

**Present:** The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin  
The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mrs J Wood  
Councillor Mrs G Dodds  
Councillor A Follett (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Miss L Hiller  
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith  
Councillor C Pye  
Councillor Dr P Skolar  
Councillor Dr B G Wood (Chair)

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

43. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs J Bland.

44. **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 Mrs G Dodds – Min 54 Legal Update (Headway/Brunner Hall) – personal & prejudicial – trustee of TYA.

Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin – Min 54 Legal Update (Headway/Brunner Hall) – personal & prejudicial – employee of TYA.

Councillor Miss L Hillier – Min 54iii) 2010–11 Budget – personal & prejudicial – shop owner.

Councillor Dr P Skolar – Min 54iii) Moorings – personal – boat owner

45. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee held on 15 September 2009 were received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman, Councillor Dr B Wood save for the following amendment:

The wording in recommendation 40 (iii) was changed to:

‘HTC formally requests using its authority under Section 130, subsection 6 of the Highways Act 1980 for all of the land outlined in the attached and that OCC as the Highways Authority justify its behaviour in not managing this land at Northfield End as publicly maintained highway.’

*Councillor C Pye entered the meeting at 19.35*

46. **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

HTC Estate Inspections

It was noted that 10 of the 16 inspections had been carried out with a further 4 areas scheduled. The two remaining areas, which were the responsibility of Councillor Miss L Hillier and Councillor Nimmo-Smith, were still outstanding. The Chairman urged that these areas be inspected within the following two weeks.

Northfield End

Councillor Nimmo-Smith reported that he had seen a copy of the papers that were to be sent to OCC in support of HTC’s assertion that the land in question was publically maintainable highway. However, he felt that the documentation was not comprehensive and may not add weight to the case. The Town Clerk understood that these were all the papers Councillor Reissmann had supplied.

47. **FINANCE**

i) Budget Monitoring Report

The Chairman drew the meeting’s attention to (and was pleased to note) the ‘2009-10 Expected Outturn’ figure which showed a projected surplus of £47k.

Councillor Mrs Dodds pointed out that one of the major variances was due to receipts at the Mill Meadows car park. She opined that this was not solely due to the better weather but was, in a large part, due to better monitoring and the staff should be congratulated for their efforts.

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

ii) Investment performance Update

Members had before them the Investment Performance Update report for the period 1 April – 31 August 2009, copy having being issued.

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

iii) Investment Managers meeting

Councillor Follett pointed out that he too attended the meeting with the Investment Managers but this had not been recorded in the notes.

Councillor Dr Skolar hoped that the Investment Managers would be held to their objective of providing £160k worth of income in the next financial year.

Councillor Dr Wood reported that the Investment Managers had been affronted by the article in the Henley Standard which intimated that the Council had 'lost' £1m. The inference was that the loss of capital was for reason other than the global stock market fall. Councillor Dr Wood said the article constituted inaccurate reporting and he hoped the Henley Standard would be more responsible in future.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

iv) List of payments/Supplier costs

Payments:

Members had before them the List of payments, copy having being issued.

Councillor Hillier questioned the entries on the purchase and hire of axle stands and requested an explanation of the Accountant.

*Secretary's note: Parks Service Supervisor has confirmed that an axle stand was hired to see if it would serve as a prop at the skateboard park for a piece of equipment. As it proved successful, it was then purchased.*

Supplier costs:

Councillor Hillier pointed out that the list supplied was not solely a list of suppliers and it also contained items such as Councillors' expenses. Councillor Mrs Wood explained that to achieve complete separation of the different categories would entail further computer software therefore incurring additional resource. It was felt that the list could be re-titled to provide greater clarity.

*Action: Accts Asst to reconsider the headings (and entries) and amend this accordingly.*

Councillor Dr Skolar checked the mileage rate being claimed by Councillors and pointed out at its current level would be subject to income tax. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Accountant makes a return to HMRC detailing all taxable benefits.

Councillor Dr Wood stated that it was interesting and surprising to see just how many small suppliers the Council dealt with.

It was RESOLVED that the reports be received and approved.

48. **STRATEGIC RISK REVIEW**

The Town Clerk explained the background to the paper and was pleased to report that the overall risk had been lowered (from 2c: likelihood – likely, impact – medium to 3d: likelihood – moderate, impact – low). However, it was agreed that the document should continue to be reviewed on a regular basis. Councillor Nimmo-Smith thought that those areas carrying the highest risk for the Council should be reviewed more regularly. Councillor Dr Skolar expressed his thanks to the Town Clerk for the work he had done on the risk strategy.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the document be reviewed and updated in May/June 2010 with the appropriate report being submitted to the Finance Strategy & Management Committee.

49. **UTILITIES**

The meeting noted the content of the report. Councillor Follett highlighted the high cost of electricity at the Pavilion. Councillor Mrs Wood said there were often bigger savings to be obtained if the utilities (gas & electricity) were with one supplier and under one contract.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Accounts Assistant was monitoring the present contracts and would make all necessary contacts/arrangements.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

50. **CCTV**

Meeting notes: The Town Clerk précised the notes and confirmed that a lower charge than had originally been requested from SODC had been achieved (producing a saving of £1.2k). Councillor Dr Wood advised the meeting that the full cost of the 3 Mill Meadows cameras (amounting to £9,465) was met by Henley Town Council.

It was RESOLVED that the meeting report be noted.

Camera removal: The meeting debated whether it was beneficial (on cost grounds) to remove one of the cameras at Mill Meadows. Helen Green (SODC) had reported that camera 115, which focussed mainly on the bandstand, was least effective in detecting serious crime. Turning off this camera would save £3k every year.

Councillor Mrs Dodds was against the idea on the grounds that the bandstand was a popular meeting place for youngsters and parents felt more secure in the knowledge that their children were congregating in a place which was monitored by a camera. It was agreed that no decision regarding camera 115 would be made at this stage.

Councillor Nimmo-Smith pointed out that camera 116 overlooks the River and Rowing Museum. As the Council is effectively providing additional security for the Museum then a contribution to the cost could be sought.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the River and Rowing Museum is approached to discuss a financial contribution towards the CCTV costs.

Councillor Hillier suggested that a camera at the Makins Recreation Ground would be beneficial. However, this was an issue that was investigated a number of years ago and was found to be prohibitively expensive. This should not preclude a follow-up enquiry to ascertain the current cost.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the cost of a stand-alone CCTV camera for the Makins Recreation Ground be obtained.

51. **SODC STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT REVIEW**

The meeting had no comment to make regarding the draft letter from SODC Planning Services.

It was RESOLVED that the correspondence be noted.

52. **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3**

Councillor Follett introduced his paper on the subject and the accompanying OCC papers which classified Henley as a 'Market Town'. He confirmed that this was a long term project and the Council's involvement was at an early stage but wanted to collect input from all Councillors so that a paper could be presented at the next FS&M meeting. It was important that the needs of Henley were fully recognised by the Transport Plan. It also needed to be recognised that the Town has to have an integrated approach which dovetails with the aspirations/intentions of the Councils it borders.

Councillor Follett suggested that the most productive way forward would be to set up a sub-committee reporting to the Finance Strategy & Management Committee. In this way he would be able to request and collate Councillors' comments and provide an agreed document to the main Committee. (Councillor Dr Skolar suggested it may be worth asking a representative from the police to attend as and when necessary.)

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that an LPT3 sub-committee be formed comprising:  
Councillor Follett  
Councillor Nimmo-Smith  
Councillor Dr Wood

Councillor Dr Skolar advised that all central Government funds had been committed until 2018 so it was unlikely that any new projects would be funded until after that date.

53. **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.

54. **MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2009.**

**i) LEGAL UPDATE**

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

Bath Site

Blandy & Blandy has reviewed the draft lease and provided answers to the questions previously raised by the HTC Legal Group. Process is continuing and the final version of the lease will be referred back to the FS&M Committee.

Headway

Following the results of the youth survey, the trustees of the Thamesfield Youth Association will be holding a meeting, the results of which will be conveyed to the Council.

**ii) VALUE FOR MONEY WORKING PARTY**

Councillor Miss Hillier left the room for this item.

Licences: Councillor Mrs Hodgkin remarked that the £500 increase in the Market Place licences seemed rather high and that if the Council were to charge such high fees then the licence holders may reasonably ask for something to be 'put back' for their benefit in the way of facilities.

Utility consultants: Councillor Mrs Dodds had been in discussion with the Dept of Construction at Reading University who had advised that they had a couple of MSc students who would be capable of carrying out the energy surveys required by the Council. Although the students were still unqualified, the inspections would be carried out at no cost. She believed that before engaging NIFES it would be sensible to gather some additional information from Reading University to determine if the students in question could fulfil the necessary requirements.

The Town Clerk pointed out that the Town Hall still required a Display Energy Certificate from a licensed assessor and the students may not be able to provide this. Consequently, costs would still be incurred.

It was RESOLVED that the notes be accepted;

and that Councillor Dodds obtains the necessary information from Reading University to update Councillors at the next Finance Strategy & Management Committee.

**iii) 2010-11 BUDGET**

Budget: Councillor B Wood introduced the budget paper, paying particular attention to the summary sheet. He highlighted the £60k allocated to building maintenance/refurbishment and the £50k allocated for the Parks

Department Staffing. These figures had been included following the Accountant's paper submitted to the September meeting. Referring to the £60k allocated to building maintenance/refurbishment, Councillor Wood confirmed that if the full amount was not utilised, then the balance could be used a contingency fund to cover unexpected liabilities.

Councillor Dr Skolar suggested that the Council may wish to consider moving away from annual budgets and take on a longer term (4-5 year) plan. This concept had been employed in the NHS and has been more successful than the previous annual budgeting cycles.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the 1<sup>st</sup> draft budget was accepted and that the VFM Committee considers the introduction of long term budgeting

Budget timetable:

Councillor Dr Wood explained how the timetable fitted in with the Committee meeting schedule which would result in the final budget being agreed at Full Council on 8 December. He requested that the Accountant ensures that each Committee received their relevant budget sheets for inclusion on the respective agendas.

*Action: HTC Accountant*

If the total capital requirement (from all the Committees) breaches the £80k limit then FS&M will need to review the individual requirements and make necessary adjustments.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND

that the timetable be accepted.

**iv) HENLEY TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB**

The meeting reviewed a letter from HTFC and agreed that it had been recognised for quite some time that the Club had been experiencing financial difficulties. It was hoped that the football partnership with the YMCA and AFC Henley would bring some positive results. It was also felt that a meeting should be arranged in the New Year with the Club to review their situation and address opportunities for increasing income along the lines of fund raising, making better use of Club facilities and possibly sharing facilities/grounds.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the loan repayments be deferred until the end of the football season in 2010 to allow the Club time to rebuild its finances during its most profitable period;

that the rent review be delayed until September 2010; and the HTC accountant organises 6 monthly meetings with the Club in order for their finances to be monitored in protection of Council revenue; the meeting to take place in the New Year.

**v) STAFFING**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report on a number of staffing issues:

- a) The HTC Accountant had resigned and was leaving on 31 December. The post had been advertised internally with a pay scale of 43 – 47. It was hoped that the successful applicant will be working 23 hours/week. Interviews will take place w/c 26 October. The Clerk added that if the post is filled internally then a vacancy would arise. The post of Accounts Assistant would be advertised externally on a pay scale 25-28 increasing the number of hours from 20 to 30 hours/week.

It was RESOLVED that

the arrangements for the recruitment of the position of Accountant on the terms set out above be approved and that Councillors Dr Wood, Follett and Hodgkin be appointed to an appointments panel; and

that if the position is filled internally, the post of Accounts Assistant be advertised on the terms set out above.

- b) The Clerk reported the appointment of a part-time Committee Administrator for the Recreation & Amenities Committee. The appointment commenced on 14 September and benefitted from a comprehensive 2 week handover.
- c) The Visitor Information Centre staff had joined the Council with effect from 1 October on the same terms and conditions as those with French Jones.
- d) The Town Clerk circulated a confidential report concerning the pay scales of the Council's two part time cleaners. An increase in the hourly rate of pay was being recommended to align their salaries with one of the nationally agreed spine column points in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Council Employees

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the Council assimilates the hourly rate of pay of the two part time cleaners to Spinal Column point 11, £14,733 from 1 October 2009

- e) The Town Clerk apprised Members on his progress on the Parks Service Review report. It was agreed that this report needed to be reviewed and discussed by all Councillors at a single meeting rather than by the FS&M Committee followed by Full Council.

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

a Special meeting of Full Council be held (provisionally for 1 Dec) in confidential session to discuss the Parks Service Review.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Chairman  
22.10.09