

Present: The Mayor, Councillor S Gawrysiak
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor M Akehurst
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
1 member of the media
6 members of the public

91. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin.

92. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

93. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Mike Trethewey (Chair - Henley Rugby Club [HRC])

Mr Trethewey spoke in support of his application for £10k to fund the Rugby Development Officer who currently carries out the role on a full-time, paid basis. His original request was submitted to the Recreation & Amenities Committee but due to its financial implications had now been submitted to the Finance Committee. He explained that HRC was a community club and the Development Officer worked closely with local schools providing uniform coaching to a high standard, often assisted by the outreach community worker.

Jonathan Barter (47 Vicarage Road)

Mr Barter spoke in favour of the grant application from the Upper Thames Rowing Club. He explained that the Club's juniors were to take part in the Ghent Regatta and the amount requested was just to pay for the transport of the boats across the channel.

Trevor Howell (65 Blandy Road)

Mr Howell was representing AFC Henley and its application for support to renovate the pavilion at the Harpsden ground. The pavilion was found to contain asbestos and as such was unusable. This meant that the pitch could not be used as there were no changing rooms for players. The Harpsden Trust had paid for the removal of the asbestos but it was estimated that the renovation of the pavilion would cost £42k and the Club needed to raise at least 50% of this total before the Football Foundation would commit funds. Mr Howell confirmed he would also be applying to SODC when their next round of funding became available.

Malcolm Page (11 Cedar House Ancastle Green)

Mr Page explained that his grant application on behalf of Borama was to gain funding to bring an exhibition of artefacts and handicrafts to the Old Fire Station Gallery so that the residents of Henley can have a greater appreciation of the region.

94. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management (FS&M) Committee held on 28 January 2014 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

95. **HENLEY RUGBY CLUB**

i) Funding Opportunities

The Chairman gave the background to the application for £10k to support the continued employment of the Rugby Development Officer. The subject was discussed at the recent working group which was specifically set up by the Council to examine ways in which the Club could be supported so it remained financially viable. It was agreed that supporting the Club in this manner was a sensible approach and could be considered as an investment in the youth of the Town. There was a feeling that no one sports club should be singled out for support but it was acknowledged that any club that came to the Council for support, their case would be heard and judged on its merits. It was accepted that providing funds to support the work of the Development Officer and delaying repayment of the Club's loan to the Council should ease the Club's financial burden considerably.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

£10k should appear as an extra line in the budget costs for 2014-15 with this additional costs to be met from the general reserves, and

the £30k loan repayment be postponed for ten years until April 2026.

Councillor W Hamilton requested his inclusion on the Rugby Club working group if it were ever re-convened in the future.

ii) Access Gate

The meeting had no objection to the installation of a new gate at Dry Leas as it represented a significant safety feature.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that installation of an appropriate new gate and an agreement for access be approved.

96. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Bell Street

It was agreed this item could now be removed from the Progress Report as the item had transferred to the Town & Community Committee.

Henley Rugby Club

It was confirmed that new signs had been installed advertising parking at Dry Leas. In addition, and as part of the Locality Fund initiative, all signage around the Town is being examined so additional signage may be forthcoming.

Community Governance Review

The Town Clerk was thanked for his letter to SODC on the subject. He then explained that the boundary review showed Gillotts School was to be subsumed into Henley. Further information on the Review should be available before the next Finance meeting. It was confirmed that if any further sites were identified for development in the future, then a further review could be commissioned.

97. **FINANCE**

i) Management Accounts

The dashboard papers were reviewed but no comments made.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

ii) Investment performance

The graph detailing the Council's investment performance was noted.

It was RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

iii) List of payments

No comment was made on the listings provided.

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

98. **GRANTS**

The Chairman explained that the remaining grant budget for 2013-14 was just over £5k but the grant applications being considered amounted to over £17.5k. It was agreed that each application should be reviewed and, while there was sufficient budgetary funds, a resolution made for the agreed level of grant. The balance of the agreed grants would be recommended to Full Council with the additional resources being met from the contingency fund. Consequently, it was

RESOLVED that the following grants be awarded:

Henley Wildlife Group	£ 100	
Allotment Association	£ 60	(free use)
Woodland Centre Trust	£ 312.50	(free use)
South Oxon Mencap Society	£ 500	
Home Start	£ 250	
Henley Women's Regatta	£ 500	
Town & Visitors Regatta	£1,000	
St John Ambulance	£ 633	
Borama Friendship	£ 180 + £265	(free use)
Henley Youth Festival	£ 100	
Round Table	£ 500	
Upper Thames Rowing Club	£ 310	
Henley Outdoor Playscheme	£ 210	

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the following grants be awarded:

AFC Henley	£6,000
Henley Synchronised Swimming Club	£ 295
WW1 Remembrance Association	£1,500
Henley in Transition	£ 238

It was suggested that the Upper Thames Rowing Club approach the Henley Educational Trust for additional support. Councillor W Hamilton confirmed he sat on the Trust and would welcome an application.

It was agreed that the application submitted by Henley Town Football Club be declined. However, the Club should be encouraged to submit more detailed plans concerning their finances, future plans, direction of the Club etc. and meet with Councillors to ascertain what steps could be taken.

The application submitted by the Henley Wildlife Group to carry out a bat survey was also declined.

99. **FINANCING OF THE TODDLER PLAY AREA**

The Mayor summarised how the working group had undertaken the review and the progress to date. He explained that the current equipment was either out of use or in need of repair as it was approaching the end of its expected lifespan. It had become apparent that a renovation was not cost effective and a total replacement was now necessary giving the opportunity to redesign the whole area producing a vastly improved facility. The inclusion of a textured safety surface had increased the overall cost. A survey of parents had been undertaken, tenders issued, received and reviewed. It was for the Recreation & Amenities Committee to recommend the preferred supplier with the Finance Committee to recommend the options for financing the venture.

There was some disquiet concerning the overall cost (c£135k) in comparison with the initial refurbishment cost of £30k plus £20k added later, and the fact that the Committee was being asked to recommend increased expenditure without seeing any plans of the new proposed play area. It was confirmed that detailed plans had only been received the day before and all Councillors should be encouraged to view them and any resulting comments directed to the R&A Committee.

A Member enquired of the level of maintenance expenditure devoted to the current play area since it was installed. The information was not to hand but would be circulated when the Accountant returned from annual leave.

Action: HTC Accountant

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

approval is given to the additional expenditure of £85k but reallocates the £50k of capital expenditure set aside for land purchases to the toddler play area project, the balancing £35k met by application of the £19k buffer and increasing the overall capex ceiling of £250k to £266k, the additional expenditure of £16k to be met from Capital Balances, i.e. a drawdown of £16k from capital reserves

100. **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 11 MARCH 2014.

101. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

The Kiosk

The Town Clerk explained that the final draft of the new lease was awaited but had unfortunately missed the deadline for the March Finance Committee. To avoid any further delays, he suggested that it be reviewed by the Council's Legal Group when received.

It was RESOLVED that the draft (when received) is reviewed by the Legal Group and if no objections are raised on the content then the new lease is presented to Full Council on 1 April for approval and sign-off.

ii) HTC IT REPLACEMENT

The Chairman explained that the proposals (and presentations) put forward by the three nominated suppliers to replace/upgrade the Councils IT equipment had been reviewed by the IT Working Group. The Group had agreed that Company A had offered the most suitable overall package. However, there were some outstanding issues regarding the broadband supplier which still need to be resolved.

A question was raised by a Member as to the availability of Wi-Fi in the Council's buildings specifically the Barn, 60+ Club and the Old Fire Station Gallery. If it were to be available, then this would make the buildings more attractive to hirers. The Town Clerk (with the assistance of the HTC Accountant) was given delegated authority to research the subject and submit a report to the Finance Committee. It was noted that the Town Centre Manager was reviewing the availability of Wi-Fi within Henley and as such could have input into the paper so that the two reviews dove-tail.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

approval is given to the appointment of Company A to provide the new server and hardware equipment with associated licences and installation charges as outlined in the notes, and

the £19k of one-off capital expenditure on equipment and its installation, which will exceed the figure of £10k in the 2014-15 budget, is approved. Following other recommendations at this meeting regarding capital expenditure (see minute 99 above), the extra £9k will increase the capex budget to a total of £275k, up from the overall limit of £250k set at the time of budget setting.

It was agreed that the old HTC laptop should be offered to St John Ambulance.

iii) HENLEY TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

The meeting reviewed the letter from the Club which had requested a suspension of the rent and loan repayment for a period of two months. The meeting was sympathetic with the plight of the Club and the difficulties that had

been experienced as a result of the floods. It was not felt appropriate to suspend the rent payments to avoid any conflict with the lease. However:

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that suspension of the loan repayments for six month is offered.

(This would mean cancelling the already overdue December 2013 invoice and not raising the March 2014 invoice, with repayments to resume as of 1 June 2014. The full amount of the loan would still be repaid but six months later than anticipated, i.e. in September 2016 rather than March 2016. Interest is not charged on the loan.)

iv) LAND AT DEANFIELD ROAD

It was confirmed that the three householders had expressed an interest in buying the land currently subject to the Tenancies at Will. The valuation carried out of the site indicated it could support residential development and as such had a commensurate value.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the sale price for each of the three plots, assuming all three are purchased at the same time, would be £25k. If only one or two householders wished to proceed to sale then each plot would have a sale price of £30k. The Town Clerk to write to each of the householders making the above offer with the responses being reported back to the Finance meeting.

v) THAMESIDE – RENT REVIEW

The meeting examined the communication with Mr Hawley concerning the rent increase. Although the increase was sizable, it did adhere to the terms of the lease.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the rent increase as determined by the RPI is applied from the rent review date.

vi) OFFER TO PURCHASE HTC LAND AT MAKINS

The letter received from the Keen Partnership covered two issues, the Japanese knotweed and an offer to buy a strip of land at Makins. The Town Clerk confirmed the knotweed was being addressed by the Recreation & Amenities Committee and the Finance Committee only need to consider the proposed sale.

It was agreed that the matter be deferred until the next Finance meeting when a report could be submitted addressing whether a sale was possible and any restrictive covenants that may exist. It was speculated that the site was bequeathed to the Town on the condition it remained an amenity space.

vii) STAFF APPRAISALS

Members had before them a summary of all staff employed by Henley-on-Thames Town Council as at April 2014, their designation, completed years of service, their spinal column range and spinal column point as at April 2013. The Town Clerk confirmed that provision had been made in the 2014/15 budget for incremental increases from 1 April 2014. It was acknowledged that staff who had not yet reached the top of their scale were contractually entitled to an

additional increment on completion of a satisfactory or better appraisal as set out in the Green Book and the contracts of employment for staff.
A view was expressed that performance related progression should be based on driving efficiency and rewarding excellence rather than rewarding satisfactory performance. It was suggested that next year's review would be based on this principle rather than automatic increments based on length of service and a satisfactory performance.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that**

- (i) the report and summary of staff employed by the Council, their designation, completed years of service, their pay scale, their current spinal column point as at April 2013 and spinal column point from 1 April 2014, as set out in the attached schedule be noted; and
- (ii) that in recognition of completing a satisfactory or better appraisal those members of staff not yet on the top of their pay scale shall receive one additional increment within their pay scale, the appropriate increase to be paid in their in salary from 1 April 2014.

The Town Clerk left the meeting at this point

The Chair asked the Mayor to report on the Town Clerk's appraisal. The Mayor reported that the Town Clerk's appraisal had been completed and agreed, and that the appraisal rated the Town Clerk's performance over the last year as "Very Good".

As a result it was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that**

- (iii) following the Town Clerk's annual appraisal and acknowledgement of his very good appraisal the Town Clerk shall receive by one final additional increment on his salary from 1 April 2014 which represents the top of his current pay scale.

The meeting closed at 9.58pm.

Chairman
12.3.14