

OPEN SESSION: There were no members of public present.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 22nd November 2006 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr P Chambers (Chairman)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr N R G 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
Martin Townsend, Finance Manager (for part of meeting)

F/4000 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr L C Ford.

F/4001 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Cracknell declared a personal interest in the grant application from Forest Forge Theatre Company as one of the Town Council's representatives on the Board.
Cllr Clarke declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the same grant application as the County Council's representative on the Board. He left the room during discussion of this item.

F/4002 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2006, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/4003 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

Members considered the Monthly Financial Reports attached to these minutes as *Annex 'A'*. It was noted that the revised budget for 2006/07 and a full statement of current provisions would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in December.

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.
- 5) That the Finance Manager's report and Summary Budget Reports be received and noted.

F/4004**ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2006**

The Finance Manager presented a report on the Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2006 (*Annex 'B'*). It was noted that the Auditor's certificate had been received and the Council had been given a clean bill of health, although he had recommended that the Council review its level of fidelity guarantee insurance cover.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the District Auditor's certificate and opinion on the Annual Return for 2005/06 be noted.
- 2) That the Council's level of fidelity guarantee insurance cover be increased to £500,000.

F/4005**REMEDIAL WORK TO GREENWAYS**

The Town Clerk reported that the Committee had made a provision of £3,000 in the capital programme for remedial works to strengthen the loft at Greenways and provide a storage platform. Tenders had now been received for this work, with the value of the lowest tender being £4,725, including a 5% contingency.

It was noted that there had been no regular maintenance regime for the Council's buildings in the past and that, in future, a condition survey of all buildings would be required and a budget provision made for ongoing maintenance.

RESOLVED: That a supplementary capital budget of £1,725 be approved for remedial works at Greenways.

F/4006**GRANTS**

Members considered applications for grant aid.

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter, Cllr Clarke left the room during discussion of the application from Forest Forge Theatre Company.

Members also noted that King's Church was unable to meet one of the conditions of the grant awarded by the Committee on 20th September (F/3975 refers) as they were unable to obtain insurance cover for the replacement shed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That £150 be awarded to Fordingbridge Stroke Club to enable members to attend a pantomime.
- 2) That £100 be awarded to Crowe Hill Women's Institute towards refurbishment of the WI Hall.
- 3) That £500 be awarded to Forest Forge Theatre Company to support the running costs of the Youth Theatre.
- 4) That the condition requiring King's Church to obtain insurance for the replacement shed be removed, but that they be advised the grant would be a one-off.

F/4007**LAND OFF LONG LANE**

The Town Clerk reported that sports pitches had now been constructed at Long Lane and Planning Permission had been granted for their use. It was now necessary to carry out works

agreed with Ringwood Football Club to convert two changing rooms for use by teams playing on the new pitches, before these pitches could be brought into use. The District Council could not confirm that funds would be released from Developers Contributions for this work as the Director of Leisure did not believe this to be an appropriate use of funds. However, it was clear that the land could not be used for sporting purposes without the supporting facilities.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That, if the District Council did not release Developers Contributions to enable the sports pitches to be brought into use, a change of financing of the £10,000 approved budget from Developers Contributions to the General Reserve be approved.
- 2) That District Councillors be asked to put pressure on the District Council to release Developers Contributions for facilities at Long Lane.

F/4008

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Members considered the Town Clerk's report (*Annex 'C'*). Cllr Mrs Sullivan was of the opinion that paragraph 8 relating to the Code of Conduct should be deleted or included as part of paragraph 9, as she did not feel that officers should become involved in complaints regarding members. The Town Clerk explained that this section had been included to make members of the public aware of what the Code of Conduct covered to enable them to decide whether or not they could take a matter up with the Standards Board.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan requested that her objection to the inclusion of reference to the statutory Code of Conduct in paragraph 8 be recorded.

RECOMMENDED: That the Complaints Procedure be adopted.

F/4009

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

Members considered the Town Clerk's report (*Annex 'D'*). It was noted that the White Paper was not a consultation document and that, if the Town Council wished to make comments, it would be more appropriate to make recommendations to the National Association of Local Councils. Members noted that, although principal councils would be encouraged to devolve powers, there was no duty for them to do this. It was felt that the emphasis should be changed to place a duty on principal councils to devolve functions, provided that the town or parish council had achieved a certain status and that the council wished to take on the particular function. The Town Clerk reminded members that Cllr Colonel Scriven had suggested in a recent email that a working party should be established to consider this matter.

Some members were of the opinion that the Council should await the publication of the Lyons Report before making any comment. However, it was noted that this was expected to be delayed until February 2007.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That the contents of the White Paper be noted and that arrangements be made for an item to be included on the agenda for the Policy & Finance Committee in January 2007 for a detailed discussion on the proposals to enable any recommendations to be made to Council and forwarded to the National Association of Local Councils through the Hampshire Association.
- 2) That the Council reaffirms its commitment to complete the Health Check and Town Plan and obtain Quality status at the earliest opportunity to enable it to be able to take advantage of any opportunities which might arise from enactment of the proposals contained in the White Paper.

- 3) That members be kept informed of any new information received relating to the White Paper and the Lyons Report.

**F/4010
RINGWOOD FESTIVAL**

Members considered the minutes of the Festival Steering Committee meeting held on 13th November 2006 (*Annex 'E'*), which included a request for the Council to underwrite the 2007 Festival up to £5,000.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the minutes of the Festival Steering Committee meeting held on 13th November be received and approved.
- 2) That the request for the Council to underwrite the 2007 Festival up to £5,000 be included in the Committee's report on budget proposals for 2007/08 to be considered at its meeting in December.

**F/4011
RINGWOOD & FORDINGBRIDGE AIR TRAINING CORPS**

The Town Clerk reported that the Ringwood & Fordingbridge Air Training Corps had invited the Council to nominate one member to sit on its Civilian Committee. It was noted that Cllr Colonel Scriven had volunteered to take on this role.

RECOMMENDED: That Cllr Colonel Scriven be appointed as the Council's representative on the Civilian Committee of the Ringwood & Fordingbridge Air Training Corps.

**F/4012
NALC SHAPING COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE**

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk and Cllr Clarke be authorised to attend the NALC Shaping Communities Conference in London on 13th February 2007.

**F/4013
MUTUAL MEDIATION SERVICE**

The Town Clerk reported that he had been invited by the Hampshire Association of Parish and Town Councils to become a member of the Panel for the Mutual Mediation Service for Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Isle of Wight.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk's membership of the Panel be supported.

**F/4014
CHRISTMAS CLOSURE**

The Town Clerk reported that the District Council would be closed on Monday 25th, Tuesday 26th and Wednesday 27th December; the Monday and Tuesday being Bank Holidays and Wednesday being a third extra statutory day. He said that Town Council employees had also been given this third statutory day in the past and, as most wished to take leave during this week, he proposed that the office should be closed for the week commencing 25th December. However, he would ensure that the answerphone and post would be checked and the dog bins and litter bins in the cemetery would be emptied.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That employees be given Wednesday 27th December as a third statutory day, with other weekdays being taken as annual leave or time off in lieu of additional hours worked.
- 2) That the office be closed for the week commencing 25th December.

F/4015

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Town Clerk reported that the next meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee had been scheduled for 13th December. However, it had become apparent that there were several external activities on this evening and during that week and, therefore, a number of members would be unable to attend. As this meeting would recommend the Precept to Council, it was therefore suggested that the date be changed to allow members to attend.

RECOMMENDED: That the next meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee be rescheduled to Wednesday 20th December and that Full Council be moved to Wednesday 3rd January 2007.

F/4016

URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

F/4017

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 F'*).

F/4018

WORKING HOURS

Members were advised of the current situation with regard to staff overtime, which had resulted from additional activity generated by the Council, and noted that a revised budget would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.40pm.