

OPEN SESSION: There were no members of public present.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 18th October 2006 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr N R G Clarke
Cllr D E Cracknell
Cllr M F J Daly
Cllr N W Light
Cllr Mrs V A Sullivan
Cllr B H Terry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Martin Townsend, Finance Manager
Cllr M H Thierry

F/3987 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P Chambers and Cllr L C Ford.

F/3988 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

F/3989 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2006, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/3990 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

Members considered the Monthly Financial Reports attached to these minutes as *Annex 'A'*. It was noted that the Finance Manager would report to the December meeting of the Committee with a proposed revised budget for 2006/07.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the list of cheque payments on the Imprest account be authorised. Cllrs Rippon-Swaine and Chard signed the report.
- 2) That the list of Petty Cash payments be authorised. Cllrs Rippon-Swaine and Chard signed the report.
- 3) That the Statement of Town Council Balances be received and noted.
- 4) That the Inter Account Transfers be authorised. Cllrs Rippon-Swaine and Chard signed the report.
- 5) That the Finance Manager's report and Summary Budget Reports, including payment of the replacement tractor on a deferred interest free basis, be approved.

F/3991**EXPENDITURE PLANS 2007/08 – 2010/11**

The Town Clerk reported that he had asked members to put forward suggestions for additions or alterations to the Council's expenditure plans for the period 2007/08 to 2010/11. However, no suggestions had been received to date, with the exception of a recommendation from the Planning, Town & Environment Committee that £6,000 be included in the 2007/08 budget to fund one Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) for the town. It was noted that some non-recurring items, such as the grant to the Youth Club and funding for the Town Plan, may need to be presented as new recurring bids. It was noted that members should not be concerned at this stage about the effect any possible percentage increase may have on council tax for 2007/08. All proposals and the effect on council tax would be considered by the Committee in December.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That £6,000 for one PCSO be included in the Policy & Finance Committee's budget proposals for 2007/08 to be considered in December 2006.
- 2) That members submit any suggestions for additions or alterations to the council's expenditure plans for the period 2007/08 to 2010/11 to the Finance Manager by Tuesday 28th November 2006.

F/3992**RINGWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD**

The Town Clerk advised that the Council was holding £9,000 of developers' contributions and had undertaken to meet professional fees relating to the proposed facilities on the Ringwood Junior School Playing Field. He reported that an invoice had been received from the architect for £2,246 for the balance of fees up to the submission of the planning application.

RESOLVED: That the invoice for £2,246 relating to architectural services for the proposed facilities at Ringwood Junior School be approved for payment.

F/3993**GREENWAYS – DAMAGED BOUNDARY WALL**

Members noted that a section of the boundary wall at the entrance to Greenways had been damaged and was in need of repair. As it was in the Conservation Area, the District Council had been asked if it was necessary to obtain planning permission and also if it would be acceptable to move a section of the wall back by 360mm from its current position to create an improved turning area.

RESOLVED: That the repairs to the boundary wall at Greenways be approved, subject to the proposals being acceptable to New Forest District Council.

F/3994**CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

Members considered an appropriate date for the switching on of the Christmas lights. It was noted that the Chamber of Trade had advised that it would not be appropriate to switch on the lights on the same evening as the Reindeer Parade, and it would therefore be necessary to switch them on some time before this event.

The Town Clerk reported that he had now issued an order to Southern Electric Contracting for the provision of an electricity supply to the three deciduous trees in the Market Place and had liaised with a County Council arboriculturist regarding the safe display of lights in these trees.

RESOLVED: That the Christmas lights be switched on on Friday 24th November 2006.

SOUTH WEST CORNER OF FURLONG CAR PARK

The Town Clerk referred members to a discussion that had taken place at the Planning, Town & Environment Committee on 13th October (P/4386 refers) and recommendations that had been made to this Committee, as follows:

- 1) *That option four must be adopted by the District Council's Cabinet, as undertaken by the Chairman of the Steering Group at Full Council on 27th September 2006, and be included in the way forward.*
- 2) *That the Town Council's Planning, Town & Environment Committee Members be full partners in taking the project forward.*
- 3) *That any conclusions be jointly acceptable to all partners.*

It was also necessary to consider a further recommendation (P/4378 refers), *that the District Council's Town Centre Steering Group be requested to incorporate a police office in any scheme for the South West corner of the Furlong.* However, members believed that it was too early in the process to be discussing specific details for any future proposals.

The Town Clerk reported that he had been invited by the District Council to attend the last meeting of the Ringwood Town Centre Steering Group and, following this, had received an invitation for the Town Council to nominate one member to attend future meetings to represent the views of the Town Council. He also highlighted the fact that he had reserved the right for the Town Council to consult residents on all options as part of the Healthcheck process.

Cllr Cracknell referred to the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee and said that he did not agree with Cllr Colonel Scriven's concern about members who were also District Councillors having a conflict of interests. He said that he had always represented the views of the people of the town and would always put these views first in any discussions.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr Thierry commented on the recommendations. He supported Cllr Cracknell's comments and said that he also represented the town's residents first and foremost. With regard to the options, he suggested that there were more than just four options and that the recommendation should be altered to require that all options be evaluated. He felt that the second recommendation to involve all members of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee in the process would be unacceptable to the Steering Group and emphasised that any members nominated by the Town Council would not have voting powers. He said that the third recommendation would not be credible and would delay the whole process. Cllr Thierry also reported that he had asked that the consultants be instructed to consult key stakeholders in the town, such as the Town Council, Chamber of Trade, Schools, Churches and Ringwood Society. However, officers had not agreed with this suggestion.

Cllr Thierry was concerned that the whole process from consultation to decision making to completion of any building could take up until 2010 and was concerned that, in the meantime, the toilets would not be rebuilt. He had therefore proposed that refurbishment of the toilets be included in the District Council's capital programme for completion prior to Easter 2007.

Members did not believe that the recommendations put forward by the Planning, Town & Environment Committee were the right way forward, particularly as the Council would be able to consult residents on all options as part of the Healthcheck process. It was therefore

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That the recommendations from the Planning, Town & Environment Committee contained in minutes P/4386 and P/4378 be not accepted.
- 2) That Cllr Terry be appointed to represent the Town Council on the District Council's Ringwood Town Centre Steering Group.

F/3996

THE REGULATORY REFORM (FIRE SAFETY) ORDER 2005

The Deputy Town Clerk advised members that it was necessary to carry out a fire risk assessment in order to comply with this new legislation. It was necessary for this assessment to be carried out by a competent person and, although she had been advised that she could be considered competent by reading the necessary guidance, she believed that the process could take a considerable amount of her time and it may be more practical to outsource the task. She had received a quotation of £550 from a company used and recommended by the District Council, to include a comprehensive fire safety survey of all Council owned buildings, an audit of fire management procedures, a detailed record of findings and action to be taken and advice and guidance on fire safety matters outside the scope of the regulations.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the quotation of £550 from Firesure UK Ltd be accepted and the company be contracted to carry out a fire risk assessment in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 2) That this sum be met by a virement from the existing budget.

F/3997

URGENT BUSINESS

Vocational Training

Members considered a recommendation from the Planning, Town & Environment Committee, as follows:

That Ringwood School be supported in any bid it may make for capital funding to provide vocational training facilities in the town for young people.

Members were supportive of the need to improve vocational training for young people and noted the benefits, including additional employment opportunities.

RESOLVED: That Ringwood School be supported in any bid it may make for capital funding to provide vocational training facilities in the town for young people.

F/3998

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 'B'*).

F/3999

PROJECT OFFICER

The Town Clerk advised members that the Project Officer's initial 12 month contract would come to an end on 14th November 2006. It was always expected that the project would continue beyond one year and he asked members to consider extending the contract until completion of the task.

RESOLVED: That the Project Officer's contract be extended for a further 12 months until 14th November 2007.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.12pm.