

OPEN SESSION: There was one member of public present.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 19th October 2005 at 7.10pm

PRESENT: Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr N G R Clarke
Cllr D E Cracknell
Cllr N W Light
Cllr B H Terry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Martin Townsend, Finance Manager

F/3833 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P Chambers Cllr M F J Daly, Cllr L C Ford and Cllr Mrs V A Sullivan.

F/3834 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

F/3835 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st September 2005, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

With the agreement of the Committee, agenda item 6 was taken next for the benefit of the member of public present.

F/3836 RINGWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Members considered a recommendation from Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee to support a revised scheme for the provision of a pavilion facility to enable implementation of dual use of Ringwood Junior School's playing field. The Mayor stated that he did not believe the County Council was fulfilling its educational responsibilities for the children at the School and said that, if it wasn't for the Town Council, the children would not be getting this much needed sporting and educational facility. He went on to say that the Council had an annual budget of just over a quarter of a million pounds and was looking to take £185,000 from its Developers Contributions reserves to assist implementation of the scheme. He therefore hoped that the County Council would review its position and provide a substantial capital contribution to the scheme from its annual budget, which exceeded one billion pounds.

It was noted that the Chairman of the Committee had expressed concern that by releasing Developers Contributions for this scheme, it would be to the detriment of the Council's ambitions for Long Lane. However, Cllr Light reminded members that Martin Devine, Assistant Director of Leisure at the District Council, had previously commented that the Long Lane project would not be compromised by the release of funds for this scheme.

RECOMMENDED:

That the revised scheme and use of Developers Contributions be supported, subject to:

- a) the Town Council's contribution being cash limited at £185,000;
- b) Ringwood Junior School making earnest efforts to obtain funding from Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council;
- c) the town Council's contribution being reduced by any capital contributions from the County or District Councils;
- d) the Town Council being offered the opportunity to take over the lease in the event of the Rugby Club's tenancy being terminated for any reason;
- e) no contract being let for the site or building works until all of the legal agreements with Hampshire County Council, including any leases with the Rugby Club and the Town Council's option in the event of the Club's lease being determined, have been concluded; and
- f) a full public consultation exercise being undertaken immediately.

F/3837**MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Members considered the Monthly Financial Reports (*Annex 'A'*). The Finance Manager reported that the total bank balances had increased by £120,000 since the last meeting as the second instalment of the Precept had now been received. With regard to the inter-account transfers, he reported that £50,000 had been invested for 2 months at a rate of 3.425%, £100,000 for 3 months at 3.65% and £265,000 for 6 months at just over 4%. Members agreed that this was excellent cash management. It was noted that the Finance Manager was forecasting a £40,000 underspend against the approved budget.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the list of cheque payments on the Imprest account be approved.
- 2) That the list of Petty Cash payments be approved.
- 3) That the Statement of Town Council Balances be received and noted.
- 4) That the Inter Account Transfers be authorised. The report was signed by Cllrs Rippon-Swaine and Clarke.
- 5) That the Summary Budget Reports be received and noted.

F/3838**2006/07 BUDGET**

The Town Clerk reported that he had received very few responses with proposals for inclusion in the 2006/07 budget and he encouraged members to contact the office with items for the "wish list".

Members were concerned about the forecast underspend on this year's budget and asked how this could be accounted for. The Town Clerk suggested that, as the Council was looking at two major capital schemes, Long Lane and a community facility, some money should be earmarked now for these projects.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That all members contact the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk or the Finance Manager with items for possible inclusion in the 2006/07 budget.
- 2) That, when Council sets for the budget for 2006/07 in December, it consider the best way forward for use of any forecast underspend.

F/3839
FAIRTRADE TOWN

The Town Clerk reported that the Council had previously agreed to try and establish Ringwood as a Fairtrade Town and had also expressed a wish to work more closely with young people in the town. He therefore suggested that a Working Party of five students and three members be appointed, to make recommendations back to this Committee.

It was noted that members of 'Churches Together' were keen to be involved and several businesses had expressed an interest. Cllr Clarke had also been in touch with a representative from the Ringwood Waldorf School who would like to be involved.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That a Fairtrade Working Party of five Ringwood School students and three Council members be appointed to take the project forward and make recommendations to the Policy & Finance Committee.
- 2) That the Working Party co-opt other interested parties.
- 3) That the three Council members be Cllr Cracknell, Cllr Terry and Cllr Ford, subject to her agreement.

F/3840
RINGWOOD FESTIVAL 2006

Cllr Cracknell, Chairman of the Festival Steering Committee, reported that following the decision not to proceed with the Civil War Re-enactment, it had been agreed to stage a smaller-scale event in the Market Place, with an encampment on the Bickerley. This would be a two-day event, with the Festival taking place over a two-week period. In addition, although the Committee had always received support from Council officers, it now wished to formalise this arrangement.

Cllr Clarke asked if this was the right way to develop the Festival and was concerned that a similar scale event would need to be included in future years in order to sustain the event. The Town Clerk said that the Festival was developing to generate interest in the town and said that the Council needed to consider showing commitment to the event by assigning resources and funding.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Council underwrite the 2006 Festival by up to £10,000.
- 2) That the Council provide assistance, in the form of officer time, to assist with the organisation and development of the event.

F/3841
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Town Clerk informed members that Southern Electric Contracting would be installing the electric boxes this week. It was noted that there would be no boxes installed in the Market Place this year as most suitable buildings were Listed and planning permission would therefore be required. All Wayleaves for Southampton Road and the north side of the High Street had now been signed, but two were awaited from Nat West Bank and WH Smith. However, a contingency plan had been agreed in the event that these were not forthcoming. The next meeting of the Working Party would be held on 26th October to discuss the issue of trees and lights on buildings which the Chamber of Trade had originally offered to organise.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk's report be noted.

F/3842
URGENT BUSINESS

i) Ringwood Infant School

It was noted that Ringwood Infant School Governing body must re-constitute itself by next year, at which time the Town Council will not have automatic right to appoint a Governor. In the meantime, Russell Collins', the Town Council's nominee, term of office expires at the end of October. The School is about to start construction works and had asked if the Council would be prepared to re-nominate Mr Collins, a Health and Safety professional, to hold office until it re-constitutes.

RESOLVED: That Mr Russell Collins be nominated to represent the Town Council on the Governing body for Ringwood Infant School.

ii) Road Closure – Bickerley Road

The Town Clerk reported New Forest District Council had advised that it would be necessary to close Bickerley Road for a period of three days to enable a sewer connection for Kinder Cottage. It was hoped that the District Council would do everything possible to mitigate the effects of this closure.

RESOLVED: That this information be noted.

iii) Greenways

The Town Clerk reported that the wooden lintels on the inside leaf had twisted and needed to be strengthened and treated for woodworm. This additional work could be contained within the provisional estimate of £3,000.

RESOLVED: That the additional work required on the lintels at Greenways be approved.

iv) Skate Park Repairs

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that essential works required at the Skate Park to level up the lips which had formed at the bottom of the ramps would cost £2,600, and that this sum could be met from the Council's provision for play equipment.

RESOLVED: That this essential work be authorised and that the expenditure be funded from the provision for play equipment.

v) ODPM Inquiry

The Town Clerk reported that he had received information on a new inquiry on "Affordability and the Supply of Housing" and that there was an opportunity to comment on this.

RESOLVED: That a draft response, relating to following issues, be prepared for consideration by Full Council:

- The relationship between house prices and housing supply
- How the planning system should respond to the demand for housing for sale
- The regional disparities in the supply and demand for housing and how they might be tackled.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.05pm.