

Present: The Mayor Councillor Mrs J Wood
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor C Pye
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor Mrs G Dodds
Councillor A Follett (Chairman)
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor I Reissmann (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Dr B Wood

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

123. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dr P Skolar and Councillor C W Gibson.

124. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Nimmo-Smith – Min 129 – Progress Report (Northfield End) – personal – (OCC Councillor). Councillor Mrs G Dodds – Min 127 (Youth Centre) – trustee – personal & prejudicial. Councillor Dr Wood - Min 127 (Youth Centre) – Town Council representative – personal & prejudicial. Councillor Mrs J Wood - Min 127 (Youth Centre) – Town Council representative – personal & prejudicial.

125. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

Councillor Mrs G Dodds (192 Greys Road)

It was pointed out that the Council had been generous over the years towards the elderly of the town with their support of the Day Centre with OCC providing the funding for the Youth Centre. The OCC funding is to be withdrawn and she would like to see the Council's generosity extended to the youth of the town. She highlighted the fact that Sonning Common Parish Council was supporting its youth centre to the value of £4k/year and would like Henley to support its own to the value of £10k/year.

Mr O Makower (Bishoplands, Dunsden)

Mr Makower stated that the Youth Centre had never been busier with c50 people attending on the nights the club was open. The club undertook marvellous work and was about to launch its advert for a training café. There was also the hope that the club will open 3 nights a week instead of the 2 at present. He very much hoped that the Council would provide support for the Centre. He did point out that the Centre would not pursue their legal case

despite a legitimate contract being in place. OCC had advised that the cuts made were not short-term and funding would not be re-instated.

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin (20 Nicholas Road)

The comment was made that the freehold of the Centre was wholly owned by Thamesfield Youth Association and was therefore 'safe'. Speaking as an administrator and trustee she pointed out the high level of voluntary commitment that the Centre relies on. However, funds were needed to pay for a youth worker and therefore an ongoing commitment from the Council was needed.

Councillor Dr B Wood (41 Blandy Road)

Councillor Wood felt that it would be more sensible for the Council to pay £10k in 2011-12 and then review the situation as he believed that the Centre only having one main sponsor was not ideal and the sponsor base should be broadened as much as possible. It would be of benefit to see the OCC plan and how youth services across the county would be affected. He did not think that the Council should be viewed as a surrogate OCC. In addition, there may be the opportunity for the Centre and NOMAD to co-operate more closely to deliver youth services.

126. **VARIATION TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Considering the level of public attendance at the meeting, the Chairman proposed and it was **RESOLVED**

that the order of business should be changed so that the public could hear the debate on the Youth Centre at the start of the meeting.

Councillors Mrs G Dodds, Mrs J Wood and Dr Wood having previously declared their personal and prejudicial interests left the meeting for this item.

127. **YOUTH CENTRE**

The meeting was disappointed with OCC on their stance over the funding of the Centre which was seen as a valuable asset for the town and should remain operational for the foreseeable future.

A question was raised as to where in the budget the funds would be found if the support from the Council was agreed. The Town Clerk confirmed that the £20k contingency fund in 2011-12 would carry the cost.

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

the Council makes a £10k contribution to the Youth Centre in 2011-12 to be paid in two tranches. A licence to be set up to ensure that £10k will be payable to the Centre in the following two years (2012-13 and 2013-14). A separate line to be created in 2012-13 budget to show the expenditure.

Councillors Mrs G Dodds, Mrs J Wood and Dr Wood re-joined the meeting.

128. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 25 January 2011 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

129. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

Northfield End

It was reported that the subject was due to be discussed at the OCC Cabinet meeting later this month but this will no longer happen because HTC had exercised their right of veto.

Basement ventilation

It was reported that the Town Clerk will be meeting with Charles Taylor (Monson) to refine the specification against which the contractors can re-quote.

Review of Polling Districts and Places

A member was disappointed with the content of the e-mail sent by David Buckle as it failed to justify why the decision had been made and also failed to address the difficulties experienced with the count being held centrally. He felt it was a bad move for democracy. The Town Clerk advised that an update on this subject had been included in his latest newsletter.

130. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

There were no comments on the papers supplied.

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

ii) Investment Performance Update

The latest performance was reviewed without comment.

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

iii) Monthly 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 noted.

131. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

It was pointed out that the papers made no reference to the HTC website which should be considered a valuable tool for communicating with the public and it was disappointing that it was not exploited better. The Town Clerk explained that the Council needed to develop 2 way communication to enable it to engage with the public and this issue should form part of the Corporate Plan developed by the in-coming Council. It was suggested that the IT Group could play a role in this respect.

It was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** that the report be received and noted and that the IT Group should reform to consider greater use of the website as a communication tool.

132. **INSURANCE**

The Accountant explained the background and content of the paper following a comment from a member stating it was difficult, from the figures quoted, to determine the premium for the following year. A decision was made 2 years ago by the Council to raise the policy excess to £200k as it was prepared to take the risk of partial self-insurance. This figure was now felt to be too high, a view that was supported by the insurance companies. A general debate took place on the various aspects of risk and exposure verses the size of the premium. A question was raised concerning the small print associated with the quotes and whether the three companies were quoting on a like for like basis. It was explained that all three companies had been given the current Zurich policy and asked to quote on the same provisions.

There was an option to extend the policies to take account of terrorism cover for an additional £2k/year premium. The meeting was unsure of the benefit of this option and asked the Accountant to investigate further through discussions with NALC and other local councils.

Action: HTC Accountant

A member requested her thanks be recorded for all the work previously undertaken by Councillor Dr Wood and Chris Whitehead (previous HTC Accountant) on the subject of insurance which had enabled the committee to look critically at this area over the past two years.

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

- the property excess be reduced from £200,000 to £25,000;
- the level of loss of revenue cover be increased to 24 months;
- the fidelity insurance cover be reduced to £500,000 once confirmation is received from both fund managers that 2 suitable signatures are required before any drawdown of investments can take place; and

regarding renewal/replacement of the current insurance contract:

- the HTC Accountant be authorised to proceed with negotiations with WPS;
- the HTC Accountant be authorised to give the required 30 days' notice of termination to Zurich immediately upon Full Council's approval of this recommendation; and
- The HTC Accountant be authorised to further investigate terrorism cover and present a further report on this peril.

133. **INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW**

It was confirmed by the HTC Accountant that a saving would be made on audit fees due to the reduced requirement for detailed external audit work. The meeting did note that hiring of the Town Hall rooms continued to be a manual

process with entries being handwritten in a diary. Obviously there was scope for reviewing the system to make it more secure and robust.

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

the internal auditor's findings be received and noted and that the HTC Accountant's responses be supported and the actions that have been taken in response to the auditor's findings be adopted.

134. **GRANTS**

Each of the grant applications were reviewed and discussed.

There was considerable discussion on how the free-use applications should appear in the accounts. Despite not charging for hire of a Council room, this did represent a real cost as it denied other fee-paying customers the chance to rent the venue. As such it was proper that the cost element be recorded under the grants budget. The current application from the Literary Festival would absorb most of the remaining budget. The meeting was keen to support the Festival and asked the Town Clerk to open discussions with the Festival organisers to see exactly what their requirement was, whether there was the opportunity to examine the hire fees for this large block booking and the scale of payments made for other venues elsewhere in the town. The balance of the grants budget, after consideration of all other applications, would be awarded to the Festival.

Action: Town Clerk

It was suggested that the budget for future years should be a separate line for the cost of free-use applications.

Action: HTC Accountant to investigate feasibility.

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

• South Oxfordshire Mencap	£500
• St Mary's Church	£500
• Sue Ryder – Nettlebed	£250
• Rotary Club (of Henley Bridge)	£189 (free use)
• Henley Regatta for the Disabled	£300
• Henley Literary Festival	<u>£643</u> (free use)
Total =	£2,382

Applications from the following organisations were unsuccessful:

- Ryder Cheshire Volunteers
- Vitalise

135. **ASTROPITCH**

An opinion was expressed that it was disappointing that the Council had not made provision over the last 10 years for the pitch replacement costs. The Town Clerk explained that it was unlikely that the project could be funded from borrowing as the Council did not meet the necessary criteria and the expense would need to be met from capital reserves. A grant application would be made to the CIF fund but the Council needed to show how the balance of the cost would be financed. However, it should be noted that there was no guarantee

that the application would be successful. It was suggested that another funding organisation (TOE) also be approached.

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

- The loan repayment of £18,250 from Henley Cricket Club be applied towards the project;
- Up to £53,250 to be drawn down from the Capital Reserves (investments) to meet the shortfall in funding the project;
- Applications for additional grant funding, e.g. British Hockey Association continue to be explored;
- Other opportunities continue to be explored including negotiating an extended management arrangement with the current provider and revising the management fee in return for their capital investment in the project if the grant application is unsuccessful;
- A 'sinking fund' be set up to cover future replacement costs.

136. **EARMARKED RESERVE FOR BUILDINGS MAINTENANCE**

The report gave details of the planned buildings maintenance budget for 2010-11, the schemes completed. The under/overspend against each project and the balance to be carried forward. Members were also invited to approve the programme of work for 2011-12.

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

the progress made and the favourable under-spend on Council properties in 2010/11 be noted;

the carry forward of the accumulated under-spend of £19,387 (subject to finalisation) for use against future unplanned maintenance works be approved; and

the planned maintenance budget for 2011-12 be approved.

137. **DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

The Town Clerk talked through the paper which was an expanded version of the one reviewed by the previous meeting. He explained that it was impossible to cover every eventuality but believed the document contained sufficient detail. He was congratulated on the amount of work that had obviously been undertaken on the subject.

It was confirmed that sub-committees did have their own terms of reference and it was agreed that this should be an agenda item for each of their next meetings.

Action: Committee Administrators.

There was a great deal of debate on the subject as it was felt that granting delegated authority could be a "bulldozer's charter" and decisions could be made on budgets without reference to FS&M and/or Full Council. The Town Clerk re-iterated the fact that all controversial items and decisions with a

financial implication in excess of £5k would automatically be referred to Full Council

In addition, the following comments were made on the paper:

3.10 9th bullet point. The reference to “all” was too restrictive and should be amended to include the acceptability of up to 2 dissenting councillors and the inclusion of substitutes.

3.10 10th bullet point. The paper should make clear that the minutes of any meeting must clearly state that the decision has been taken under delegated authority and the reasons why.

It was unclear whether some of the bullet points should be read with an and/or after each and the Town Clerk was asked to carry out small re-writes to improve clarity and understanding. It was confirmed that the revised Standing Order would be submitted to both Committee and Full Council.

It was proposed that:

the Council adopts a scheme of delegation (subject to the bullet point amendments above) to committees, sub committees and working groups as set out in the report and makes the necessary changes to Standing Order 17 Delegation of Authority to Committees to accommodate this change in policy. The scheme to be reviewed 6 months after adoption.

A recorded vote was requested:

For

Councillor G Dodds
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor A Follett
Councillor I Reissmann
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
Councillor C Pye
Councillor Mrs J Wood

Against

Councillor Dr B Wood

The motion was carried, whereupon

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

the Council adopts a scheme of delegation (subject to the bullet point amendments above) to committees, sub committees and working groups as set out in the report and makes the necessary changes to Standing Order 17 Delegation of Authority to Committees to accommodate this change in policy. The scheme to be reviewed 6 months after adoption.

138. **ESTATE INSPECTIONS**

The Town Clerk explained that the second round of inspections had been completed and now that the land registration exercise had been completed there was a reduced risk of adverse possession. However, inspecting the Council’s estate was still a very worthwhile exercise and the meeting agreed that extending the remit of the inspections was a positive move.

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

- the new scheme of inspections be instituted from June 2011 (when the new Council is in place).
- the FS&M Committee administrator reallocates areas if there is a change of Councillors following the election and issues a new set of guidance notes (and associated form) to all Councillors prior to the start of the 2011 inspections.

139. **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF OXFORDSHIRE**

A member wondered whether the Boundary Commission was right to undertake a review of OCC when the district council will be carrying out a review in two years time. It may have been better to review from the bottom up rather than top down. It was hoped that the review of both councils would maintain the co-terminous ward boundaries.

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

the comments supplied by Councillors be reported to the Boundary Commission.

140. **SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES**

The e-mail from OCC on this consultation was received inviting Councillors to comment on the services provided by the County Council.

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

any comments that Councillors may have (based on the questionnaire supplied) should be forwarded to the Chairman (or Town Clerk) for presentation at Full Council on 29 March.

141. **PAST MAYORS BADGE**

This item had come back to committee at the request of the Mayor. There were differing views on whether tax payers money should be spent funding the one-off cost of the die, leaving individual councillors to pay for their own badges. A view was expressed that, during these difficult economic times, the Council should not be incurring this expenditure while others felt it represented a 'thank you' for all the efforts made by the Mayor on behalf of the town. On the casting vote of the Chairman

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

no council money should be put towards the past mayor's badge and any past mayors who wish to have a badge should decide how and which option they wish to pursue.

142. **EXTENSION OF MEETING**

In accordance with Standing Orders 5 (xxvi) the Chairman proposed to extend the meeting until after 10pm. Councillors were in agreement.

143. **OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ACTION (OCVA)**

Councillor Dr B Wood introduced his paper submitted on the subject. He believed that it was important to encourage those who are likely to volunteer

and match them with services looking for assistance and to discuss the issues associated with the subject. It was agreed that running a Fair would help the process. As it would be a Council initiative, then there would be no 'free use'/charging issues associated with holding the event in the Council's building. It was confirmed that no financial support would be forthcoming.

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

- the Council sponsors the initiative;
- as promoter, provides free use of the Large Hall for a maximum of 2 events;
- the involvement of the Office Administrators for organising invitations be approved.

MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 MARCH 2011.

144. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) LEGAL UPDATE

The report giving an update of the legal issues was noted.

ii) ROWING CLUB - RENT REVIEW

A letter from the Rowing Club had been received which gave agreement to the 16% uplift in the rent that had been discussed at their previous meeting with the Town Clerk.

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

A revised rent of £6,960pa for the next 5 years be approved and that the Rent Review Monitoring System is updated accordingly.

iii) 36 MARKET PLACE

A brief discussion took place on the acceptable level of rent increase to be applied.

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

- an increase representing the current inflation rate (4.5%) be applied from 1 April and the tenant advised accordingly.
- the rent is reviewed again in 2013.
- the Rent Review Monitoring System be updated to reflect the new figure

iv) LEAVER ROAD

Further communications have been received from the Council's solicitor on the subject. In view of this, it was decided to defer the item to the next meeting when an update could be provided.

v) STAFF APPRAISALS

Members had before them a summary of all staff employed by Henley Town Council as at March 2011, their designation, completed years of service, their spinal column range and spinal column point as at April 2010. The Town Clerk updated the meeting with the results of the staff appraisals and confirmed that provision had been made in the 2011/12 budget for incremental increases from 1 April 2011. In response to a Member's question, the Clerk confirmed that there would be no cost of living increase again this year.

It was acknowledged that staff who had not yet reached the top of their scale were contractually entitled to an additional increment on completion of a satisfactory appraisal. The Committee also considered the award of additional merit increments to two members of staff who had reached the top of their range in 2010 having regard to their outstanding performance throughout the year.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that

the report and summary of staff employed by the Council as at March 2011 be received and noted;

in recognition of completing a satisfactory appraisal those members of staff not yet on the top of their salary scale be advanced to the next appropriate spinal column point within their range and paid the appropriate increase in salary from 1 April 2011; and

an additional merit increment be awarded to H King and J Smith in recognition of their outstanding performance during 2010-11.

The Town Clerk left the meeting at 10.20pm

The Mayor reviewed her appraisal session with the Town Clerk. In summary this appraisal was good and therefore she proposed to recommend that the Town Clerk's salary be increased to SCP 64 as documented in the agenda report on staff pay. This motion was seconded by the Chairman and was unanimously agreed by members and

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the Town Clerk's progression of one incremental point within his salary range SCP 61-64 to spinal column point 64, following his annual appraisal by the Mayor, be awarded;

The meeting closed at 10.25pm.

Chairman
9.3.11