

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor C Pye
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor A Follett (Chair)
Councillor C W Gibson
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor I Reissmann (Vice chair)
Councillor Dr B Wood

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

22. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Mrs J Bland. The Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood had already given her apologies for a possible late arrival.

23. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Dr and Mrs Wood – prejudicial – Friends of the Kenton Theatre – Min 26.
Councillor Dr P Skolar – personal – moorings – Min 32.

24. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Northfield End area:

Miss Hare (6 New Street). Concern was expressed about the state of the pavement outside 92-102 Bell St as the slabs had been broken by cars driving over them and the pavement now represented a safety issue. Councillor A Follett undertook to report the situation to OCC.

Mr C Russell (102 Bell St). Mr Russell provided photos of cars that had driven over the pavement. Police Sgt Pink had visited his property that day and was looking into the issue. He was concerned that the parking as it stood could hamper emergency vehicle access and pointed out that the Town Council had the power to stop the stopping up order.

Mr Stott (23 Friday St). Mr Stott referred to the OCC consultant's report and the recommendation that the area outside Rupert House School should be included in the stopping up order. He believed that there was no reason this area should be discriminated against as it was no different from the adjacent space. In his opinion the parking outside the school was not unsafe and therefore should be included in the order. The role of the school governors was to preserve the school's assets (including the parking) and the governors were prepared to pursue the matter.

Mrs Barker (Chairman of governors – Rupert School). Mrs Barker advised the meeting that the parking spaces outside the school were used by senior staff and should an accident befall any of the children then they could be taken to hospital without delay. To open up the spaces for use, by the general public, could present a danger to the children and she urged the Committee to include this area in the stopping up order.

Kenton Theatre:

Mr Symons (trustee Kenton Theatre). Mr Symons had seen the report to be considered by the FS&M Committee which recommended that a grant/loan be denied and asked that this be reconsidered. He pointed out that 30,000 people attended the theatre annually with c£10/head being spent in the town as a result (which helped support the Council's published strategy of Town Centre Economic Viability). The theatre should be considered as one of the town's 'fixed assets' and worthy of saving and he also believed that it was one of the reasons families were attracted to Henley. Although a grant of £75k had been requested, the theatre would be pleased with any level of grant.

Miss Bowsher (trustee/managing director Kenton). Miss Bowsher pointed out that the Kenton was the 4th oldest working theatre in the country and was responsible for bringing many visitors into the town. In addition, the Council does not contribute to the running costs in any way.

Mrs Diamond advised the meeting that she first appeared on the stage in 1960 and had been involved with the Kenton ever since. She believed the theatre was an important part of the community and therefore should be of concern to the Council.

Councillor Dr B Wood (speaking as a member of the public) suggested that although he realised the Council did not have the money currently available to grant to the theatre maybe capital repayments from loans and monies realised from the Bath Site proposed lease could be ringfenced to provide some necessary assistance.

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood joined the meeting at 19.55.

25. **VARIATION TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Considering the level of public attendance at the meeting, the chairman proposed that the order of business should be changed so that the public could hear the debates on Northfield End and the Kenton Theatre at the start of the meeting. The proposal was agreed by Councillors.

26. **NORTHFIELD END**

- (i) Councillor I Reissmann asked if Standing Order 36a needed to be suspended before any discussion could take place. The Town Clerk advised this was not the case as committee was only making recommendations. However, Full Council would need to enact the suspension if recommendations were accepted that overturned decisions previously taken within the 6 month time period.

Councillor I Reissmann pointed out that the statement in paragraph 2 re "ancient highway" was mis-leading. The areas in question had always been highway and their status had not changed.

Councillor Dr P Skolar confirmed that OCC would be responsible for maintenance of the highway area until the stopping up order had been granted.

It was **RESOLVED** that

the response from OCC (in the letter dated 25 June) be noted.

- (ii) Discussions took place on OCC's request to include the area in front of No. 90 Bell Street in the stopping up order. As in previous discussions, there were wide ranging opinions on the subject ranging from none of the land being stopped up to the acceptance of the inclusion of the area outside Rupert House School.

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

the area outside No 90 Bell Street be included in the stopping up order.

Councillor I Reissmann then raised the issue of the small triangle of land between Bell Street and the parking spaces outside 92-102 Bell Street. It was unclear what the fate of this area was and the Councillor felt this should remain as highway and therefore be publically maintainable.

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

the Town Clerk writes to OCC to confirm the status of the land, who owns it and what the plans for the area were.

Clerk's post meeting note: The County Council's Head of Highways and Transport has informed the Council that the area mentioned is not considered to be highway and as such OCC are not proposing anything for it. OCC believe it to be in private ownership. Clearly if anyone wanted to use it for a different purpose it would need to meet with the necessary planning approvals.

27. **KENTON THEATRE**

Councillor Dr P Skolar stated that he believed the Kenton theatre should own their freehold but wondered why a deadline had been imposed by Henley Municipal Charities and what would happen if the deadline was missed. It was explained that the valuation placed on the theatre was only valid for 6 months and it was normal to work to a timeframe.

It was generally agreed that the Council would like to assist the theatre but no financial provision had been made for the grant and Council selling investments to support the venture was not a financially sound proposition.

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

Councillor A Follett will lead a small group to examine all the options before making a recommendation to Full Council on 27 July.

the Town Clerk and Councillors look creatively at the budgets to see if the Kenton (and other community organisations) can be helped with their funding requests.

the Kenton theatre be asked if they would consider a loan rather than a grant.

the Town Clerk to write to Henley Municipal Charities advising them that the Council are looking at possible funding for the theatre but at this stage cannot give any guarantees and therefore request additional time to investigate the issue.

28. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 25 May 2010 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman Councillor A Follett.

29. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Estate Inspections

Councillor A Follett reminded councillors that their inspections needed to be completed. If everyone was now familiar with their respective areas of land then there was no need to take the Senior Parks Supervisor with them. However, it was important that the exact boundaries of each area was known and if there was any doubt, to consult Gareth Bartle. All inspections should be completed by the end of August. Completed pro formas to be submitted to the Committee Administrator.

Councillor Dr B Wood asked if the allocation list could be re-circulated so that each councillor was aware of their 'patch'.

Action: Committee Administrator.

Strategy Document

A number of comments were made on the document in relation to the reference to capital expenditure and the precept. It was felt that the content of the document should be reviewed for accuracy especially in view of the proposed budget.

Action: HTC Accountant.

It was **RESOLVED** that the contents of the progress Report and Strategy Document be noted.

30. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

Page 2 – Councillor Dr P Skolar pointed out that a couple of items under 'Rents and Licences' appeared to show rent levels had reduced (the final 2009-10 outturn being higher than the 2010-11 budget). As this did not seem reasonable, the Accountant to ask to investigate.

Action: HTC Accountant.

Page 5 (1 of 2) – it was also noted that Henley in Bloom appeared to be costing the Council money when normally expenditure was matched by income. The figures appeared to show a subsidy of c£5k.

Action: HTC Accountant to investigate.

Page 6 – Capex. Councillor Dr B Wood said the figure allocated to the Mill Meadows toilets was not correct as no final figure had yet been agreed. He asked the Town Clerk and the Accountant to look at the capex figures as a whole as the outturn expected (£260k) was not sustainable.

Action: Town Clerk and HTC Accountant.

ii) Investment Performance Update

The question was asked whether the Investment Managers were still confident in their ability to improve the value of the Council's investments to the level anticipated. The Accountant would be meeting the managers in the very near future and this would be a subject for discussion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Investment Performance Report be noted.

iii) Monthly List of Payments

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

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

31. 2011-12 BUDGET TIMETABLE

The meeting noted the timetable which had already been considered and agreed by the Value for Money and Resources Working Group.

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

the timetable for the budget preparation process be accepted.

32. 2011-12 CORE BUDGET

Councillor Dr P Skolar queried the assumption (under b) of the report that the employers NI contribution would rise to 13.8%. He believed the level would remain unchanged but the employees' contribution would rise.

Action: HTC Accountant to check

The assertion that there would be no increase in the precept had not been fully agreed but there appeared to be no obstacles to increasing the level although further central guidance was still awaited on the matter.

Councillor Dr B Wood was concerned that each committee was being given too much power to spend capital sums.

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith was concerned that the replacement of the Astroturf was a significant expense for the Council.

It was agreed that the figures in the budget need to be reviewed to see if any savings could be made. The revised figures should be available to be reviewed by the next VFM meeting which would be scheduled for end July/early August.

Action: Town Clerk, HTC Accountant and VFM Group.

In addition:

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

the FS&M Committee notes the principals and strategy recommended by the VFM working party;

the individual committees take these figures forward for detailed discussion;

individual committees are alerted to the deadlines – provisional figures to be agreed by FS&M on 21st September, R&A on 28th Sept, and T&C on 26th October.

33. **CASHFLOW PROJECTIONS**

The report made reference to the proposed loan (from the PWLB) of £120-£150k. The Town Clerk advised the meeting that this loan had already been agreed in principle. However, with the change in the economic climate it may not be forthcoming due to the level of the Council's investments. The Accountant was asked to check out the latest position.

The Accountant did confirm that a 5 year loan from the PWLB would be charged at a level of ≈3% over the whole period.

Councillor I Reissmann asked that figures be made available on the cost of a loan verses drawdown on investments to enable an informed decision to be made.

Action: HTC Accountant

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

that the cash flow position is noted and the Accountant is authorised to take the necessary preliminary steps to ensure that a loan can be secured in good time.

34. **APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITORS**

The report gave details of the Council's obligations to appoint internal auditors. Three quotations for internal auditing services were considered.

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

Alan Harland be appointed to undertake the 2010-11 internal audit.

35. **HTC CREDIT CARD**

The Town Clerk gave the background to this paper and explained that having a Council credit card was not unusual, even in small councils. It would enable the Council to purchase goods and services via the internet

without staff having to use their personal credit cards. He also confirmed that the auditors had not raised any objections as long as clear controls were in place.

It was agreed that any purchases made using the credit card (by the Town Clerk as the only authorised signatory) should be included on the normal payment listing.

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

the accountant completes the credit card application forms to be provided by Lloyds TSB and includes the necessary controls in the financial regulations, subject to agreement of the monthly expenditure limit.

36. **STRATEGIC RISK REVIEW**

Councillor Dr B Wood thanked the Town Clerk for all his hard work managing the Council's risks with the overall 'threat' level having reduced significantly.

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

the Committee notes the report and an updated report be submitted for consideration by FS&M in June/July 2011.

37. **PLANNED PROGRAMMED MAINTENANCE 2010-11**

The meeting reviewed the report and the list of property maintenance required. The Town Clerk confirmed the laylights were not on the list as their replacement was a capital item and not part of on-going maintenance.

Councillor A Follett advised that Mill Lane car park should be included. Line painting and pothole repairs were required. The Town Clerk was asked to add these items to the list.

Action: Town Clerk.

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

the planned maintenance programme and budget for Council properties in 2010-11 be received, approved and adopted.

38. **ENTRANCE TO MILL MEADOWS**

The committee considered a recommendation from the Recreation & Amenities Committee held on 1 June seeking a virement in the capital programme to fund improvements to the entrance to Mill Meadows.

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

the recommendation from the Recreation & Amenities Committee for a virement in the capital programme of £10,296 from the cemetery chapel refurbishment budget to fund the improvement works to the entrance to Mill Meadows in 2010-11 be approved.

39. **PAST MAYOR'S BADGE**

The Committee was asked to consider the reinstatement of a past mayor's badge, a custom that appeared to have ceased since 2000. Town Clerk advised the meeting that since writing the report, he had received a quotation from Toye, Kenning & Spencer, the company responsible for manufacturing this regalia in the past. Whereas the report stated that 6 medals would cost in the region of £250, he had now been advised that they would actually cost £295 each plus the cost of inscription.

Members were surprised at the high cost, considering the die for the medal had already been made. The Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood stated that she had checked with Thame Town Council who confirmed that Mayors buy their own badges at a cost of £48. Councillor D Nimmo-Smith reported that his medal (which he purchased himself) cost £40 in 1991.

The Town Clerk was asked to make further enquiries as to why the price was so high and whether there were any other suppliers who offered a better price.

Action: Town Clerk

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

Mayors should be given the option of buying their own medal if they wish.

40. **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 6 JULY 2010.

41. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

The Committee received and noted the report on the outstanding legal issues.

Arising from the report:

Bath Site

The Town Clerk explained the recommendations that had been put forward by the Legal Group. It was agreed that the Town Clerk should write to Rod Eyot Parking Limited advising them of the recommendations that will go to Full Council for ratification on 27 July.

Action: Town Clerk.

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

the Clerk writes individual letters of explanation to the five directors of REPL confirming that REPL's failure to include the Lesters within the proposed lease leaves the Town Council with no alternative but to withdraw their offer of entering into a 20 year lease of parking land at Rod Eyot with REPL

the Council reverts to the status quo and issues invoices for rent from 1 April 2009 in accordance with the existing licences, including RPI increases

the Council seeks payment from REPL for the Council's aborted legal costs in this matter

the Council offers no guarantee that the existing licence agreements for parking on the Bath Site will be renewed from 1 April 2013.

Greencroft Allotments

The meeting discussed the extent of the alleged encroachment and decided that as the area was only very small then no further action would be taken at this time. (Any further encroachment in this area should be identified during the six-monthly estate inspection.)

ii) VALUE FOR MONEY & RESOURCES GROUP

The meeting reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2010. No additional comments were made.

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

the minutes of the meeting were received and noted.

iii) HENLEY TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

The meeting felt that the viability of the Club was still in doubt and the best way to ensure its survival was to amalgamate with the other football clubs. The Club needed a better plan to explain how it was to achieve the £80k spend.

It was also felt that any future meetings with the club should include Councillor representatives.

The meeting did not agree that the loan should be written off and neither should the "wasteland" beyond the pitch be included in an extended lease agreement. It was agreed that a further meeting with the HTFC and either the VFM or Legal Group be set up for the middle/end September to see and review the Club's latest plans.

Action: HTC Accountant.

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

that approval is given to extending the loan holiday period until September 2010.

iii) STEPPING STONES

The Town Clerk explained that he had met Ms Bonham-Carter on a number of occasions and she was aware of the figures he was proposing in the report and had not raised any major objections. The District Valuer had been asked to confirm the proposed rent as being in line with the property and its use.

The only issue that had arisen during negotiations was the provision of cleaning. The Town Clerk will be dealing with this separately but would keep members updated.

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

the Committee notes the report and approves the arrangements for applying service charges of £8,000pa and a revised rent of £9,000pa subject to confirmation from the Valuation Office on the market rental value.

The meeting closed at 22.05 pm.

Chairman
7.7.10