

**Present:** The Mayor, Councillor Glen Lambert  
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ken Arlett  
Councillor Sara Abey  
Councillor Julian Brookes  
Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak  
Councillor Will Hamilton  
Councillor Lorraine Hillier  
Councillor Laurence Plant  
Councillor Jane Smewing (Chair)

**In attendance:** Janet Wheeler– Town Clerk  
Liz Jones – HTC Accountant/RFO  
Cath Adams – Projects and Planning Manager  
Hilary King – Committee Administrator  
1 member of the media  
10 members of the public

42. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ian Reissmann.

43. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Ken Arlett – Min 58ii) – Lease renewal – personal – close friend.  
Councillor Lorraine Hillier – Min 58iv) – Land purchase – personal – in receipt of  
business sponsorship.

44. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Mr Tony May (Leicester Close) - Friends of Freemans Meadow Committee - Member

Mr May had prepared a statement which had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting, a copy of which is also attached at the end of these minutes. He wished to stress that the Council's Open & Green Spaces Committee members, during their discussions, were equally positive regarding the future preservation of the green space.

Mr Peter Lloyd (Leicester Close) – Friends of Freemans Committee - Chair

Mr Lloyd endorsed Mr May's comments. He explained that Friends of Freemans had canvassed 500 local residents earlier in the year to determine what they would like to see at Freemans Meadow and the results had been shared with the Council. He advised that here was a close working relationship with the Parks Service and together they have organised a number of improvements to

the area. As the site had been a public park for almost 100 years, most residents would like to see it kept as such. The Meadow is used on a daily basis, being popular with dog walkers as well as all age groups. He hoped that the Council would take a long term view of the area by applying for village green status. He also confirmed this approach would not be classed as a 'disposal' of a Council asset.

Councillor Donna Crook

Councillor Crook stated that she fully supported an application to retain Freemans Meadow as an open green space free from any type of development.

Mr Ian Clark (Cromwell Road)

Mr Clark handed Councillors a letter concerning the potential sale of the Drill Hall in Friday Street.

45. **VARIATION IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

In accordance with Standing Orders 5(a)(vi), it was **RESOLVED**

**that in view of the members of the public present, the order of business is altered to allow Item 10 - Freemans Meadow to be moved up the agenda and considered before item 4 - Minutes.**

46. **FREEMANS MEADOW**

The meeting discussed the Friends of Freemans (FoF) request regarding an application to make the Meadow a village green. The Council had received some preliminary advice from OCC Legal in respect of the restrictions this would impose. At this stage, it was felt that the Council did not want to be put in the position of potentially not being able to upgrade the current recreational facilities on site due to the conditions imposed on village greens. It was stated that the Council had not been in any discussions, nor had any intention to, develop the site for housing. It was agreed that further investigation needed to be carried out on the impact of village green status and whether the Open Spaces Act 1906 would afford effective protection as an acceptable alternative. Further legal advice may also need to be sought. It was also agreed that advice could also be requested from the Open Spaces Society as they had a great deal of expertise in this area.

**It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that further research is undertaken, including obtaining legal advice, to determine the exact restrictions imposed by village green status and also to what degree Freemans Meadow is protected under the Open Spaces Act 1906.**

47. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 2 October 2018 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

48. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

SODC funds from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

It was agreed that as there was no more information likely to be forthcoming on the subject, this item could be removed from the report.

East Eyot Island

It was noted that the Planning Committee was taking the lead on this item and Councillors should proceed with caution as developments continue.

Estate Inspections

It was agreed that the estate inspections should be circulated to Councillors for information once a year.

Town Hall Sound & Light Project

The installation of the new equipment was taking place currently.

49. **FINANCE**

i) Management Accounts

No comments were made on the accounts.

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

ii) Investment Performance

No comment was made on the Investment performance update.

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

iii) List of payments

A query was raised concerning the item "mule service & supply of rear mounted box", the cost of which was £1,753.10. The RFO was asked to investigate why the cost was so high and e-mail Councillors with the outcome.

*[Post meeting note: this has now been done.]*

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

iv) HTC's own Grant Applications to SODC

The RFO confirmed that the result of the LEADER grant application, covering the conversion of the First Chapel, should be known before Christmas.

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

v) Cumulative Supplier Costs

No comments were made on the listing.

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

50. **REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY (MACRO-CONSIDERATIONS) & DRAFT BUDGET 2019-20**

The budget report, produced by the RFO, contained a number of assumptions that needed to be discussed and agreed by Councillors. It was recognised that setting a balanced budget was always the ideal approach but as it stood, the budget was showing a £66k deficit. The Value for Money Working Group would be meeting shortly to examine the budget in greater detail and put forward suggestions for savings and/or revenue generation.

To make the discussion process easier, each item in the report was addressed in turn:

3% increase in the Band D Council Tax

This issue was hotly debated as to whether the Council tax should be kept at the current level or raised by inflation therefore protecting the value of the precept. It was noted that there would be an increase in the tax base but the exact numbers would not be known until later next month. The RFO had suggested a 3% increase bringing the Band D cost to £95.88 and this assumption had been built into the figures. A recorded vote was requested to determine whether this percentage figure was accepted:

**FOR**  
Councillor Ken Arlett  
Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak  
Councillor Lorraine Hillier  
Councillor Glen Lambert  
Councillor Jane Smewing

**AGAINST**  
Councillor Sara Abey  
Councillor Julian Brookes  
Councillor Will Hamilton  
Councillor Lawrence Plant

The motion was carried.

CAPEX

The recommended capex limit was set at £150k. The draft capex schedule only showed an expected spend of £75k but the RFO explained that as this is an early stage in the budget setting process, there was scope to add additional items. In addition, £23k was already in earmarked reserves for traffic calming measures. Where monies could be spent from CIL they would be, and certainly in advance of any HTC contribution.

Retention of CIL monies for administration

SODC retained 5% of CIL monies collected to re-imburse its administration expenditure of the scheme. It was suggested that HTC adopt the same policy. This received general agreement and the RFO will retain the new line in the draft budget.

Flowerbed contract

The contract is due for renewal in March 2019 and it was agreed that the VFM Working Group should work with the R&A Committee to examine the scope of any new contract and the feasibility of bringing some of the work in-house.

Jubilee Park contract

With the GLL contract finishing in 2019, it was agreed that the Value for Money Working Group (with input from R&A) should consider how the facility will be managed after this date and whether there is an in-house solution that could produce cost savings. Again, this will require the co-operation of the R&A Committee.

### Insurance

The meeting was asked to consider updating the current policy to include cover for terrorism. The RFO was asked to discuss with the Council's insurance the extent of the existing policy and the exclusions to ascertain exactly what additional cover may be necessary.

*[Post meeting note: Currently if there is material damage to one of the Council's properties due to a terrorist action then normal buildings insurance cover does not apply.]*

### Deputy Mayor's Allowance

A suggestion was made that an allowance (of £1k) be included in the budget. It was agreed that the issue would be discussed at the VFM meeting.

**It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the budget as presented by the RFO be accepted, with the following points to be noted:**

- **The Council tax, Band D level to be raised by 3%.**
- **Capex spend to be limited to £150k**
- **5% of CIL monies received should be retained to cover administration of CIL and CIL projects**
- **The VFM Working Group to be involved in the new horticultural contract examination.**

**It was RESOLVED that the meeting of the Value for Money Working Group (prior to Full Council) should examine the budget in greater detail and propose agreed changes. It will also examine the management of Jubilee Park in as much as it affects the budget,**

### 51. VALUE FOR MONEY (VFM) WORKING GROUP

It was recognised that a VFM meeting needed to be arranged, to review the budget, before Full Council on 6 November.

**It was RESOLVED to that the VFM meeting be held on Monday 29 October at 7pm in the Council Chamber.**

### 52. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

The meeting noted the progress that had been made in respect of GDPR and made no comments or alterations to the updated policy.

**It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the action taken so far towards the Council becoming GDPR compliant be noted and approval is given the revised Data Protection and Retention Policy.**

### 53. COMMITTEE MEETING CYCLE

A debate ensued as to the benefit of an 8 week committee cycle over the previous 6 week cycle. Although having fewer meetings was felt to be beneficial, it did mean that agendas were longer and the extended wait until Full Council did slow business down. Overall, the 6 week cycle was preferred. However, it was felt that this was an item requiring input from all Councillors not just those on the FS&M Committee and as such should be debated at Full Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the Standing Committees should revert to the 6 week cycle from the start of the next civic year but an agenda item should be added to the Full Council agenda for further debate on 6 November.

54. **2018-19 CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS**

There was general agreement for the normal Christmas arrangements to apply, as they had in previous years. It was also agreed that staff could leave earlier in the afternoon on Christmas Eve should workloads permit.

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

- the Town Hall is closed from Tuesday 25 December 2018 through to Tuesday 1 January 2019 inclusive, and that three days are granted to staff as additional, discretionary, non-contractual leave, subject to any cover arrangements required by the Town Clerk.
- staff required to provide cover during the normal working hours of 27 – 31 December 2018 i.e. Park Services, Caretakers and Parking Wardens be granted time off in lieu on a straight one for one basis.
- the Council considers making a contribution (similar to that last year) of up to £750 (+ VAT if applicable) towards the staff Christmas event as a token of the Council's thanks and appreciation for their work throughout the past year.

55. **SODC INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES**

There was a long discussion concerning the need for Henley to have 4 polling stations considering the increasing level of postal voting. Operating 4 stations was seen as too costly as well as being unnecessary. It was felt that either 2 or 3 would suffice. It was agreed that the Town Hall should be retained, the sports hall at Gillotts and either Trinity School or the Christ Church Centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk be given delegated powers to write to SODC before the deadline of 2 November agreeing to losing either Trinity School or the Christ Church Centre as a polling station.

56. **KENTON THEATRE**

The request from the Kenton Theatre was discussed and there was no opposition to it being added to the free use list.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the Kenton Theatre is added to the list of organisations that benefit from 'free use' of Council rooms under the agreed policy.

57. **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 23 OCTOBER 2018**

58. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) **LEGAL UPDATE**

Councillors noted the information provided in the Update. In particular:

Fairmile access

It was noted there was a meeting with the developer and the Council's agent on Thursday 25 October. An officer would also attend to observe. A verbal report would be provided at Full Council on 6 November.  
*[Post meeting note: the meeting was subsequently cancelled.]*

ii) **LEASE RENEWALS**

a) **Riverside**

There was a debate regarding the length of lease that should be offered. It was felt that any new lease should be for no longer than 10 years. The applicant could decide whether he wished to surrender his current lease and take out a new 10 year lease from the start of 2019 or continue with the current lease until 2022. Councillor Ken Arlett did not take part in the discussion and refrained from voting.

**It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the applicant be advised that a new 10 year lease, from the start of 2019, would be acceptable. The rent would remain at the current level but increased on an annual basis by RPI. The lease to stipulate that the slipway should not be blocked. The Council's proper legal fees (for the new lease and deed of Surrender) to be met by the tenant.**

b) **Parking**

The meeting reviewed the proposals submitted by the applicant. Although the proposal contained an offer to enhance the area, in lieu of rent, it was agreed that this should not be considered. Additionally, the rent charged for the parking spaces was deemed to be too low when compared to the prices charged for other areas e.g. Upper Market Place.

**It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the applicant is offered a new 10 year lease from March 2019 with an initial rent of £10.5k (+VAT) with annual RPI increases.**

**iii) STREET CLEANING**

The Town Clerk updated the meeting with latest developments. A further update will be provided to Full Council.

**It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that Town Clerk's update be noted.**

**iv) LAND PURCHASE**

The report produced by the Planning & Project Manager was reviewed, discussed and noted.

**It was RESOLVED to commence negotiations with the agent for the land in question at the price agreed. Confirmation of the offer price to be subject to a red book valuation of the site and public consultation. An options appraisal to come back to FS&M on 4 December following the result of the viability assessment and business plan on the 353-357 Reading Road project.**

**v) 353-357 READING ROAD**

The meeting reviewed the minutes of the meetings of the subgroup held in July and August and the accompanying report detailing progress

**It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the minutes of the meetings held on 25 July, 17 August and 18 September and the progress report be received and noted.**

**It was RESOLVED to proceed with the removal of scrub on the boundary of Jubilee Park.**

The meeting closed at 10.15pm.

Chairman  
24.10.18



**Statement presented by Mr Tony May:**

**Freemans Meadow – Village Green Status Finance Strategy & Management  
Committee 23.10.18**

1. The Open and Green Spaces Subcommittee responded very positively to our proposal about Village Green registration, so we were somewhat taken aback by the wording of Janet Munro- Nelson's report and in particular her recommendations.
2. Paragraph 4.2 of the report suggests that the Council might consider "a less permanent option which satisfies Friends of Freemans and other habitants using the Meadow".
3. The Friends wish to make it quite clear that any non-permanent solution would be unacceptable. The whole point of such registration is that it would protect the integrity of Freemans Meadow (and indeed that of Makins) in perpetuity, for the enjoyment of subsequent generations.
4. Our understanding from the many discussions over the last 2 years with both the relevant Council Subcommittees has been that the Council fully supports the intention to maintain the peace and tranquillity of Freemans Meadow
5. The only reason why the value of the land would be of significance would be if the Council intends to dispose of or develop the land which it has so far been clear is not its intention
6. We fully appreciate that the Council needs to take legal advice but would suggest that in the first instance you should seek the free advice of the Open Spaces Society of which the Council is of course a member
7. The Open Spaces Society will probably have case studies of other councils which have registered property as a Village Green. Hugh Craddock of the OSS has already been very helpful in our understanding of the process and will obviously help the Council if asked
8. Hugh is incidentally quite certain that the Council does not have to go through a sale and repurchase process in order to effect such a registration
9. Over the last 2 years there have been 2 surveys amongst local residents and extensive discussions as to potential additional uses of Freemans Meadow. The possibility of putting tennis courts (for example) has been actively considered and rejected partly because there would appear to be no foreseeable solution to the car parking problem, so this again would not seem to be a significant issue.
10. We feel sure that the Council wishes to guard its reputation in terms of maintaining the character and stability of Henley-on-Thames. Any indication that the Council wishes to keep its options open could, we suggest, severely damage that reputation.