

Present: The Chairman, The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin  
Vice Chairman Councillor Dr B G Wood  
The Mayor, Councillor Mrs G M Dodds  
Councillor A J Follett (substitute for Councillor T B Buckett MBE)  
Councillor Mrs R Myer  
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith  
Councillor S R Smith

In attendance: Mike Kennedy - Town Clerk

Also present: Mrs L Martin – Committee Administrator/Minute Taker  
One member of the press and five members of the public

**679. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss L Pye and T B Buckett

**680. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

*Members are hereby reminded that, under the provisions of Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 (The Code of Conduct), a member with a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent. A member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgment of the public interest. A member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting is being held whenever it becomes apparent that the matter is being considered at that meeting, unless he has obtained a dispensation from the standards committee of the responsible authority; and not seek improperly to influence a decision about that matter. For the purposes of this Part (of the Act), "meeting" means any meeting of the authority; or any of the authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees.*

None

**681. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 March 2009 were approved by Councillors as a true record and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin.

**682. PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Freemans Meadow

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin advised that the opening of the playground had gone very well and that the equipment was being well used. This item is now removed from the progress report.

Fortnightly Refuse Collections Min 672 (31.03.09)

Councillor Dr B G Wood reported that the Waste Action Group had now secured agreement to 1200 residences in Henley being exempt from wheelie bins. This was an improvement on the 400 originally identified by SODC. He proposed a vote of thanks to Councillor S Smith for securing the position in respect of the residents of Mount View. Councillors agreed. Councillor S Smith, although overall pleased with the efforts, was disappointed to see that despite SODC promising that new bins would be delivered to the spot from where they would in future be collected, the majority were on pavements and not within the curtilage of the property.

Councillor Mrs G M Dodds was also concerned about the situation. She had attended a meeting of the Visually Impaired Group in Henley and had talked to one elderly resident in particular who had had 4 bins delivered and was worried about how she was going to cope with them. SODC had promised to respond to all queries and complaints by residents but many of them said that their concerns had not been addressed and SODC had failed to get in touch with them.

Councillor Mrs R Myer congratulated the Waste Action Group on their efforts but wished to point out that both she and other SODC Councillors had lobbied very hard on the issue of exemption from wheelie bins. The exclusion of terraced houses in the conservation area had been a major step forward and she felt that SODC does listen and learn from comments received.

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin requested that residents be advised to contact the One Stop Shop if they have any problems.

Councillor Dr B G Wood thanked Councillor Mrs R Myer for her efforts but agreed with Councillor Mrs G M Dodds that SODC should be returning calls. Councillor Mrs R Myer advised that she had already reminded SODC of their responsibilities in this regard.

Sale of land at rear of 18 Harcourt Close- Min 644 (2.12.08)

Councillor S Smith advised that he had e-mailed the owners of 18 Harcourt Close to see if they were still interested in the sale. The e-mail had only been sent on 5<sup>th</sup> May and no reply had yet been received. He requested delaying removal of this item until after the next meeting. This was agreed.

CLS Sports Contract – Min 678 31.03.09)

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin advised that this issue would be discussed later in the meeting. The Town Clerk also requested that a further verbal report of great importance be considered in confidential session after the main meeting. This was agreed.

**683. BUDGET**

Councillors received and noted the details of the budget monitoring report as at 31 March 2009.

**684. TESCO SPORTS PITCH LIGHTS**

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin invited Mr Chris Baker and Mr David Dickie of Henley Hockey Club to the table to give a presentation regarding installation of additional lights at the Tesco sports pitch.

Mr Baker introduced both himself and Mr Dickie as President and non-executive director of Henley Hockey Club. He advised the Committee that Henley Hockey Club was pleased that for the first time in a number of years communication between the Council and Henley Hockey Club was excellent and they felt that issues were being addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.

The letter Henley Hockey Club sent to the Committee was discussed and Mr Baker explained the reasons for the Hockey Club's request for additional lights to be installed. When the new lighting was installed in July 2008, England Hockey stipulated that the minimum light level for playing hockey was 300 lux. By January 2009 the figures given by England Hockey had increased to 350 lux and by March 2009 had increased again to 500 lux. This sudden increase in minimum levels has put the Hockey Club in a difficult position in respect of both training and league play. They are trying to satisfy England Hockey's rules but realise that Henley Town Council has no obligation to increase lighting levels. The figure of 500 lux is the standard for international hockey but also applies to any new facilities. Existing facilities cannot be expected to increase lux levels overnight and there are many other facilities locally and elsewhere that currently run at a level of 350 lux. Reading Hockey Club provides a lux level of 500 but they play international standard hockey - Sonning Hockey Club for instance plays at a lux level of 350. Henley Hockey Club is a successful club and cannot afford to lose members if they are unable to train or play.

The new lighting scheme in 2008 was installed on existing pylons and utilised existing wiring. The company selected to carry out the work promised that 300 lux could be maintained with 20 lights rather than the 24 that were there originally. The hockey club now wants to install the additional 4 lights to increase the maintained lux level as much as possible and to diffuse dark spots that still occur down the centre of the pitch. The hockey club is prepared to pay the cost of installing these additional lights and a quote of £5360 + VAT has been obtained. The increased light levels will give the hockey club an extra edge and should diffuse problems with England Hockey. Mr Baker also pointed out that the hockey club is not rich but it is in the black. They currently make about £1000 a year in profit and £6000 is a considerable outlay. However, it does demonstrate their commitment to working with the Council to find a solution to the problem.

*Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin invited questions from Councillors.*

Councillor S Smith asked what would happen if England Hockey insisted that the light levels be increased to 500 lux. Mr Baker replied that this was a risk the hockey club was willing to take. There are many clubs in England that still play at light levels around 350 lux and it would be difficult for England Hockey to make them all change overnight. He re-iterated that the club must be able to train and cannot afford to lose members.

Councillor Mrs G M Dodds asked about the effect a new light abatement enforcement order would have. Mr Baker replied that it would be the hockey club who would be taking a £6000 risk. He had spoken to one of their members who had been involved in the installation of 80 sets of lights in the last few years and the only complaint they have ever heard of was the one from Henley. Mr Dickie advised that although the hockey club had not been carrying out much training in the last two months, the football club have and so far there have been no complaints.

Councillor Dr B G Wood advised the Committee that he had spoken with the enforcement officer from SODC at a recent meeting and he had indicated that there would be no objections from them if the angle of the lights were raised by 2 degrees. He also questioned the ownership of the lights, if the Hockey club were to pay for the installation of additional lights who would retain ownership? Mr Baker replied that the lights should come under the ownership of Henley Town Council with the caveat that repairs e.g. blown bulbs, would be carried out promptly. He also asked if there was a possibility that the lights could be switched separately. The football club does not need the increased lighting

levels and none of the other users of the facility have expressed concern at the current lighting levels. Councillor Dr B G Wood asked if the 4 lights would be a gift to the Council from the Hockey Club. Mr Baker replied that he thought this would be the case. Councillor Dr B G Wood felt that Henley Town Council had met its obligations in respect of current lighting levels but felt that the Council should walk towards the Hockey Club regarding trying to provide the next level of lighting. If the Town Council paid for the installation, the Hockey Club would give a donation of £5360 to the Council. This would mean that Henley Town Council could reclaim the VAT and the Hockey Club would not be involved in additional cost.

Councillor A J Follett asked if there were any time constraints on the installation. Mr Baker replied that the Hockey Club would resume serious training in September but he understood that the balance of the original guarantee from the contractor did not expire until October.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that

- i. Henley Town Council accepts the gift of 4 lights from Henley Hockey Club
- ii. the Town Clerk works out an agreement regarding ownership should the facility ever be closed
- iii. Henley Town Council investigates the possibility of separate switching

**685. HENLEY TRANSITION TOWN STEERING GROUP**

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin invited Mr Ian Reissmann and Mr Edwin Bowles of Henley Transition Town Steering Group to the table to give a presentation on the work of the above group.

Mr Reissmann delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the work and progress of the Henley Transition Town group. The group is worried about a range of issues including climate change and peak oil. Their aim is to act locally and currently have 150 people involved in the group. Their aim is to make Henley carbon neutral by 2012 and have a range of initiatives in mind to work towards this goal. Energy saving and improved insulation is the most obvious means of achieving this goal and they have also established various sub groups in the areas of food, education and transport. Another suggestion that has been adopted by other towns in the UK is the 'Henley pound'. The town would print its own currency and this could be spent locally on a barter basis. This would encourage people to think local – if you can only spend locally then you can only buy locally.

Mr Reissmann advised that the group is not asking for money from the Council; they are asking for the Council's support for their vision in the following areas.

- Involvement in some of the group's ideas
- Help with grant applications
- Increase in availability of allotments
- Garden sharing
- Reducing energy consumption within Henley Town Council

Mr Bowles then explained what being carbon neutral meant and advised that the target of achieving carbon neutrality in Henley by 2012 was designed to tie in with the Olympics.

The group has a three fold strategy:

- Energy saving
- Carbon offset
- Renewable energy

Their target is to achieve a 10% - 40% reduction by 2012 and felt that a decrease of 18% would be a good result.

*Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin invited questions from Councillors.*

Councillor Mrs R Myer asked whether this is just a fad and is the underlying premise correct. She felt the Council should not just go ahead with these schemes without some scientific evidence to back up the claims. Mr Bowles replied that Transition Towns is more about sustainability and Henley Town Council doesn't have to buy into CO2 emissions.

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith advised that the County Council was involved and were doing a number of things. They were achieving an 18% reduction already and would be prepared to give support in kind but not financially.

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin asked what the group wanted from Henley Town Council. Mr Bowles replied that there were a number of areas where the Council could help:

- Support for the group's aims in
  - energy saving
  - sustainability
  - local resilience
- Consider the groups aims when making other decisions

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that Henley Town Council supports the aims of the Henley Transition Towns Steering Group

**686. PROPOSED EXTENSION TO HENLEY ROWING CLUB**

Henley on Thames Town Council considered a request to give consent as landlords to a proposal to extend Henley Rowing Club.

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that permission be granted for the proposed extension subject to the inclusion of sustainable features within the new extension

**687. SPORTS CENTRE USER GROUP**

Councillors received and noted the notes of the above group

**688. ALLOTMENTS – CATCHMENT AREA**

Councillors received a report regarding a proposed reduction in the catchment area for the allotments. Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin congratulated the Committee Administrator on a concise report which made the decision making process more streamlined.

Councillor S Smith questioned the map with a radius of 5km which excluded Sonning Common. Councillors agreed that parish councils were responsible for providing

allotments and if these were not being provided then residents of those parishes should lobby for the provision to be made.

Councillor Mrs G M Dodds felt that all the proposals be adopted including the 5km radius. Councillor A J Follett thought that the custom at proposal 4 should be discontinued i.e. inheriting a plot was not to be allowed.

Councillors agreed that more provision for allotments could be made in the future, but accepted that this was a long term plan due to the cost of land and the cost of setting up the infrastructure once land was obtained.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that

1. proposal 1 “that the current 15 mile radius for qualification for an allotment is reduced to 5km or some other figure as in the options” is adopted with the radius set at 5km
2. proposal 2 “that if the boundary is reduced, it should apply to new tenants only and existing allotment holders will not be asked to quit” be adopted
3. proposal 3 “that a decision be made as to whether an allotment holder may keep their plot if they move out of the area but still wish to maintain their plot” – an allotment holder must relinquish their plot if they move outside the area
4. proposal 4 “that a decision be made as to whether a plot can be ‘inherited’ from a deceased plot holder” – a plot may not be inherited from a deceased plot holder

**689. 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 are considered to be confidential

**690. SPORTS CENTRE CONTRACT**

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that CLS, who were managing the sports facility for 6 months on an interim basis, were now withdrawing from this agreement and only staying on until the end of June 2009. He advised that time was now very short for sourcing a new provider and gave details on the discussions and actions taken so far. At the last meeting the preferred option was the in house bid, however there are obstacles to this, most notably the cost of business rates. If an external not for profit provider were to take on the facility they would qualify for 80% mandatory rate relief and would probably also be awarded discretionary relief of the remaining 20%. Henley Town Council would be liable for the rates in full which would make a difference to the bid. Discussions have been held with an alternative provider. They appear to be keen to take on the contract but there is still a lot of work to be done on the finer detail. One anomaly at the moment is the cost of water rates, currently being charged at £10k per annum, which seems excessive for a facility of this nature.

As the timescale is now tight a proposal needs to be put before Committee on 19 May so that it can be ratified by Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> June in time for the 1 July deadline. Councillor A J Follett suggests that the current working group meet prior to 19 May to move the matter forward. Councillors agreed that in order to demonstrate that ‘Best Value’ had been sought, 3 options should be presented to the Committee – a previously submitted proposal, the alternative provider’s bid and the In House option.

*Action:*

- i. Town Clerk to arrange an urgent meeting of the working group to discuss the way forward.*
- ii. Investigate the issue of rateable value*
- iii. Investigate the anomaly with the water rates*

The Committee RECOMMENDS

that options to run the Tesco sports facilities submitted by the local businessmen, the alternative provider and Henley Town Council be presented to the next meeting on 19 May.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.15 pm

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Chairman