

OPEN SESSION: There were no members of public present.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 21st June 2006 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr P Chambers (Chairman)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr N G R Clarke
Cllr D E Cracknell
Cllr M F J Daly
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

F/3943 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr L C Ford.

F/3944 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

F/3945 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2006, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/3946 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

Members considered the Monthly Financial Reports attached to these minutes as Annex 'A'.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the list of cheque payments on the Imprest account be authorised. Cllrs Chambers and Chard signed the report.
- 2) That the list of Petty Cash payments be authorised. Cllrs Chambers 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 Chambers and Chard signed the report.

F/3947 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2005/06

The Finance Manager presented the Internal Audit Report for 2005/06 (Annex 'B') and said that overall it was a good report with only a few minor issues identified. He would now arrange for measures to be put in place, as outlined in the report, in order to further improve the Council's financial controls.

It was noted that, at the time of the Audit, there had been over £2,000 in the safe. However, this amount was in cheques, and not cash. The Council was insured to hold up to £1,000 in cash, although it was very rare for this amount to be held on the premises, and it was never exceeded.

RESOLVED: That the response to the Internal Audit Report 2005/06 as shown at Annex 'B' be approved.

F/3948

DRAFT FINAL ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2006

The Finance Manager presented the Draft Final Accounts and Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2006 (Annex 'C').

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) The actual income and expenditure accounts for 2005/06 and balance sheet as at 31st March 2006 be approved.
- 2) The transfer from the General Reserve of £27,732.44 for 2005/06 be approved.
- 3) The additional transfer of £5,000 to provisions for 2005/06 be approved.
- 4) The Annual Return for 2005/06 be approved.

F/3949

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO CONTRACTS

The Finance Manager reported that he had reviewed the Council's Financial Regulations, based on a template provided by NALC and to reflect the introduction of new controls put in place since the last review. It was noted that the document also now included Standing Orders Relating to Contracts and that the Standing Orders Relating to Meetings would be reviewed later in the year.

RECOMMENDED: That the revised Financial Regulations and Standing Orders Relating to Contracts be adopted.

F/3950

GRANT AID

Members considered applications for Grant Aid.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That £50 be awarded to Hampshire Children and Families Forum towards a one-week playscheme for young children with special needs.
- 2) That £50 be awarded to Vitalise to support holiday breaks for disabled people and their carers.
- 3) That £50 be awarded to Salterns Playscheme towards a two-week summer playscheme for children with special needs.
- 4) That 100 be awarded to Ringwood Disabled Swim Association towards the cost of hiring the swimming pool.
- 5) That £200 be awarded to Avon Valley Concerts towards a series of classical music concerts.
- 6) That no grant be awarded to The Forest Bus.
- 7) That all organisations be informed that if they wish to apply for a grant in the future, the actual number of children or persons who attended the previous year's activity should be provided, together with the expected number for the coming year.

**F/3951
GREENWAYS**

The Town Clerk presented an initial sketch for a first floor extension at the rear of Greenways, which would provide two separate offices of 43m² and 57m² at a cost estimated at approximately £50,000. Rental of these offices would give a projected income of £14,000 per annum and it would therefore be necessary to borrow the capital over a period of 15 to 20 years.

It was noted that the current lease of the first floor offices provided for five car parking spaces and that this would not need to be increased.

Members were concerned that there was uncertainty over the future location of the Town Council offices. However, as any extension would increase the capital value of the building, it was agreed to proceed with the submission of a planning application and then to wait for any developments that may arise from proposals by the District Council in the Furlong car park. It was noted that the fees to bring the scheme to planning stage would be approximately £1500.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Town Clerk be authorised to arrange for the first floor extension at the rear of Greenways to be designed and submitted for planning approval.
- 2) That a decision on implementation of any scheme be deferred until such time as it is known whether the Town Council's offices will be integrated in any new building with other authorities in the Town Centre.

**F/3952
MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE**

The Town Clerk said that, as the Town Council was becoming more proactive, the Mayor was being invited to attend more functions and activities and, as he was not always able to attend in person, a substitute was often asked to attend in his place. As members were only able to claim travel expenses for official Council business and many of these events would not qualify, the Town Clerk suggested a supplementary budget of £100 to increase the Mayor's Civic Allowance, which could be distributed at the discretion of the Mayor to ensure that members were not out of pocket in carrying out Civic duties.

RESOLVED: That a supplementary budget of £100 be approved to increase the Mayor's Civic Allowance, with effect from 24th May 2006, to be dispensed to members substituting for the Mayor at the joint discretion of the Mayor and Town Clerk.

**F/3953
CHARTER 88 – CAMPAIGN FOR A MODERN DEMOCRACY**

Members considered whether to support a campaign by Charter 88, in support of the Sustainable Communities Bill, which makes democracy relevant to citizens everywhere by giving parish councils and local people powers over how to protect their communities from further decline by introducing mechanism for government from the grass roots.

RESOLVED: That the campaign by Charter 88 be not supported.

**F/3954
FESTIVAL 2006**

Members considered the minutes of the Festival Steering Committee meeting held on 23rd May and 5th June 2006 (Annex 'D').

It was noted that Pocket Park had been removed from the Entertainment Licence in order to ensure that the Licence was granted for the main part of the Bickerley. Also that the Council's groundstaff would be assisting in the week leading up to the Festival in order to ensure the event runs smoothly.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Festival Steering Committee meetings held on 23rd May and 5th June 2006 be received and noted.

F/3955

URGENT BUSINESS

i) Channel Four Production - Under New Management

The Town Clerk reported that Channel Four was seeking a location to film a new series, and was looking for a town with six vacant shops so that they could follow first time shop owners realising their dream of opening a shop.

The details had been forwarded to the Chamber of Trade and Commerce for further consideration.

RESOLVED: That, if the Chamber of Trade and Commerce wishes to promote a location which meets the Channel Four criteria, such application be supported.

ii) Casual Vacancy

The Town Clerk reported that an election would take place on Thursday 27th July to fill the casual vacancy in the North Ward. As the deadline for nominations was 30th June, it would not be possible to place an advertisement in the local paper. However, a press release would be issued and the details displayed on the Council's noticeboards and website.

RESOLVED: That this information be noted.

iii) Mystery Shopper Exercise

The Town Clerk reported that Ringwood had been offered the opportunity to benefit from funding from the Learning Skills Council and European Social Fund, by taking part in a Mystery Shopper Exercise. There would be no cost to the Council and local shops would benefit from independent feedback on the strength and weaknesses of their business.

RESOLVED: That, providing the Chamber of Trade and Commerce was in agreement, the offer to take part in the Mystery Shopper Exercise be accepted.

F/3956

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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Annex 'E').

F/3957

TECHNICAL OFFICER

The Town Clerk reported that the Council had made savings as a result of the Technical Officer being in post and recommended that his contract be extended to the end of the year, providing there was work available for him. Costs would be contained within the approved budget for appointment of consultants.

RESOLVED: That the Technical Officer's contract be extended to the end of December 2006, providing there was sufficient work available.

F/3958

MOUNT PLEASANT LANE

The Town Clerk gave an update on the latest position regarding the Council's claim to right of access over Mount Pleasant Lane.

RECOMMENDED: That the Town Clerk continue to negotiate with Dr Doyle.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00pm.