with amended figures in row 9; £21,796,502 and £21,659,245 respectively) and unaudited accounts (with amended balance sheet giving additional breakdown under the general fund) for the year ended 31 March 2011 be approved for ratification at the Full Council meeting on 21 June.

15. **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR**

Councillors noted the appointment of the external auditor. The appointment is made by the Audit Commission and the decision is not capable of being influenced by the Council. The fee for the 2010-11 audit will be £3k and is expected to remain at the same level for the 2011-12 audit. This represents a saving of c£10k each year due to the revised limited assurance approach.

It was **RESOLVED** that

The appointment of BDO LLP by the Audit Commission for 2010-11 and 2011-12 be noted.

16. **APPROVAL OF EARMARKED RESERVES**

The Accountant explained that the purpose of having earmarked reserves was to specifically identify works/projects that need to be undertaken in future years where monies are set aside to ensure their completion. In the main these are long term (property) maintenance issues. The accumulated underspend was carried over from 2010-11 and will be put towards known commitments and any unexpected costs. However, the budgeting process is making provision for known future costs e.g. the (second) replacement of the astropitch. It was also confirmed that no limit existed for the extent of earmarked reserves.

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

The carry forward of an earmarked reserve of £72,216 as at 31 March 2011 be approved.

17. **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 31 MAY
2011.**

18. **CONFIDENTIAL**

LEGAL UPDATE

(a) Leaver Road

The Town Clerk explained the background to the case and the decisions that had been taken to date. The Council's solicitors have been instructed to draft the appropriate letters and these will be examined by the Legal Group and amended as necessary. The letters will then be reviewed and agreed by both FS&M and Full Council before despatch.

It was **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Chairman
1.6.11

VALUE FOR MONEY & RESOURCES (VFM) WORKING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2011-12

1. Membership

The Group shall consist of 7 Councillors plus 3 Officers. The nominated Officers are Town Clerk, Accountant and the Finance Strategy & Management (FS&M) Committee Administrator.

2. Quorum

Shall be at least 3 Councillors.

3. Chairman

The Chairman of the VFM group shall be the Chairman of the FS&M Committee unless s(he) is absent in which case the Councillors present shall appoint a Chairman for the meeting.

4. Reporting

The Group is appointed by the FS&M Committee and acts in an advisory capacity only by submitting reports and recommendations to FS&M. where such a recommendation falls within the scope of a committee or sub-committee, the recommendation to be transferred and considered by the appropriate committee.

On matters that require further research, for example requesting a more detailed report or seeking clarification from third parties on a specific item, then the Group shall have a delegated power to act.

5. Remit

The Working Group is set up:

- To review the Council's use of its physical and financial assets to ensure that it secures value for money.
- To monitor spending undertaken by the Council to ensure value for money having particular regard to the suppliers' turnover figures.
- To consider all charges or fees imposed by the Council to ensure value for money.
- To consider the disposal of any asset not needed.
- To consider possible new revenue streams
- To meet annually with the Council's Investment Managers.
- To ensure the Council maintains adequate systems of internal control
- To make recommendations to FS&M on the appointment of the Internal Auditor.