

OPEN SESSION: There were no members of the public present.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 22nd September 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
Cllr M H Thierry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Martin Townsend, Finance Officer (for part of meeting)
Cllr D E Cracknell (for part of meeting)

F/3660 APOLOGIES

All members were present.

F/3661 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

F/3662 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2004, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/3663 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS (*Annex 'A'*)

a) Schedule of Monthly Payments

i) No. 1 Account
RESOLVED: That the Schedule be AGREED.

ii) Imprest Account
RESOLVED: That the Schedule be AGREED.

b) Cheques for signature

There were no cheques to sign.

c) Petty Cash Statement

RESOLVED: That the Petty Cash Statement be AGREED.

d) Inter-Account Transfers

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

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

e) Statement of Town Council Balances

RESOLVED: That the Statement be RECEIVED and NOTED.

F/3664

BUDGET REPORTS (*Annex 'B'*)

Mr Townsend circulated draft budget reports for Members' approval. It was intended that these reports would replace those previously circulated and would be sent out monthly with the Committee agenda. The reports reflected the performance of the Council's services in financial terms, with a report for each Committee showing actual expenditure against both the profiled budget and the approved annual budget, and the variances between these figures. Any significant variances would be explained each month. It was noted that it would be some time before the profiled figures were completely accurate. In addition to the Committee reports and overall summary, a statement of inter-account transfers would also be presented monthly for authorisation by members.

Cllr Clarke asked if it was possible to show a budget forecast. The Town Clerk replied that this would be provided in December to assist with budget setting for 2005/06.

It was also noted that all financial information was available to view in the office and the Town Clerk encouraged members to come in from time to time to look at this.

Members congratulated Mr Townsend on the hard work that he had put into setting up the new financial system, and on the clarity of the new reports.

RESOLVED: That the budget reports, as circulated, be approved, and that reports in similar form be submitted to Committee each month in place of those previously circulated at the meeting.

F/3665

BUDGET 2005/06

Members were asked to identify any areas where changes – increases or decreases – in services should be considered and to advise the Town Clerk accordingly.

F/3666

RINGWOOD FESTIVAL

At the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr Cracknell took part in the discussion for the next 2 agenda items.

i) Financial Report

The Town Clerk advised members that the Festival Steering Committee was a committee of the Council and technically only members of the Town Council should vote. He said that the Town Council did not wish to get in the way of the Steering Committee but there was a need to ensure that the Town Council is properly protected. Therefore, the Town Clerk would be looking at this in the next 6-9 months and would report back to Members to enable the Committee to continue with its work, but within the statutory framework.

Mr Townsend presented the draft financial report for the 2004 Festival (*Annex C*). It was noted that £1,000 had been allocated for the Skate Park and therefore there was a surplus of approximately £1,800. The Festival Committee would be responsible for deciding how this should be spent.

Cllr Cracknell congratulated Mr Townsend on the presentation of the accounts and said that this was the first year the accounts had been presented so clearly.

RESOLVED: That the financial report for the 2004 Festival be accepted.

ii) Copyright

Cllr Cracknell reported that the Festival Steering Committee felt very strongly that the Town Council should obtain the copyright of the name "British Pedal Car Grand Prix" for Ringwood. The Town Clerk said that the cost for the copyright would be approximately £200. However, there may be a need to engage the services of a specialist lawyer to complete the application, which could increase the cost considerably.

RESOLVED: That the copyright of the name "British Pedal Car Grand Prix" be obtained and the Town Clerk seek further details of the cost of implementing this decision.

iii) 2005 Festival

RESOLVED: That the arrangements for the 2005 Festival, as outlined in the Minutes of the Steering Committee meeting held on 26th July 2004 (*Annex D*), be agreed.

Mr Townsend left the meeting.

F/3667

GRANT AID

Members considered the following applications for grant aid:

i) Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir

It was noted that the Council supported Avon Valley Concerts, which reaches a far wider number of people and holds regular concerts in the area. In contrast, Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir would be holding just one concert in Ringwood in 2005.

RESOLVED: That no grant be awarded to Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir.

ii) New Forest Disability Information Service

RESOLVED: That a grant of £100 be awarded to New Forest Disability Information Service to support the work of the outreach office in Ringwood, and towards the cost of home visits to clients unable to travel.

iii) Hampshire County Youth Band Association

Cllr Cracknell reported that the District Council considered a grant to Hampshire County Youth Band Association last week. The Association had been granted £100, however, the Band had appealed against this. When considering the appeal, it had been determined that there were too few people in the New Forest who were members of the Association and, therefore, the grant remained at £100.

RESOLVED: That no grant be awarded to Hampshire County Youth Band Association.

iv) Ringwood Pregnancy & Family Care

RESOLVED: That a grant of £200 be awarded to Ringwood Pregnancy & Family Care towards the costs of advertising, pregnancy tests and rent.

v) New Forest North Citizens Advice Bureau

RESOLVED:

- 1) That a grant of £500 be awarded to New Forest North Citizens Advice Bureau towards the costs of delivering this service.
- 2) That the Bureau be asked to keep the Council informed on its progress in addressing the issue of alternative methods of funding.

Cllr Cracknell left the meeting at 7.50pm.

F/3668

GORLEY ROAD BUS SHELTER

It was noted that this bus shelter had now been removed as it had been made unsafe by vandals. The Town Clerk was now investigating the cost of a brick built shelter, which it was hoped would be more vandal proof.

RESOLVED: That the £1500 in the Planning, Town & Environment Committee's budget allocated for street lighting be vired to the bus shelter budget.

F/3669

NEWSLETTER

Cllr Light informed Members that the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee felt that the Council was doing a lot of good things in the town that members of the public were not aware of. The Committee had therefore recommended that the Council should produce a quarterly newsletter.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk investigate the costs of producing and distributing a newsletter, and include this in the wish list for the 2005/06 budget.

F/3670

NORTHFIELD PLAY AREA

Members considered the recommendation from the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee that up to £10,000 of the general reserve be released for the refurbishment and updating of the Northfield Play Area. Cllr Thierry, although fully supportive of the project, asked if the Council could apply for funds from S106 developers' contributions before releasing money from the general reserve. The Town Clerk said that the Council had already agreed to use S106 money on several large projects and that it would take some time to go through the District Council's procedure.

RESOLVED: That officers investigate whether money could be released from S106 developers contributions before releasing any money from the general reserve for the refurbishment and updating of the Northfield Play Area, but in the meantime suppliers be invited to submit schemes for the Council's consideration.

F/3671
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 'E'*).

F/3672
NEW FOREST DISTRICT URBAN HOUSING POTENTIAL STUDY

Members considered a recommendation from the Planning, Town and Environment Committee, which identified sites that should be put forward for inclusion in the Urban Housing Potential Study. The Town Clerk suggested that Members might also wish to include land adjoining Mount Pleasant Lane in this list.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan suggested that there should be a survey carried out into Ringwood's drains and sewers before any large developments are agreed.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine asked about the planning restrictions on the Wellworthy site. Cllr Thierry replied that the policy in the Local Plan states that this land should be retained for employment use. The Town Clerk suggested that, as Ringwood had not been included in the National Park, the Council should be asking for a more fundamental review of the town and its planning policies.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That the following sites should be put forward for inclusion in the Urban Housing Potential Study:
 - Former Wellworthy site
 - Land rear of 88-100 Christchurch Road (opposite Greenways)
 - Rear of properties along Christchurch Road in general
 - Land adjoining Mount Pleasant Lane
- 2) That the District Council should be advised of the Town Council's concerns about future development, in the widest sense, of the town and would wish to address these issues through a more fundamental review of the town as a whole.

F/3673
RE-ADMISSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: That the public and the press be re-admitted to the meeting.

F/3674
FEES & CHARGES

The Town Clerk reported that New Forest Rangers were currently charged £40 for use of the whole of Carvers for a day. One extra pitch has been provided this year, making a total of 5 pitches, and it was suggested that the fee should be increased to reflect the additional pitch.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That New Forest Rangers be charged £50 per day during the 2004/05 season for the use of Carvers.
- 2) That the charge for the 2005/06 season should be reviewed as part of the budget process.

**F/3675
FORTHCOMING SEMINARS**

RESOLVED:

- 1) That one member be authorised to attend Managing Countryside Paths in your Parish on 16th November in Winchester (Cllr Mrs Sullivan).
- 2) That two members be authorised to attend Climate Change & the Implications for Hampshire on 4th November in Winchester (Cllr Ford and Cllr Clarke).

**F/3676
NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK**

i) Candidate for the National Park Authority

It was noted that Cllr Light was no longer available to stand as a candidate for the National Park Authority.

RESOLVED: That an item be included on the next Full Council agenda to nominate a candidate for the National Park Authority, in order that all councillors could be considered.

ii) Cross Boundary Issues

RECOMMENDED:

That it be made clear to New Forest District Council that:

- 1) Whilst the Town Council totally supports the National Park and its planning policies, these policies should not be extended to areas outside of the National Park.
- 2) A more fundamental approach is required and a new planning regime, and appropriate to Ringwood, should be developed.

iii) Gateway

The Town Clerk proposed that the Town Council should consider re-branding Ringwood as “the western gateway to the New Forest National Park”, and that this phrase should be used in all Town Council publicity, including the website.

Cllr Clarke believed that this was an opportunity to look at the entire content of the website, as it was currently neither interactive or community based. It was noted that the District Council had already been asked to look into this and that Mrs Stannard was also looking at community sites.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the concept that Ringwood is “the western gateway to the New Forest National Park” be approved and;
- 2) That this phrase be used in all Town Council publicity, including the website.

**F/3677
HAPTC AGM**

Members considered the Schedule of Resolutions for the HAPTC Annual General Meeting (*Annex 'F'*)

RECOMMENDED:

That the Town Council supports Resolution number 2, but does not support Resolution numbers 1, 3 and 4.

RESOLVED: That an item be included on the Full Council agenda to appoint one member to attend the HAPTC AGM.

F/3678

CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

The Town Clerk reported that the District Council was closing for the whole week commencing 27th December 2004. This breaks down as follows: Monday and Tuesday – bank holidays, Wednesday - third extra discretionary statutory day, Thursday – day off awarded in recognition of good CPA report, Friday – all staff must take as leave. Members reflected on the unpaid hours worked by staff and agreed that they should recognise this loyalty and commitment, and determined that, if it was possible, the office should close for one week.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk be given authority to construct a way in which it would be possible to close the office for the whole week commencing 27th December 2004, enabling both officers and groundsmen to have a week's holiday.

F/3679

URGENT BUSINESS

i) South East Regional Conference for Clerks and Councillors

It was noted that the topic of this conference, to be held in Winchester on 9th November 2004, is "Funding & Managing Community Projects". The Town Clerk said that he would be attending and asked if any Members wished to attend.

RESOLVED: That Cllr Chard be authorised to attend the South East Regional Conference for Clerks and Councillors. In the event of Cllr Chard not being able to attend, Cllr Terry would take his place.

ii) Greenways

It was noted that there was an urgent need to repair some lead flashing on the chimney at Greenways. It was estimated that this work would cost in the region of £850, as scaffolding was required to get up on to the roof.

RESOLVED: That the work to repair lead flashing on the chimney at Greenways be approved.

iii) Internal Audit Report

The Town Clerk circulated copies of the Internal Auditor's report, which included the Council's response to the recommendations (*Annex 'G'*).

Cllr Thierry commented on item 5.1 and asked that hire agreement forms be looked at in detail and should include such things as damage to the pavilion etc. He believed that the forms should be approved by the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee.

RESOLVED: That the response to the Internal Audit Report be approved.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan left at 8.40pm.

iv) New Forest Alcohol and Drug Centre

It was noted that the premises for this Centre were being refurbished from mid October for a period of 6 weeks. The Centre was therefore looking for temporary accommodation on either Wednesday or Thursday mornings. The Town Clerk asked if Members had any objection to the use of Greenways for this purpose.

RESOLVED: That there was no objection to the use of the Committee Room by New Forest Alcohol and Drug Centre, whilst its premises were being refurbished.

F/3680

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 'E'*).

F/3681

TOWN PLAN AND MARKET TOWNS HEALTHCHECK

The Town Clerk reported that he had hoped an ex-District Council officer would be able to act as project coordinator for the Town Plan. However, this was no longer feasible. He would therefore be revisiting this to look at ways forward to achieve the same objective, and would report back to committee with new proposals.

RESOLVED: That action by the Town Clerk be approved.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50pm.