

**Present:** The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P Phillips  
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin  
Councillor M Akehurst  
Councillor S Gawrysiak (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor W Hamilton  
Councillor Miss L Hillier  
Councillor Ms L Meachin  
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith  
Councillor I Reissmann (Chair)

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

32. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies.

33. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith:

Min 35 – Progress Report (Northfield End) – personal (OCC Councillor)

Min 47 – Electoral Review – personal & prejudicial (OCC Councillor).

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin:

Min 37 – Grants — personal & prejudicial (President of the Town & Visitors Regatta).

Min 47 – Electoral Review – personal & prejudicial (SODC Councillor).

Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk:

Min 46 – Christmas arrangements – personal & prejudicial (staff member)

Mrs H King – Committee Administrator Clerk:

Min 46 – Christmas arrangements – personal & prejudicial (staff member)

34. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

None.

35. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 12 July 2011 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

36. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Northfield End

The Town Clerk explained that OCC had declined to have a meeting at this stage as no action was being taken at this present time. He also advised that documentation existed showing that the Town Council had a maintenance responsibility for the area of land outside Sydney House. The area had become overgrown and part had been tarmaced to provide a parking area which was clearly encroachment. The Parks Service would be instructed to clear the overgrowth but he felt that some dialogue needed to take place over the area now under tarmac.

A Member did state that OCC were aware of the situation but the issues associated with the Northfield End area were resource intensive and in the present climate this was not considered a priority. However, SODC were also aware of the situation and are advising any prospective house purchasers that the ownership of this area is currently used as private parking has been confirmed as highway by OCC. Councillor Nimmo-Smith undertook to examine the agreements in place from an OCC viewpoint to ensure that both Councils were aware of their responsibilities.

An extensive debate took place on the various options that could be taken to move the process forward.

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

that the remaining green area should be included in the Parks Service regular maintenance programme.

It was felt that issue of the tarmaced/parking area needed to be addressed and this could only be done effectively by having a constructive dialogue with OCC.

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

that the Town Clerk write to Steve Howell (Head of Transport) at OCC and request that a meeting is held with Town Councillors to produce an option plan as to exactly what steps can be taken to resolve the outstanding issues, their likely impact and timescales. The letter should also request confirmation that OCC has informed all the relevant land owners and parking space owners of the overall situation. The letter would ask for a response within one month.

Councillors would be circulated a copy of any response received so that if a meeting was scheduled a decision on attendees could be made at the earliest opportunity.

Corporate Plan

Although no date had yet been set for Councillors to meet and construct the foundation of the Plan, it was agreed that the document should contain a medium term financial budget.

37. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring

The report was examined but no material comments were made.

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

ii) Investment Performance

It was noted that investments at 31 August 2011 stood at just over £4m but there had been a great deal of volatility in the stock market since that time.

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

iii) List of payments

Members had before them the List of payments, copy having being issued. No queries or comments were made on the contents.

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

38. **GRANTS**

It was generally felt that Council grants should not be considered as 'automatic' and the organisations applying for grants should be encouraged to help themselves more. This could involve better or more extensive marketing. In addition, it was important that applications should show a clear community involvement. It was also suggested that some of the events/activities i.e. May Fair next year could be combined with the Jubilee celebrations planned for 2012. The Rotary Club should be encouraged to liaise with the appropriate event organisers (both Council and non-Council) and explore whether the event should go ahead in the same format as previous years or should be adapted in view of other planned celebrations.

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin left the room for the discussion on the application from the Town & Visitors Regatta.

After examination of each application:

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the following grants be awarded:

- Henley-on-Thames Round Table      £500
- Henley Women's Regatta              £500
- Berks MS Therapy Centre            £600
- Henley & District Organ Trust        £200
- Mind in Henley                         £265 (free use)  
(Although this organisation has asked for a cash grant, the committee felt that offering free use of the Old Fire Station Gallery to hang the work was more appropriate)
- Rotary Club (Henley-on-Thames)    £210.60 (free use)
- Town & Visitors Regatta              £130 (free use)
- AFC Henley                                £66.15 (free use)

Total £2,471.75. Consequently, £1,805 remains in the budget for consideration of applications in the February tranche.

39. **2012-13 DRAFT BUDGET**

The HTC Accountant introduced the paper and explained that the Value for Money & Resources Group had reviewed the draft budget and proposed the high level guidelines. The Town Clerk explained that a certain number of assumptions had to be made including the levels of RPI and staff pay increase to enable relevant figures to be calculated. It would be for the individual standing committees to examine their respective budgets in detail and put forward any resulting proposals. The FS&M Committee would have overall sight of the budget and make the final recommendation to Council. It was noted that the VFM Group had also suggested no increase in the precept.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the notes of the meeting on 8 September were noted.

The Chairman expressed his unease (and was supported by others) that the VFM Group had acted outside its remit when recommending that there was no increase in the precept. It was also felt that all future discussions concerning the wider principles of the budget and associated strategy should be considered by Committee to enable greater input from Councillors. It was agreed that the role of the VFM would need to be re-examined.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that assumptions to be used for the construction of the draft budget should include -

- the figure of 5% should be used as the inflation figure. (This figure represented an average of the current RPI and CPI figures.)
- no national pay award for staff \*
- that the level of the precept would be discussed at the next FS&M Committee meeting.

(\* A discussion took place on this point and it was noted that there was limited scope for the Council to control this aspect as the 'Green Book', yet unpublished for 2012-13, would reflect government policy on pay awards. However, it was not unreasonable to expect a zero increase would result.)

It was also noted that a meeting was currently being arranged with the Investment Managers. The original intention was that they would present to the VFM Group. However, this too was felt to be outwith the VFM remit.

In view of the extended debate on the overall value and remit of the Value for Money & Resources Group, it was agreed that its continued existence should be reviewed in 6 months time.

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

the HTC Accountant contact the Investment Managers and ask them to present at the next FS&M meeting on 8 November.

40. **COUNCIL FEES & CHARGES 2012-13**

A typo was noticed in bullet points a) and b) of the report - the figure of 10% should have read 5%. The meeting noted the recommendations for the pricing structure. As far as the Town Hall was concerned, it was not easy to make a realistic price comparison with a similar venue due to its uniqueness. However, an attempt was made a few years ago for all the buildings/rooms the Council hires out and the prices used were felt to be appropriate.

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

that the revised fees and charges as specified in the report be accepted.

Councillor W Hamilton abstained from the vote.

41. **IT WORKING GROUP – WEBSITE REDESIGN**

The meeting reviewed the notes of the Working Group held on 4 July. It was felt to be unfortunate that one of the Companies originally interested decided not to pursue their quotation and attend a presentation. This meant that the choice was limited to only one of two companies. Following the presentations there was a clear favourite.

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

that InTouch With Communities is the preferred supplier to undertake the redesign of the HTC website and;

further negotiations with InTouch should be made to reduce the optional one-off charges quoted in their proposal.

42. **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

One member objected to the wording of para. 3.3 in the report which dealt with the political balance of the just quorate VFM Group held on 8 September as she felt it was unnecessarily negative.

A debate followed on the benefits of allowing substitute members. On one hand it was important that scheduled meetings went ahead and were always quorate and having substitute members would ensure that this was the case. However, there was also a need to maintain the continuity of attendees which was especially important when Groups (other than Standing Committees) were involved in project work. On balance it was felt that allowing substitute members would be of benefit.

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

that the Committee recommends to Full Council the appointment of substitute members to any Committee, Sub-Committee, Working Group, Panel, Advisory Committee, or Forum and adopts the proposed changes to Standing Orders.

43. **EMPLOYMENT LAW, HR AND HEALTH & SAFETY SUPPORT**

The Town Clerk explained the benefit of renewing the Ellis Whittam contract at this early stage and the saving that would result. The meeting was in agreement.

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

that the Council extends the contract with Ellis Whittam for a further two years until 2014 on the terms set out in the report.

44. **MINERALS PLAN AND WASTE PLAN CONSULTATION 2011**

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith updated the meeting and explained that the intended waste facility in the vicinity would be designed for commercial not residential waste.

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

that the report be noted.

45. **GILLOTTS - CONSULTATION ON ACADEMY STATUS**

The meeting reviewed the letter from the Chair of Governors of Gillotts School. The meeting was advised that OCC were in support of the Academy status application from the school and it was envisaged that if successful would assist with the school's re-building projects. Some concern was expressed that the character and/or direction of the school may change depending on the extent of any private funding source.

The response to the consultation is due by 14 October which is in advance of Full Council. Under delegated powers, the Town Clerk was authorised to respond to the consultation on the lines agreed.

It was **RESOLVED**

that HTC supports the application for Academy Status as long as Gillotts does not plan to change its policies as stated by them in the 3 bullet points on pay and conditions, and admissions policy.

46. **MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE**

The Town Clerk explained that the allowance was paid in two instalments. The Local Government Act detailed the responsibilities associated with the allowance and the type of expenditure that could be incurred. He also confirmed that receipts for expenditure needed to be retained. Separate budgets existed for Mayor Making and Remembrance. It was widely recognised that the cost of fulfilling the role of Mayor nearly always exceeded the level of allowance granted.

As the allowance had remained at the same level for the last 5 years, the meeting agreed that an increase was acceptable.

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

that the Mayor's allowance is increased to £6,500pa from May 2012.

47. **CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS 2011**

A short discussion took place on the arrangements that would apply over the Christmas period.

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

that the Town Hall is closed from Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> December 2011 through to Friday 30<sup>th</sup> 2011, 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 who do not normally work on these days are not granted any additional compensatory leave.

that staff required to provide cover during the normal working hours of 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011 i.e. Park Services and Wardens be granted time off in lieu on a straight one for one basis..

that the Council makes a contribution of £450 towards the staff Christmas team building event.

48. **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF OXFORDSHIRE**

The meeting agreed that the draft recommendations put forward by the Boundary Commission would make life more difficult for Councillors as larger wards would mean a greater number of towns/villages to cover with the associated increase in travelling time.

The deadline to provide a response to the Boundary Commission is 10 October which is in advance of Full Council. Under delegated powers, the Town Clerk was authorised to respond to the consultation on the lines agreed.

It was **RESOLVED**

that the Town Clerk writes to the Boundary Commission objecting to the proposed changes.

49. **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 27 SEPTEMBER 2011.**

50. **CONFIDENTIAL**

**i) LEGAL UPDATE**

The meeting reviewed the report and made the following comments:

Leaver Road

The Town Clerk explained that this issue was still on-going. He was in the process of re-drafting the letter to ensure that the correct tone was achieved.

It was **RESOLVED** that the legal update report be noted.

**ii) TOWN HALL BASEMENT VENTILATION**

Monsons had completed their assessment of the tenders and made a recommendation which had formed the basis of the report. The Town Clerk confirmed the existing budget stood at only £8,600. The shortfall would be met by the projected underspend under programme maintenance (possibly the pavement (ley)lights).

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

that the supplier specified in the Conclusion of the Monson' tender appraisal, whose quote appeared to offer the best value, should be engaged to carry out the work.

The meeting closed at 22.05 pm.

Chairman  
28.9.11