

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

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 19th January 2005 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

F/3720 APOLOGIES

All members were present.

F/3721 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

F/3722 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th December 2004, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/3723 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

Members discussed the Monthly Financial Reports (*Annex 'A'*).

It was noted that the Town Council was in possession of funds from the Twinning Association, as the President had relocated overseas. Cllr Thierry asked why this was not shown in the Council's accounts. The Town Clerk replied that the funds did not belong to the Town Council and added that he would be reporting on this issue to a future meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan referred to the Inter Account Transfer report (item 4e) and asked what the sum payable to Meesons related to. The Town Clerk said that the Council's solicitors had been dealing with a number of transactions on behalf of the Council, but would provide details to members.

Cllr Clarke was concerned that the Council appeared to be underachieving on its budget and that there was an imbalance between income and expenditure. The Town Clerk explained that there was no even income level throughout the year and said that the Council was still awaiting some large sums, such as the recently agreed funds from developer's contributions held by the District Council.

It was noted that the Council would not be receiving the £2,500 from the Chamber of Trade for Christmas lights, as the Council had not spent any money and therefore did not require this match funding. This underspend would go back into the general reserve and would not be automatically carried forward to the 2005/06 Christmas lights budget. The Clerk said that the Council had agreed a budget of £5,000 for Christmas lights in the 2005/06 budget and would be requesting match funding of £2,500 from the Chamber of Trade, giving a total budget of £7,500. He explained that the Christmas lights would be the responsibility of the Town Council this year. The Council would buy the lights, arrange for their erection and taking down, employ an electrician to wire them correctly, liaise with the County Council regarding additional electric boxes and arrange all the necessary permissions from the owners of any properties affected. The Council would continue to work with the Chamber of Trade and would enter into an Agency Agreement with them. Christmas lights will continue to be dealt with by the Policy & Finance Committee and a report on these arrangements will be presented to a future meeting. If, during the year, members wished to increase the provision, this could be funded from this year's underspend.

Cllr Thierry was concerned that the income generated from the lease of part of Carvers to MedCentres should be used to fund something other than the refurbishment of the pavilion, which he felt should be funded from developers' contributions. The Town Clerk explained that members had agreed to reinvest the income in this way to give something back to residents. He added that there were other projects in the pipeline which would be using developers' contributions, such as improvement works to the Bickerley and land at Long Lane. In addition, the Council had agreed a major investment in sport and recreation and every pound taken out of developers' contributions now would have to be found from other sources in the future.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the list of cheque payments on the No. 1 account be approved.
- 2) That the list of cheque payments on the Imprest account be approved.
- 3) That the list of Petty Cash payments be approved.
- 4) That the Statement of Town Council Balances be received and noted.
- 5) That the Inter Account Transfers be authorised. The report was signed by Cllrs Chard and Light.
- 6) That the Summary Budget Reports be received and noted.
- 7) That more information on forecast and outturn be provided for the next meeting of the Committee.

F/3724

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

The Town Clerk presented a draft Code of Conduct for Employees for consideration by members. Some minor amendments were agreed and are shown in *Annex 'B'*.

RESOLVED: That the Code of Conduct for Employees be adopted, subject to consultation with employees.

F/3725

NEW FOREST & DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Members considered the proposed changes to the Association's Constitution (*Annex 'C'*). The Clerk summarised that the new constitution makes a fundamental change to the principle of the Association in that it provides for any Parish within the National Park to be entitled to be a member, and the new National Park authority becomes the prime body. The new constitution makes the National Park much more important than the district.

Cllr Clarke said that the Association does an important job representing the third tier to the District Council and other bodies. However, it is unable to carry out its current constituted duties and is unable to discharge its role effectively as it is so underfunded.

Its total source of funding comes from Hampshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (HAPTC) and amounts to approximately £800 per annum. It was noted that the Town Council pays £1000 per annum for membership to NALC and HAPTC.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk respond to the New Forest Association of Local Councils to say that the Council does not believe the Association is fulfilling its full potential, is unhappy with the change of direction, cannot support the proposed constitution and recommends there should be a fundamental review of that document.

F/3726 DELEGATIONS

The Town Clerk explained that, legally, a quorum is no less than 3 members. There had been a situation at a meeting of the Planning Town & Environment Committee recently when there were only 3 members present and 1 member had to leave the room after declaring an interest in a planning application. In this situation, the Committee was unable to submit an observation because it was not quorate. He was therefore asking members to authorise the Town Clerk, in liaison with the Committee members in attendance, to make decisions when there is no quorum.

Several members were not in favour of this, as it appeared that they were being asked to approve delegation of decision making. It is the councillors who are responsible for decision making and members of staff should not be put in this position.

It was noted that the Planning, Town & Environment Committee was only an advisory committee in respect of planning applications and that there were often tight deadlines to comply with. It was therefore

RESOLVED: That the Planning, Town & Environment Committee should consider whether it wished to adopt a policy of delegation and make a recommendation to Full Council.

F/3727 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2ND WORLD WAR

The Town Clerk asked members if they wished to consider celebrating this anniversary or if it would be more appropriate to ask the Festival Committee to consider commemorating the event, as the official date for celebrations fell on the second day of the Festival.

RESOLVED: That the Festival Committee be asked to consider commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the 2nd World War, and to report back to this Committee with proposals.

F/3728 MEETING DATES

Members considered proposed dates of meetings from June 2005 to May 2006 (*Annex 'D'*).

RESOLVED: That the list of dates be approved.

F/3729
URGENT BUSINESS

Healthy Walks

Mrs Sullivan reported that the Ringwood Healthy Walks had been launched and showed members copies of the leaflets that had been produced with a contribution from the Town Council.

Cllrs S & Mrs B Wright

Cllr Thierry reported that Cllrs S & Mrs Wright would cease to be members of the Council at the end of January, either by default or resignation. He suggested that the Council should hold an open evening for prospective members. It was noted that this matter was included on the agenda for Full Council on 26th January and the proposals now made could be dealt with at that time.

F/3730
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/3731
UPGRADE AND SUPPORT OF IT NETWORK

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report (*Annex 'F'*). Cllr Chambers summarised that the last upgrade to the IT network had not been sufficient and several critical functions such as the daily backup and sharing of information were currently not working. Two companies had been approached for advice and both had recommended similar solutions.

It was noted that the report did not make a final recommendation on which company to use or exactly how much it was going to cost the Council. It was therefore

RESOLVED: That the matter be deferred to Full Council on 26th January.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.40pm.