

OPEN SESSION: There was one member of the public present.

## **MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2004 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr N J Chard (Chairman)  
Cllr P Chambers  
Cllr N G R Clarke  
Cllr L C Ford  
Cllr N W Light  
Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine  
Cllr Mrs V A Sullivan  
Cllr B H Terry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk  
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk  
J D Heron, Chamber of Trade (for part of meeting)  
Keith Miller, Festive Decorations (for part of meeting)

### **F/3682 APOLOGIES**

Apoloiges for absence were received from Cllr M H Thierry.

### **F/3683 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Rippon-Swaine declared a prejudicial personal interest in F/3695 relating to 73 Christchurch Road as the applicants were close family friends. He left the room during discussion of this item.

### **F/3684 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2004, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

### **F/3685 CHRISTMAS LIGHTING**

Keith Miller of Festive Decorations explained that he had been asked by Nicki Wood, on behalf of the Chamber of Trade, to provide a quotation for Christmas lights in Ringwood. His original quotation to cover the whole town had been £21,000. However, due to budget limitations, this had been reduced to £5,000 and would provide for lights on the Christmas tree in the Market Square and illumination harness (strings of lights hung across the road) along the length of the High Street (from Wilde Sports to Friday's Cross). This decoration would be the same as that provided by the company in Wimborne.

The Council's budget of £2,500 for new lights had been match funded by the Chamber of Trade to give a total budget of £5,000. However, the Council still had the annual budget provision of £1,100 for Christmas lights, which had yet to be allocated.

Members felt it was important that Southampton Road should be included in the scheme and it was suggested that there should also be a "statement" display across the road where it meets Mansfield Road.

The Town Clerk suggested that Festive Decorations could erect the existing lights or provide new for Southampton Road. He had also asked Colin Harrison to indicate the extent of work he could undertake for £1,100, but had not yet received a response.

It was noted that the Town Council had previously agreed that it would not be prepared to own the lights. However, the Town Clerk said that it would be safe for the Town Council to enter into an agency agreement with the Chamber of Trade. Advantages of proceeding in this manner would be the saving of 17.5% VAT enabling more money to be spent on the lights and the lights could be hired or loaned out to other organisations such as the Festival and the Carnival.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That Christmas lights be acquired by the Town Council using the match funding of £2,500 allocated by the Council in its budget for new lights, with a contribution by the Chamber of Trade, subject to the Chamber of Trade entering into an Agency Agreement, for installation and operation of the lights each year at Christmas.
- 2) That the annual budget provision of £1,100 be used towards a scheme for Southampton Road.
- 3) That the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, and the Chamber of Trade, be authorised to liaise with Festive Decorations on the details of the final scheme.
- 4) That a press release be issued outlining the joint initiative between the Chamber of Trade and the Town Council.

**RECOMMENDED:** That a further £2,000 be taken from general Reserves to enhance the Christmas light display, which should include a "statement" display across Southampton Road.

**F/3686**

**MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS**

**a) Investment of Reserves**

It was noted that more of the Council's reserves had been invested in the 6-month notice account and other money had been transferred into a higher interest earning account. As a result, the Council would receive an additional £6,000 in interest for the year.

**RESOLVED:** That the arrangements made be approved.

**b) Summary Budget Reports (Annex 'A')**

Members received summary budget reports for the 6-month period from April to September 2004 and noted that, by December, there should be a more accurate forecast of outturn in order to assist with setting the precept.

**RESOLVED:** That the summary budget reports be noted.

**c) Cheque payments on No.1 account**

It was noted that there had been 2 cheque payments made on the No. 1 bank account as follows:

<b>Cheque No.</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Payee</b>	<b>Details</b>
2101	£2,744.27	Inland Revenue	September PAYE
2102	£1,963.41	Hampshire County Council	September Pensions

**d) Inter-Account Transfers (Annex 'B')**

Members received a Statement of Inter-Account Transfers for October 2004.

**RESOLVED:** That the transfers be agreed. Cllrs Chard and Light duly signed the report.

**e) Statement of Town Council Balances (Annex 'C')**

**RESOLVED:** That the statement be received and noted.

**F/3687**

**TIME OF MEETINGS**

Members discussed the possibility of changing the time of the committee meeting from 7.00pm to 6.00pm.

**RESOLVED:** That the time of the monthly meetings of the Policy & Finance Committee remain at 7.00pm.

**F/3688**

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Town Clerk reported that he had received indication from the external auditor that he was happy with the Council's accounts. However, he had requested a formal statement of risk assessment, which had not been supplied with the annual return. The Town Clerk had therefore produced a schedule of risk management activity over the last 12 months (Annex 'D').

**RESOLVED:** That the schedule of Risk Management Activity be approved.

**F/3689**

**PROPOSED RUGBY FACILITIES AT RINGWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL**

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Town Clerk request the District Council to release £10,000 from Developers' Contributions to enable this scheme to proceed.
- 2) That the funds released by the District Council be only used following the prior approval of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee.

**F/3690**

**REFURBISHMENT OF CARVERS PAVILION**

The Committee received an extract of the Minutes of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2004 and the Town Clerk reported that there was a need to appoint an architect to supervise the works to refurbish Carvers pavilion. As MedCentres would be paying the rental fee on a monthly basis, there would also be a need to take money from general reserves in order to finance the project. However, it was noted that the total sum to be received from MedCentres would be in excess of the cost of the project.

**RESOLVED:** That the use of general reserves be authorised for the refurbishment of Carvers pavilion, to avoid any delay, pending receipt of the full rental for the site.

**F/3691  
LAND AT LONG LANE**

It was noted that legal costs associated with the transfer of land at Long Lane were likely to be in the region of £500.

**RESOLVED:** That the estimated legal costs be noted.

**F/3692  
COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS**

Members considered a report issued by the District Council on their discretionary powers to reduce the council tax discount on unoccupied furnished properties (often referred to as second homes) and long-term unfurnished empty properties (Annex 'E'). It was noted that the District Council had reduced the council tax discount on all unoccupied furnished properties for the current year. However, no reduction was made on long-term substantially unfurnished dwellings. In this latter case a reduction in the discount may encourage owners to bring those properties back into beneficial use by either selling or letting them, which should assist in dealing with the number of families requiring accommodation.

**RESOLVED:** That the District Council be recommended to reduce the council tax discount on all empty properties, whether furnished or unfurnished, so that owners pay 90% of the full council tax.

**F/3693  
DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995**

The Town Clerk reported that, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, the Council was legally obliged to give formal access rights for disabled persons to all its property. He had hoped that the District Council might have been able to undertake the audit on a fee-paying basis, but it was unable to assist on this occasion. There was therefore a need to appoint a professional consultant to carry out an audit to review all the Council's property covered by the Act.

Cllr Light emphasised that the Council must do what is reasonable to comply with the Act.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Clerk be authorised to appoint a consultant to carry out an Access Audit.

**F/3694  
CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU DISCLOSURE SERVICE – CODE OF PRACTICE**

It was noted that, in order to use the disclosure service offered by South East Employers for Criminal Records Bureau checks, the Council must have policy statements in place for the recruitment of ex-offenders and the secure handling, use, retention and disposal of disclosure information (Annex 'F').

**RESOLVED:** That the policies on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the secure handling, use, retention and disposal of disclosure information be adopted.

**F/3695  
73 CHRISTCHURCH ROAD**

*Cllr Rippon-Swaine declared a prejudicial personal interest and left the room.*

It was noted that the Council, as owners of adjoining property, had been consulted on planning application number 82709 for proposed use as 3 flats and first floor rear extension at 73 Christchurch Road. The Planning, Town & Environment Committee had already

considered this application and had submitted an observation of "Support subject to 1) parking being located at the rear of the property, NOT the front and 2) the retention of the Ash tree".

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That there was no objection to the extension and the creation of 3 flats.
- 2) That the removal of the Ash tree be opposed.
- 3) That parking should be restricted to the rear of the property, and there should be no parking at the front.

*Cllr Rippon-Swaine rejoined the meeting.*

**F/3696  
HEALTH & SAFETY**

*Mrs Stannard declared a personal interest in this item and left the room.*

The Town Clerk explained that it was essential for a Health & Safety audit to be carried out since one had not been undertaken for some years. Budget provision had been made to carry out this work, and he suggested that two Members should be appointed to interview prospective consultants who were experienced in these matters.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllrs Chard and Light be appointed to form an interview panel for the appointment of consultants to undertake a Health & Safety Audit for the Council.

*Mrs Stannard rejoined the meeting.*

**F/3697  
URGENT BUSINESS**

The Town Clerk reported that the PCT was concerned the construction of the new Health Centre may overrun and Medcentres had asked for an extension to the agreed 18-month lease of Carvers. He had therefore agreed to a 3-year fixed term lease.

**RESOLVED:** That action taken by the Town Clerk be approved.

**F/3698  
EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:** That under section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information (*Annex 'G'*).

**F/3699  
RINGWOOD YOUTH SERVICE**

The Town Clerk reported that the County Council would be withdrawing £4,000 funding from the Ringwood Youth Service at the end of March 2005. This money supports 2 youth workers who run a weekly youth club at Greyfriars. A meeting with all interested parties had been held last week.

It was clear that the County Council was withdrawing funding from conventional youth service provision and supporting youth work at the health centre, school and recreation centre. Those involved with the youth service believed that the ideal facility would entail the provision of a drop-in centre building. This should be available at all times to young people and there would be little need for direct adult supervision. The Town Council had previously offered joint use of the pavilion at Carvers. However, since the youth service was looking for exclusive use of a

building, this would require the termination of the use of the pavilion by existing sports clubs. The joint meeting had also suggested that the former groundsman's house could be released for use as a drop-in centre. This building might also provide accommodation for Connexions multi-agency support staff.

Cllr Terry said that Greyfriars was still available for use, although the young people did not like this building as so many other groups used it. He reported that between 16 and 30 young people attended the weekly youth club, which ran for about 2¼ hours. The age range was between 12 and 15 years old. In comparison to this Poulner Baptist Chapel attracted an attendance of about 140 a week.

Members debated all the possible options. It was clear that there were no easy solutions and the Committee did not now believe that relocation from Greyfriars to Carvers would overcome the basic problem of funding or increasing interest in the youth club. It was believed that it was essential to increase awareness of, and interest in the club, and this would best be achieved by retaining Greyfriars as its base.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the former groundsman's house be not released for use by the youth service.
- 2) That, in view of the need for exclusive use, Carvers pavilion be not made available to the youth service.
- 3) That efforts be concentrated on retaining the youth facility at Greyfriars.
- 4) That a further representative be appointed to attend future meetings and that Cllr Cracknell be asked if he would like to attend.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.00pm.