

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

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

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Deputy Mayor called for nominations. It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Dr B Wood be elected.

There being no other nominations, it was RESOLVED

that Councillor Dr B Wood be elected Chairman of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Dr B Wood took the chair

2. **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Dr B Wood called for nominations. It was proposed and seconded that Councillor A Follett be elected.

There being no other nominations, it was RESOLVED

that Councillor A Follett be elected Vice-Chairman of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors A Follett and Mrs E Hodgkin. (Councillor Miss L Pye was the nominated substitute for Councillor A Follett)

4. **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 Dr Skolar – Energy use - Min. 11i) – personal – amateur radio user.

Michael Kennedy (Town Clerk) – Performance Review – personal and prejudicial – staff member.

5. **APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES AND THE MEMBERSHIP THEREOF**

Value For Money Working Group

It was RESOLVED that the membership of the VFM Working Group should remain unchanged. The 2009-10 membership will comprise:

Councillor Dr B Wood
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor A Follett

Legal Group

It was RESOLVED that the membership of the Legal Group should remain unchanged. The 2009-10 membership will comprise:

Councillor Dr B Wood
Councillor Dr P Skolar
Councillor A Follett
Councillor C Pye

6. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee held on 28 April 2009 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Dr B Wood.

7. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Estate Inspections

It was noted that, with the resignation of Councillor Elliott, part of the inspection process was not being covered. It was agreed that a reference should be made in the weekly newsletter alerting Councillors to the fact which may bring forth a volunteer. If not, then it was decided to wait until a new Councillor was elected and they would assume Councillor Elliott's responsibilities.

Action: Town Clerk to make an appropriate entry in the Newsletter.

8. **FINANCE**

i) 'Month 13' Report

Notes:

The Chairman explained that the 'Month 13' report included all the end of year transactions. The new format, in the main, showed income matched to expenditure. The report was now easier to read and this format would be used by the other committees. All members were happy with the revised layout.

Mrs J Bland brought up the subject of replacing the Astroturf and enquired what financial provision had been made. The Chairman explained that there were a number of other items, such as a replacement for the current Mayor's chain, where future commitments would need to be met. The Town Clerk explained the monies would need to be found from either the Council's capital or general fund, the difference between the two and the choice between selling investments against increasing the precept.

It was agreed that the HTC Accountant should produce a paper which identifies those areas/assets where there is a depreciation element and potential replacement cost. The report should itemise the length of depreciation and financial options for replacement i.e. from where the cost would be met and the resulting impact on the general and capital funds. The paper should also include other available (commercial) options that may be appropriate.

Action: HTC Accountant to produce the report for consideration by the September Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

Summary

The meeting noted that the overall deficit had been decreasing over the years shown which was welcome news.

FS&M Income

Councillor Dr P Skolar asked whether the Dividends & Interest figure was realistic. The Chairman stated that there was no reason to believe the figure would not be achieved.

T&C Expenses

CCTV. The Chairman explained that amicable negotiations had taken place with SODC concerning the cost of the cameras. It was expected that SODC would be providing a response by the end of June and a paper would subsequently be presented to the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

ii) 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.

iii) Budget Timetable for 2010 -11

Councillors received and considered a report detailing the timetable for budget setting.

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

9. **FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Councillors received and considered the Terms of Reference for the Committee. The Town Clerk pointed out that 'Twinning' had not been allocated to any of the Committees and asked members where they thought it properly belonged. It was agreed that it should be added to the responsibilities of the Town & Community Committee.

Action: T&C Committee Clerk to note the addition.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the terms of reference for the Finance Strategy and Management Committee be received and approved.

10. **RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT**

Councillors received and considered a report from the Town Clerk on Risk Management. Councillor D Nimmo-Smith complimented the Town Clerk on the clarity (and brevity) of his paper.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Risk Management Policy Statement be received and approved.

11. **ENERGY USE**

i) **Carbon Trust**

The Town Clerk gave the background to this paper and the Council's desire to reduce its energy consumption. Councillor Mrs G Dodds understood that SODC has a sustainability officer who could impart a lot of valuable advice on the subject and suggested that she is approached and asked to give a presentation to the Council (and staff) on the subject.

Action: Town Clerk to arrange suitable date(s)

Councillor Dodds also suggested that it may be a sensible option to have solar panels fitted on the Pavilion.

Councillor Miss L Hillier had e-mailed some literature from a company (Measure to Manage) who were willing to devise an energy management programme for the Council. Councillor Dr P Skolar voiced some reservations about the company's distance monitoring devices as he asserted the frequency they operated on would interfere with radio frequencies. Councillor Dr B Wood also had been contacted by another company (CarbonAqua) who also offer energy management techniques.

It was RESOLVED

that the Value for Money Working Group should evaluate the external proposals and recommend a way forward.

Councillor Mrs G Dodds expressed a particular interest in the subject of energy conservation and was willing to volunteer in assisting drawing up the proposed energy policy.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that an energy usage policy is drawn up (using the expertise of Councillor Mrs G Dodds, the Town Sergeant and the Town Clerk) which is submitted to a future Finance Strategy and Management Committee for approval. The policy should identify the responsible officer who will be given the appropriate implementation authority and also include the necessary bespoke form (based on the Carbon Trust Checklist) to cover the Council's requirements.

Once the policy is adopted:

that the Town Sergeant organises a pattern of inspections to all the Council owned buildings (for which the Council is liable for the energy bills) and completes the bespoke checklist.

that the results of the inspections are reviewed by the Town Clerk and a report presented to a future Finance Strategy and Management meeting.

ii) **Utilities**

Councillors received and considered a report covering the cost of electricity and gas in Council owned buildings. Members were pleased that savings had already been secured and asked that the methods used to obtain the savings are communicated to organisations such as the CAB who occupy Council properties but are liable for their own utility costs to see if they could make similar savings.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the

Accounts Asst should ask Southern Electric if there is any possible benefit if all the Council's properties are put onto one contract, if this is possible to do.

Accounts Asst should also ask if the contracts can be amended to include a higher standing charge but lower unit cost in particular for the Pavilion before the present contract expires.

Accounts Asst also to check market rates prior to December 2010 for electricity.

12. **HTC FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

Councillors received and considered a report regarding fire extinguishers. Members agreed that it made economic sense to purchase extinguishers rather than rent.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Council agree to purchase the extinguishers from Chubb at a one-off cost of £2,000.

13. **HTC ALARMS**

Councillors received and considered a report regarding alarms.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Accounts Asst negotiates with the appropriate suppliers to achieve adequate alarm coverage at a cheaper rate.

It was noted that the Accounts Assistant had produced three, high quality reports for the meeting and Councillors were appreciative of her efforts.

14. **HIGHLANDS FARM (SITE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST)**

Mrs Gill Oliver (SODC Planning Officer) had written to the Town Clerk on the subject of Highlands Farm. She confirmed that the ancient monument was not included in the sustainability appraisal. This omission did seemingly support Mr D Smewing's point made during Public Questions at Full Council on 12 May. The meeting agreed that the clarification offered in Gill Oliver's letter was essential.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the

Town Clerk writes to the County Archaeologist to ask what information he has on the site;

Town Clerk writes to SODC (copied to OCC, Mr D Smewing and Reading University) expressing concern that the ancient monument was not included in the original appraisal and asking that it forms a much stronger element in the next version. The monument is significant in itself and significant to the people of Henley and as such should assume a higher profile.

15. **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.

16. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 JUNE 2009.**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

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

Bath site

The Committee noted, with disappointment, that the Bath Site draft lease had not yet been received. It was agreed that if the lease was not received in the next two weeks that the annual invoices for use of the site should be raised.

Action: Town Clerk to contact John Farmer and advise him of the Committee's decision.

AFC Henley

Councillors noted the update and wished it recorded that their hope was that AFC Henley would look favourably on the Hockey Club's request to use the site on 2 or 3 additional occasions a year. The Town Clerk advised the meeting that an agreement had been reached concerning the Regatta weekend.

ii) HENLEY VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE (HVIC)

The Town Clerk had produced a comprehensive report concerning the options for the HVIC for which he received credit from members. He talked through the report, setting out the original history, background to the proposed move and the options available.

Councillor Mrs J Wood expressed her thanks to Terrie Jones for all her work and was personally sorry to see the HVIC close. She asked that the Town Clerk write to Terrie Jones conveying the Council's gratitude for her contribution. It was hoped that should the move to the Town Hall take place, the staffs' professional approach would continue to the same high standard.

It was noted that space was a limiting factor should the HVIC move to the Town Hall. Councillor Mrs G Dodds suggested that the records room could be opened up and used as office space. It was accepted that this may mean absorbing some of the professional fees budget so this would need to be carefully monitored. It was agreed that it would be helpful if Councillors could see a suggested floor plan when one became available. Councillor C Pye reminded Councillors that if there was the intention to make any structural changes to the building (which was listed) then a dialogue with SODC would be necessary.

Councillor Mrs J Bland pointed out that she has never had a tour of the Town Hall and wondered if this could be arranged.

Action: Town Sergeant to escort Councillor Mrs J Bland on a guided tour at a mutually convenient date/time.

It was RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that

the HVIC is brought into the Town Hall

the Town Clerk talks to SODC regarding the scope of alterations that could be made.

initial absorption of the HVIC (inc staff) could be made in advance of any alterations to the buildings (on the assumption that staff are not unreasonably cramped)

all efforts should be made to maintain the ambience that existed when the HVIC was located in the Barn.

iii) TOWN CLERK - PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Town Clerk, having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest, together with the Committee Administrator, left the Council Chamber prior to the debate on this item.

A discussion took place on the Mayor's paper which addressed the Town Clerk's performance and related incremental review. The Committee endorsed the view of the Mayor that the Town Clerk's performance had been higher than satisfactory during the six month period.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the Town Clerk should progress from scale point 61 to scale point 62 in line with his contract.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Chairman

4.6.09