

HENLEY-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE RECONVENED
MEETING OF THE FINANCE
STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 MARCH
2015 AT 8.20PM, COUNCIL
CHAMBER, TOWN HALL,
HENLEY-ON-THAMES.

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

In attendance: Mr M W Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs P Price-Davies – Committee Administrator

100. **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 meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as matters which were about to be discussed would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

MINUTES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 MARCH 2015.

101. **CONFIDENTIAL**

i) 353-357 READING ROAD AND ADJOINING LAND

PRESENTATION BY NL PROPERTY

The Chairman suggested, and it was agreed, that the Property Developers (NL Property) should have the opportunity to give their presentation before the meeting considered the Town Clerk's Report at Agenda Item 2.i. The Property Developers, Mr Guy Harman (NL Property), Mrs Alison Knight (Alison Knight Consulting) and Mr Douglas Bond (Woolf Bond Planning) were introduced and invited to the table to give their presentation.

A hard copy of the short presentation (which had previously been emailed to all Committee Members) was circulated to all Members. Mr Harman outlined the formal proposal which had been made to the Council on 2 March 2015, setting up a joint venture between NL property and Henley Town Council (HTC) to redevelop 353-357 Reading Road in conjunction with relocating the on-site sport related tenants onto the adjacent playing fields. After outlining recent joint ventures that NL Property had undertaken, giving examples of various projects, he reiterated the importance of this proposal being a 'joint' venture rather than solely a Developer's project – making a positive contribution to the area. Stressing the point that they had a proven track record in working in partnership with organisations from both the public and private sectors, he introduced the team. Both Mrs Knight and Mr Bond gave a synopsis on their particular areas of expertise and then Mr Harman presented his report, highlighting the three main aims of the proposed joint venture as being:

1. Ensuring best value for the site to the benefit of HTC
2. Safeguarding the sport related occupiers and enable relocation into purpose built facilities on the playing fields and safeguarding the hairdressers within a new scheme. Seeking and advising on alternative premises for the private gym on or off-site.
3. Safeguard the rental income to HTC during the redevelopment proposal, taking away the property management costs and risks.

He then set out their three main proposals in ensuring that these aims were achieved as being:

1. Harnessing NL Property's skills and expertise to creating a scheme that represents best value for HTC and enabling them to remain in control throughout the planning process.
2. Ensuring that any planning applications are made on a joint basis, ensuring at all times that the various tenants and facilities are relocated.
3. NL Property will take on both the rental and property management liabilities by entering into a new 10 year lease, the terms of the lease will enable the proposed development of the site and the relocation of the existing occupiers to progress successfully. During this period NL Property will be paying the rent, therefore HTC will have a guaranteed income source.

The Team then took questions from Members, clarifying various points within the proposal and the suggested reconfiguration of the playing fields and relocation of the facilities and amenities currently housed at 357 Reading Road. It was suggested that a Working Group could be set-up to work in conjunction with their assigned professional team from the outset so that HTC were party to all decisions, ensuring that the development of the site was in the best interest of the residents and that it was a fully transparent process.

Members sought clarification that the redevelopment would conform to the Neighbourhood Plan and they were assured that NL Property was aware of the Plan and that their proposal complied with the framework laid out for the future development of the Henley area. They also emphasised the importance of nurturing relations with the current tenants within their working practice which Members felt was an important negotiation part of this development.

With regards to the schedule of the project, they confirmed that NL Property would be working towards delivery within the next 24 months so would aim to set up a Working party in June this year and had budgeted to fund all the planning applications within the redevelopment.

A Member questioned them on the percentage return to HTC on the value of the site currently and once it was developed. NL Property suggested a percentage return, outlining the complications within the site and the value of the consultation that they could bring to the partnership and utilise within the planning applications and the fact that they would carry any element of risk.

A Member enquired as to whether they had considered any undercrofting scheme at the Tesco Car Park as there was concern that the proposed drawings for the site represented a very tight layout. He was assured that this idea had been considered and that this drawing was just an initial rough drawing and would inevitably change as the project progressed.

There being no more questions, the Chairman thanked the Consultants for their proposal and presentation to the Committee and confirmed that HTC would be in touch in due course.

TOWN CLERK'S REPORT ON 357 READING ROAD AND ADJOINING LAND

The meeting next considered the Town Clerk's report on 357 Reading Road and Adjoining Land. Following the Council's previous resolution that the Town Clerk should seek professional advice from Planning Consultants, he gave a verbal update on his earlier meeting with Carter Jonas (Land Consultants) on the proposed scheme. They had suggested that the best option for the redevelopment of the site would be for HTC to secure a joint venture agreement. Members recognised that they did not have the specialised expertise in-house to ensure best value for the development and the town. Further debate on this issue ensued and it was agreed that a due diligence process should be followed and that the Town Clerk should have delegated powers to brief three Consultants so that they could tender for this role. It was

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the Town Clerk informally invites three Planning Consultants to submit a tender for this role, all bidders to include their pricing structure, and that interviews with the Consultants would then be held with the Working Group and their recommendations be put to the Finance, Strategy and Management Committee and then to Full Council.

Members then discussed the options and financial considerations as laid out in item 3.4. of the Town Clerk's report and the fact that the current lease on 357 Reading Road expires on 30 June 2015. The meeting was agreeable to the HTC assuming responsibility for management of the premises and allowing the existing sub tenants to continue in occupation with HTC being responsible for maintaining the fabric of the building and the tenants being responsible for the maintenance of the building. It was therefore,

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that

the Town Clerk be given delegated powers to negotiate a short term maintenance only year lease up to 5 years with the sub tenants that is renewable on a 12 month rolling contract, enabling the existing sub tenants to continue in occupation. The actual details of the responsibility would be left to Town Clerk's discretion to negotiate.

Mrs P Price-Davies left the meeting at 9.45 pm.

ii) STAFF APPRAISALS

Members had before them a summary of all staff employed by Henley-on-Thames Town Council as at April 2015, their designation, completed years of service, their spinal column range and spinal column point as at April 2014. The Town Clerk confirmed that provision had been made in the 2015/16 budget for incremental increases from 1 April 2015. 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 or better appraisal as set out in the Green Book and the contracts of employment for staff.

Following the resignation of the committee administrator/ Mayor's PA, the opportunity had been taken to reassess workloads in the office. The Town Clerk circulated details of the proposed restructure and following detailed consideration of this and the recommendations contained in the report, it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that

- (i) the report and summary of staff employed by the Council, their designation, completed years of service, their pay scale, their current spinal column point as at April 2014 and spinal column point from 1 April 2015, as set out in the attached schedule be noted;**
- (ii) in recognition of completing a satisfactory or better appraisal those members of staff not yet on the top of their pay scale shall receive one additional increment within their pay scale, the appropriate increase to be paid in their in salary from 1 April 2015;**
- (iii) in recognition of the Accountant undertaking the work of the Accounts Assistant for a continuous period of 5 weeks in addition to her own work a payment of £500 be made; and**
- (iv) the reorganisation of the committee section, resulting in savings to the Council of £4,100 as set out below be agreed from 1 April 2015:**
 - (a) the post of Committee Administrator (part-time) be renamed Recreation and Parks Administrator; the post be made up to full time; the existing salary range be increased by one increment to SCP 25-29; and the postholder be awarded one additional increment to SCP 29;**
 - (b) the post of Committee Administrator and Legal Assistant be renamed Finance and Legal Administrator within the existing salary range of SCP 25-31;**
 - (c) the post of Committee Administrator and Mayor's PA be deleted and a new post of Planning Administrator (part-time) be created within the salary range SCP 25-29;**
 - (d) the post of Committee Administrator and Events Co-ordinator be renamed Projects and Events Co-ordinator; the existing salary range be increased by one increment to SCP 25-29; and the postholder be awarded one increment in addition to (ii) above to SCP 29;**
 - (e) the post of Senior Committee Administrator be renamed Office and Projects Manager; the existing salary range be increased by one increment to SCP 33-37; and the postholder be awarded one additional increment to SCP 37.**

The meeting closed at 10.12pm.

Chairman