

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor A Follett (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Miss L M Hillier
Councillor S Smith (substituting for Cllr D Nimmo-Smith)
Councillor C Pye
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor Dr B G Wood (Chair)

In attendance: Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs H King – Committee Administrator
A member of the press
A member of the public

17. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor D Nimmo-Smith.

18. **TO RECEIVE 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 judgement 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 the 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.

Councillor A Follett – Min 23 Town & Visitors Regatta – personal & prejudicial – member of Visitors Regatta.

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin – Min 26 Legal Update (Headway/Brunner Hall) – personal & prejudicial – employee of TYA.

Councillor Mrs G Dodds – Min 26 Legal Update (Headway/Brunner Hall) – personal & prejudicial – trustee of TYA.

19. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 2 June 2009 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Dr B Wood.

20. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Estate Inspections

It was noted that only 3 of the possible 16 inspections had been carried out. Although it had been a busy time for Councillors recently, it was agreed that the first round of inspections should be carried out by the end of August (depending on staff availability). Councillor Smith asked if the inspections could be carried out at weekends. The Town Clerk informed the meeting that Gareth Bartle (who needed to be present) did not work at weekends, however, he would enquire whether any accommodation of the request would be possible.

Action: Town Clerk to discuss with Gareth Bartle the possibility of covering weekend inspections.

CCTV

The Town Clerk advised that he had attended a meeting of the CCTV Management Group earlier that morning. (Representations had already been made to SODC concerning the cost of the cameras and a substantive response was expected when the size of the Thames Valley Police (TVP) contribution was known.) The TVP contribution was expected to increase but the overall cost of the cameras would still leave HTC with a deficit of c£2,000 against budget.

The matter had yet to be concluded and an appeal mechanism will exist which HTC could use if it feels unreasonably disadvantaged. Councillor Dr Skolar was concerned that decisions made by the Vale of White Horse Council seemed to have a direct impact on Henley and suggested that if an appeal was lodged than this undue influence could form part of the argument.

Councillor Dr Wood pointed out that the contribution towards the CCTV cameras was not due until March 2010 and a watching brief should be kept on developments. The Town Clerk was asked to report back regularly.

Energy Use

Councillors discussed the benefits of having an energy use policy in place and the timing of inviting external companies to give presentations on their services/performing inspection visits. It was agreed that the Value for Money Working Group should arrange and evaluate the presentations and make recommendations to the relevant Finance Strategy & Management Committee. Dates of presentations should be advertised to all Councillors so that members can attend if they so wish.

21. **FINANCE**

i) **Budget Monitoring Report**

The Summary sheet showed that the Council was in a good position with figures highlighting an expected surplus at the end of the year of £48.9k against an original projected budget deficit of £14.4k.

In response to a question from Councillor Dr Skolar, the Town Clerk confirmed that the Mill Meadows income could now be accurately split between mooring and car parking.

Councillors agreed the 'dashboard' approach to displaying the figures had been very successful, producing a document which was much more user friendly and the Accountant should be congratulated on its implementation.

Councillor Dr Skolar enquired how the likely increase in employer's pension contributions would be reflected in the accounts. Councillor Dr Wood confirmed that the figure would appear as a negative variance at the end of the year.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the report be received and approved.

ii) **Investment Performance Update**

Members had before them the Investment Performance Update report for the period 1 April – 16 June 2009, copy having being issued.

It was RESOLVED that the Investment Performance Report for the period be noted.

iii) **List of Payments**

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

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the report be received and approved.

22. **ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY**

The Town Clerk advised the meeting that having the policy in place was not only good practice but a requirement of external auditors. Once the policy was adopted it would be placed on the Council's website thus adding to the existing policy bank.

It was RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

that the policy covering Anti-Fraud and Corruption be adopted.

23. **HENLEY TOWN & VISITORS REGATTA**

Councillors were agreed that the Regatta was a worthwhile event and the sponsorship of the 'Town Challenge Cup' should continue for 2009.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that £75 is made available from the appropriate budget for the sponsorship and the Regatta sponsorship secretary informed accordingly.

24. **PARTIAL REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH EAST IN RELATION TO: SOMEWHERE TO LIVE: PLANNING FOR GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE (GTTS) IN THE SOUTH EAST**

The Chairman gave a short précis of the papers and highlighted the fact that the South East England Regional Assembly's Planning Committee has recommended their preference for Option D.

Option D states: 75% of new spaces should be in the same general areas where GTTS currently live. 25% would be spread across the region to make sure that all areas provide some spaces. The region-wide redistribution takes account of strategic constraints and opportunities.

Councillor Dr Skolar advised that OCC had also expressed its preference for Option D in an attempt to fulfil its obligation to the GTTS. At present there were no permanent traveller sites within Henley although there were a number of unofficial sites within easy reach of the town.

There was a wide ranging discussion concerning permanent sites for travellers. It was felt that provision of permanent sites did attract travellers to set up temporary sites close by and the relevant local authority only had limited power to have these removed. In fact, the paper did not propose granting additional powers for removal of unofficial sites but just addressed the need for additional permanent sites.

It was felt that the Council should present its comments on the proposal but not on the comments form supplied by the Government Office for the South East. Instead, the Council should send a separate submission.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that representations be made to GOSE advising them that Henley Town Council does not support any of the options listed and is not in favour of any permanent sites being located in Henley. The determining factors being:

- the impact on taxpayer's liability, and
- that there is insufficient detail on, or proposals to increase, the powers required to remove temporary/unofficial GTTS sites.

25. **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.

26. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 JULY 2009.**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

The content of the legal update was received and noted. In particular:

Registration of HTC land

The Town Clerk advised the meeting that he had invited Mrs Pickett (ex Town Clerk) into the Town Hall for a meeting and will take the opportunity to discuss the documentation that still needs to be located. It was suggested that the Victoria Historical Society and/or Roger Smee may be useful sources of information.

Bath Site

The draft lease had just been received. The meeting was content for the draft to be reviewed by the Legal Group at their meeting on 15 July. All resulting comments plus the lease will then be forwarded to the Council's solicitors for review. Following this, a report will be submitted to the September meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

Headway Lease extension

It was recognised that with the current short lease Headway found it difficult to encourage outside funding. The meeting was sympathetic to Headway's request for a longer term but felt that no firm commitment could be made at this stage without the intentions of TYA being known. TYA are still awaiting the results of the youth survey before there would be a clear indication of how they intend to proceed.

The Town Clerk had been in contact with Brian Pyle (Headway) and Oliver Makower (TYA) and had proposed a meeting to discuss the issues. With the results of the TYA survey not yet available, it was suggested by Councillor Dodds that the meeting was delayed until August. It was also agreed that at least one councillor should attend the meeting.

It was apparent that the position with TYA needs to be resolved before the Headway issue could be progressed. Councillor Pye reiterated his previous view that the Council, as part of its responsibility, needs to develop a strategy (both short and long term) for the Makins land.

Action: Town Clerk to advise both parties of the outcome of the Committee's discussion.

ii) **HEADWAY/BRUNNER HALL**

The meeting reviewed Headway's request to allow the MS Society to use part of Brunner Hall on a Thursday. Councillors were sympathetic to the request and understood the benefits of fully utilising the existing facilities to provide benefit to an increased number of people.

Councillors did not agree that permission should be granted to 'share occupation' with any other (non-group) organisation as it was prohibited in the lease. However, should the facilities be offered to the MS Society as a 'gifted free use' opportunity, then the Council would not object on condition it was not prejudicial to the terms of the lease.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Town Clerk writes to Brian Pyle (Headway) stating that the Council has no objection to the facilities at Brunner Hall being used by the MS Society on a Thursday. However, this permission is given exceptionally and only applies to the MS Society. No further requests relating to other organisations will be considered. Brian Pyle to be made aware that this is not a case of shared occupation and should not be regarded as such. No actions by Headway should prejudice the terms of the lease.

Councillor Dr Skolar abstained from the vote that accepted the resolution.

iii) **STAFFING MATTERS**

a) P Graffin – Parks Service

The Town Clerk advised the meeting that Mr Graffin, who was approaching his 60th birthday, had asked to take his retirement from that date and had requested to be re-employed on a part-time basis. The meeting considered the implications of the request both in terms of staffing for the Parks Service as well as the budget.

The Committee was minded to agree to Mr Graffin's retirement request and re-employment on a 20 hour/week temporary contract. However, councillors could not make any firm decisions concerning this issue until the Town Clerk's paper covering the review of Parks Service has been presented and proposals considered.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that a decision on Mr Graffin's request would be made as soon as practicable following the Parks Service Review.

Action: Town Clerk to speak to Mr Graffin and explain the situation.

b) Disciplinary Procedures

Following the adoption of the new disciplinary procedures, the Committee was asked to consider the appointment of an Appeals Panel to consider appeals made by employees against disciplinary action taken by the Town Clerk.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chairman of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee be appointed to serve on an Appeals Panel.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Chairman

8.7.09