

**Present:** The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood  
Councillor Mrs J Bland  
Councillor Mrs G Dodds  
Councillor A Follett (Vice chair)  
Councillor Miss L Hillier  
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith  
Councillors Dr B Wood (Chair)

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

83. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin and Councillors Dr P Skolar and Councillor C Pye.

84. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs G Dodds – Min 89 (Grants – Henley in Transition) – prejudicial.  
Councillor Mrs J Wood – Min 89 (Grants – Henley Fringe Festival) – prejudicial.  
Councillor Miss L Hillier – Min 89 (Grants – Henley Fringe & Literary Festivals) – personal.  
Councillor A Follett – Min 89 (Grants – Henley Town & Visitors Regatta) – prejudicial.  
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith – Min 89 (Grants - Henley Town & Visitors Regatta) – personal.

85. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

*Mr K J Arlett – Elizabeth Road*

Mr Arlett referred to the 'dashboard' papers and enquired why it appeared that the Council had not issued rent invoices for the Thameside parking area for 5 years. He enquired how many parking spaces there were, the rent charged for each and the frequency of the rent reviews. In addition, he was not clear what the dashboard papers were intended to show.

Councillor Dr B Wood stated that he did not have the exact details of the case to hand. The dashboard had been introduced to provide a commentary to the accounts, assist analysis and identify trends.

*Action: Committee Administrator to provide relevant details re. Thameside to Mr Arlett.*

*Mr K J Arlett – Elizabeth Road*

Mr Arlett referred to the c£700 for the repair/cleaning of benches shown on the payment listing.

Councillor Dr B Wood confirmed that the benches had, in fact, been replaced.

*Mr K J Arlett – Elizabeth Road*

Mr Arlett enquired whether the number of maintenance visits and related costs detailed in the 'Review of Lift Maintenance' report were correct.

Councillor Dr B Wood confirmed that they were.

*Mr K J Arlett – Elizabeth Road*

The 'Reports in Confidential Session' paper quoted Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Mr Arlett enquired whether this was relevant as it appeared to apply to county, district and borough Councils rather than town councils.

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that the town council was bound by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 which had been stated in the report.

86. **MINUTES**

Councillor Mrs J Bland expressed her dismay concerning how the VFM minutes had been treated at the previous Finance meeting (at which she was absent) and wished to point out that the VFM Working Group had correctly fulfilled its obligation of examining the Council's assets with a view to recommending to Committee potential disposal possibilities.

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 12 January 2010 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Dr B Wood.

87. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Estate Inspections

Councillor Hillier reported that due to work commitments her inspection had not been carried out. Councillor D Nimmo-Smith undertook to carry out her first inspection for her.

Northfield End Highway

A letter had been received from OCC on 11 February 2010 which stated that the evidence submitted was still being evaluated and a full response could not yet be made.

Henley Information Centre

The Town Clerk reported that KVB had given a detailed presentation on 9 February which included 3 quotations for the work to be undertaken. Contractor A was chosen. Their quote was originally £39,700 but after further negotiations was reduced by 5% to £35,082. Consequently, the project is expected to come in on budget. It was confirmed that the architect's fees would be met from the professional fees budget.

Paintings (basement corridor)

The Town Clerk updated the meeting as the River & Rowing Museum had been approached to see if they would be prepared to display the paintings. The Museum's Senior Curator is expected to visit the Town Hall in the next few weeks to inspect the paintings.

Councillor Follet asked that the HTC Strategy paper (previous agreed by Full Council) was added to the Progress Report so that key objectives were no lost sight of. The meeting agreed that this should be the case.

*Action: Committee Administrator.*

88. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

Page 5 (1 of 2) – the figures showed expenditure on rates for the Little White Hart moorings. It was not clear whether this was the case or a mis-description and the Accountant was asked to investigate.

*Action: HTC Accountant*

Page 5 (2 of 2) – it had been noted that there was an 82% increase in the cost of emptying the dog litter bins. SODC were responsible for emptying bins but had not advised the Council of increased costs. It was agreed that SODC should be asked for an appropriate explanation and to find out whether this activity had been included in the Verdant contract. It was also suggested that it would be worth investigating the possibility of an alternative company carrying out this function.

*Action: HTC Accountant*

Councillor Mrs G Dodds enquired whether any savings could be made on the Council's insurance premium considering the market was very competitive at the moment. The Chairman reminded the Committee that the previous accountant had carried out an exercise last year to review all the insurance policies, excesses etc and subsequently renegotiated a deal with the Council's insurers which had produced substantial savings.

It was noted that the dashboard showed that, with approximately 6 weeks to go to the end of the financial year, outturn was stabilising. It was expected that the end of year figure would show a c£50k surplus.

ii) Investment Performance Update

Members had before them the Investment Performance Update report for the period 1 April 2009 – 29 January 2010, copy having being issued.

Councillor Dr B Wood pointed out that the figures quoted (in the table) were at 31 December 2009 and the FTSE had fallen since that date.

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

iii) Monthly List of Payments/Cumulative Supplier Costs

Members had before them the List of Payments and Cumulative Invoiced Costs, copies having being issued.

Councillor Miss L Hillier asked how the Customer Service training course was received and how many people attended. The Town Clerk said that 12 had attended (including OSS, office staff and himself) and he thought the course was both informative and good value.

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith noted that an extra insurance premium had been paid to Zurich to cover van hire and enquired why this sort of activity was not covered under the overall Zurich policy. The Accountant was asked to review the policy details.

*Action: HTC Accountant*

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

89. **GRANTS**

The Committee was reminded that there was only £96 remaining in the budget and there were grant applications totally £11,691 to be considered.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that £2,000 be vired from the Townlands budget and £2,000 from the professional fees budget to supplement the grants budget. Any underspend following the consideration of the applications would be returned to the professional fees budget.

On that basis, it was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** the following grants were awarded:

• Henley Football Partnership	£445
• Sue Ryder Care	£500
• Henley Fringe Ltd	Free use of Council buildings up to the value of £750
• South Oxon Mencap	£500
• Henley Literary Festival	£842 (to cover hire of Town Hall and Fire Station)
• Henley Town & Visitors Regatta	£750
• Henley in Transition	<u>£154</u>
Total:	£3,941

Grant applications from Swan Lifeline and Ryder Cheshire Volunteers were unsuccessful.

90. **FRSSE REPORTING**

The HTC Accountant introduced the paper and explained the background as to why there had been a change in the reporting requirements. The issues previously raised by the Town Clerk and the Accountant, and reported back to the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group, had been taken on board. The changes would mean that the Council's accounts would be less likely to be qualified.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the report be noted with satisfaction.

91. **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2010-11**

The meeting noted the paper and agreed that it was important this strategy locked into the HTC strategy and the two are in line.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the strategy paper be noted.

92. **LIFT MAINTENANCE**

The Accountants Assistant was complimented on the paper she had produced which had identified worthwhile savings.

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

that the Council transfer the lift maintenance contract over to Kone, initially for a period of 1 year to monitor the level of service, once 3 months notice period with Stannah has been served.

93. **HENLEY TOWN COUNCIL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The Town Clerk explained that the Committee should be aware of the annual subscriptions that are paid. He had suggested that the subscription to South East Employers is no longer continued as Ellis Whittam now fulfil the HR role.

Councillor A Follett pointed out that although the Council should continue to pay the subscription to the Henley Partnership, they were not a "Professional Association" and as such should be removed from the list.

Councillor Miss L Hillier questioned whether the £78 spent on Horticulture Week Subscription was worthwhile. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was as the Sen. Parks Supervisor found the publication very useful.

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

that the Council renews the subscriptions and affiliation fees to those professional bodies shown in the schedule save for the Council's Associate Membership of South East Employers.

94. **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT**

The Town Clerk explained the signed copy of the statement will be displayed once accepted. Councillor Mrs J Wood expressed surprise that mention of the necessity for contactors to have insurance was not included. The Town Clerk undertook to investigate and report back.

*Action: Town Clerk*

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the Health & Safety Policy Statement be received, approved and adopted.

95. **MAINTENANCE/REFURBISHMENT OF COUNCIL ASSETS**

This report was brought to Committee following the (previous) Accountant's report on the subject. One of the recommendations from the original report was to review how best to use the surveyor and schedule in the required inspections. The Town Clerk had spoken to the surveyor who had confirmed that there was no necessity to have annual 'light touch' inspections as his original survey was comprehensive enough.

Councillor Dr B Wood thought the surveyor ought to be commended for his integrity for not chasing additional (non-essential) work.

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

that the report be noted and no further action be taken on the proposal to carry out annual "light touch" inspections but that the Council reverts to its earlier proposal and carries out a building survey once every five years.

96. **REPORTS IN CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**

The Town Clerk reminded Members that they had asked for this report to be presented. It was difficult to be entirely prescriptive concerning the types of business that was confidential but in all cases it was for Councillors to agree if discussions should take place in public or private session. However, the paper did give an indication of areas that were usually treated as confidential.

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

that the Committee notes the report and adopted the classification of agenda items that are to be considered in private.

97. **ENERGY USAGE**

The Committee Administrator explained that the engagement of NIFES to carry out the energy survey (as recommended by the VFM Working Group) had been put on hold whilst Councillor Mrs G Dodds investigated the possibility of using University MSC students to carry out the work at nil cost. Unfortunately, that option did not bear fruit.

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

that the Council approaches NIFES to carry the energy audit (and produce the Display Energy Certificate for the Town Hall).

Councillor Mrs G Dodds had become aware of the 10:10 campaign whose aim was to encourage reduction of energy use/carbon footprint by 10% in 2010. She thought it would be a good idea to join the campaign and

suggested some investigation work was carried out (including liaising with SODC). A report could then be presented to the FS&M meeting for consideration.

*Action: Committee Administrator*

98. **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.

99. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2010.**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

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

CAB

Councillors were advised that the lease had been completed and was ready to sign.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the document is signed and sealed at Full Council on 2 March 2010.

Bath Site

It was noted that a year had passed since the Committee had agreed to grant the lease. Although the start of the lease would be backdated to 1 April 2009 it was felt that a reminder ought to be sent to Rod Eyot Parking to encourage them to complete the process.

*Action: Town Clerk*

Headway

Councillor Dr B Wood said that he was sorry to hear of Brian Pyle's departure as he had done so much for the organisation. The Town Clerk told Members that he would be meeting Brian's replacement (Richard Gilby) on 24 February to talk about the new lease and revised rent.

ii) **ANNUAL LICENCE RENEWAL**

Members considered a letter received from Mark Dunlop (landlord of the Angel on the Bridge) asking for a reduction in the licence fee for use of part of Singers Park. It was acknowledged that the current economic climate was difficult for businesses including the pub trade. However, the Committee did not believe that the annual licence fee should be reduced mainly due to the fact that the previous year's fee had already been negotiated down from £1,000 to £750. It was felt that a request by Mr Dunlop to the building's owner for a reduction in his rent may yield a more meaningful cost saving.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the application for a reduction in the rent be not granted.

*Action: Town Clerk to advise Mr Dunlop of the Committee's decision.*

### iii) **PARKS SERVICE REVIEW**

The Town Clerk explained that this further paper had become necessary because the termination clause of the M&C contract was served too late. Some of the dates used in the contract were non-specific and this had led to an understandable confusion. In essence, part of the re-organisation of the Parks Service would have to be put back a year but the remaining part could still be implemented as planned. As a consequence, another operative would be recruited to the Parks Service. This would bring the establishment up to its former full complement.

Councillor A Follett pointed out that the work the Parks Service was very visible to the public (more so than that of the office based staff) and as such the level of the outside services needed to be maintained. During the interim period it would be important to keep the staff motivated. Councillor Dr B Wood stated that M&C also needed their motivation maintained during this time.

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

- M&C Landscapes be retained for the remainder of the contract period until 29 February 2012;
- The proposed restructure of the Parks Service be phased in over the next 2 years to bring back in-house the whole of the grass cutting operation from 1 March 2012;
- Arrangements for advertising and recruiting internally the posts of Leading Hand and Park Warden proceeds with a view to the positions being filled by 1 April 2010;
- A summer Parks Warden be recruited for this season and next;
- Arrangements for advertising and recruiting a Parks Manager from 1 April 2011 be progressed at the appropriate time.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Chairman  
17.2.10