

OPEN SESSION: There were no members of public present.

## **MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2007 at 7.00pm

### Apologies

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr D E Cracknell and Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine.

### Declarations of Interest

Cllr Heron declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the grant application from the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group as his son attends Sparsholt College. He gave notice that he would leave the room during discussion of this item.

PRESENT: Cllr J D Heron (Chairman)  
Cllr N J Chard  
Cllr N R G Clarke  
Cllr M F J Daly  
Cllr L C Ford  
Cllr B H Terry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk  
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk

## **F/4152**

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2007, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

## **F/4153**

### **MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS**

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

There was some concern about future maintenance costs, following an investment in additional grounds maintenance equipment. However, it was noted that the new equipment was more suited to the work being carried out and should therefore stand up better to frequent use.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the list of cheque payments on the Imprest account be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Chard signed the report.
- 2) That the list of Petty Cash payments be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Chard signed the report.
- 3) That the Statement of Town Council Balances be received and noted.
- 4) That the Inter Account Transfer be authorised. Cllr Heron and Chard signed the report.
- 5) That the Finance Manager's report and Summary Budget Reports be received and noted.

## **F/4154**

### **FINANCIAL REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES**

Members considered recommendations from the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee to write off two debts owed by Ringwood Lawn Tennis Club, and to meet direct costs and loss of income for tennis facilities from the General Reserve.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the two debts owed by Ringwood Lawn Tennis Club of £551.53 + VAT (invoice number 3188) and £315 + VAT (invoice number 3189) be written off; and
- 2) That direct costs and loss of income estimated to be about £6,410 for 2007/08 be met from the General Reserve.

**F/4155  
GRANT AID**

Members considered applications for grant aid.

*Cllr Heron declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application from the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group as his son attends Sparsholt College, where the Group was based. He left the room during discussion of this item and Cllr Chard took the chair.*

It was noted that New Forest Access For All had recently carried out an audit in the town and charged an administrative fee for this. In addition, it was possible for the group to borrow the required equipment.

Members felt that they did not have sufficient information to determine the grant application from It's Your Choice as there was a perception that there were several different organisations in the town offering a similar service. It was therefore agreed to contact Hampshire County Council for advice.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That, under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, £50 be awarded to the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group to enable the provision of advice and support to local farmers and the organisation of farm walks to raise awareness.
- 2) That no grant be awarded to New Forest Access For All.
- 3) That the grant application from It's Your Choice be deferred pending further information.
- 4) That, under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, £100 be awarded to Ringwood Debt Advice Centre towards running costs.

**F/4156  
SHOPWATCH**

The Town Clerk reported that he had now received a list of 55 traders who had expressed an interest in proposals by Ringwood Police to set up a Shopwatch scheme in the town. It was noted that the 14 members of the Pub Watch scheme were also interested in becoming involved.

Cllr Heron had attended a meeting with traders to discuss the scheme. He reported that 20 individuals had attended and some were very keen to support the scheme and take it forward. It was intended to establish a repeater station in the town, which would cost in the region of £2,000. He said that the scheme would require a significant number of traders in the town to be involved for the system to work, and suggested that the Council should wait until they were committed to the scheme (i.e. contracts had been signed), before agreeing to make a contribution. It was noted that Ofcom required one person to be the licence holder for the repeater station and Cllr Heron agreed to liaise with the Chamber of Trade on this issue.

**RESOLVED:** That the Shopwatch scheme be supported in principle and that Cllr Heron liaise with the Chamber of Trade on the details of the scheme, prior to the Council considering a level of contribution.

**F/4157  
APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES**

Members considered the appointment of Cllr Peter Chambers to committees and noted his wish to be appointed to the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee, Christmas Lights Working Party and Web Site Sub-Committee. As the Council had previously agreed that a maximum of eight members sit on each

standing committee, the Town Clerk advised that one member would have to stand down from Recreation Committee or the Council would need to agree to increase the membership of that Committee. He also reminded members that Cllr Mrs Wiseman still wished to serve on the Planning, Town & Environment Committee.

After some discussion, Members agreed that the decision to limit membership of standing committees to a maximum of eight members needed to be changed as it would be unacceptable to deny Cllr Chambers, a newly elected member, the opportunity to sit on a Standing Committee and would not be appropriate to remove an existing member from a committee.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllr Peter Chambers be appointed to the Christmas Lights Working Party and Web Site Sub-Committee.

**RECOMMENDED:** That Standing Orders as to Meetings be suspended to enable the membership of two Committees to be increased to allow Cllr Peter Chambers to be appointed to the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee and Cllr Mrs Angela Wiseman to be appointed to the Planning, Town & Environment Committee.

#### **F/4158**

##### **STUDENT ADVISORS**

The Town Clerk reported on the meeting between the members appointed to meet the representatives of the School and advised the Committee that Ringwood School was interviewing students for the position of Student Advisors. There was considerable interest amongst the students to take part. The names of the students would be reported to Council next week and it was hoped that some of them would be able to attend that meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted and the appointment of two Student Advisors to each Committee be confirmed.

#### **F/4159**

##### **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

Members considered the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places being carried out by New Forest District Council.

It was noted that Cllr Chambers had commented on the suitability of the Crow WI hall as a polling station as the access was poor, with limited car parking and no pavement access for pedestrians. Cllr Clarke commented that there were very few houses within walking distance of Bisterne Village Hall and felt that, as most people had to drive to this polling station, it would possible for voters in this area to drive into town. Notwithstanding these issues, the Committee did not believe it was in the best interest of residents to recommend changes to existing arrangements.

**RESOLVED:** That no change be recommended to the Polling Districts and Polling Places in Ringwood.

#### **F/4160**

##### **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

The Town Clerk reported that, during the recent period of heavy rainfall, some members of the public had enquired about emergency arrangements within the town. Details of the District Council's arrangements had been circulated to members and the Committee was now invited to consider whether it should establish a small working party of volunteers to complete an Emergency Plan template for the town.

Cllr Terry had recently attended a meeting of the Ringwood Rotary Club, whose members were concerned that there was not a directory of telephone numbers for contacts in the event of an emergency.

Cllr Heron said that the Council would be able to provide some information for a directory and could act as a signpost to other agencies, such as the District and County Councils and the Environment Agency. However, he did not support the Town Council taking on this project.

**RESOLVED:** That Ringwood Rotary Club be asked if they wished to complete the Emergency Plan template provided by the District Council, which included a directory of emergency contact numbers.

#### **F/4161**

#### **DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT**

The Town Clerk informed members that an update on the programme of works for the provision of disabled facilities would be presented to the Committee in October. In the meantime, he reported that it was necessary to provide one disabled parking bay at the rear of the office, an increased area of hardstanding outside the Clerk's office and widening of the footpath to the side and front of the building. A quotation of £1500 had been received to install a ramp to the back door and it was agreed that further work should be carried out to try to minimise this cost.

**RESOLVED:** That the location of the disabled parking bay, outside the toilets at the rear of Greenways, be approved and that Cllr Clarke discuss the overall scheme with the Technical Officer.

#### **F/4162**

#### **HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS (HAPTC)**

Members considered two resolutions to be put to the HAPTC AGM on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2007, as follows:

- 1) It is resolved that unless the National Association of Local Councils is able to evidence improvements in service provision, effective communications and levels of national lobbying and representation, the Hampshire Association of Parish and Town Councils will consider a 'Motion of Withdrawal from Membership' at AGM 2008.
- 2) It is resolved that following members consultation and revision by the Standing Orders Committee of the Executive, the Hampshire Association of Parish and Town Councils adopts the attached Constitution and Standing Orders as its Governing Documents with immediate effect.

Members also considered appointing a second member to attend the AGM.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Council's delegate be authorised to decide how to vote on the resolutions at the HAPTC AGM.
- 2) That no second member be appointed to attend the HAPTC AGM.

#### **F/4163**

#### **RINGWOOD FESTIVAL**

Members considered the minutes of Ringwood Festival Steering Committee meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007 (*Annex 'B'*).

Cllr Ford reported that Cllr Cracknell would be retiring from the Committee and it was therefore necessary to appoint another councillor to take on the role of Chairman. She said that, although she was currently Vice Chairman, she would be unable to take on the role of Chairman due to other commitments.

Cllr Heron congratulated all involved in organising such an excellent event and urged members to join the Committee.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the minutes of the Festival Steering Committee meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007 be received and the proposals therein be approved.
- 2) That Cllr Terry and Cllr Mrs Terry be appointed to the Festival Steering Committee.

**F/4164  
FARMERS MARKETS**

The Town Clerk reported that Hampshire Farmers Markets would take place in Ringwood on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> April, 19<sup>th</sup> July and 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and that these dates had been approved by the market operator.

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

**F/4165  
FLOOD WARDEN SEMINAR**

Members noted that the Environment Agency's annual Flood Warden Seminar would take place in Gillingham on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007 and that Cllr Cole had expressed an interest in attending.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllr Cole be authorised to attend the Flood Warden Seminar and that his reasonable travel expenses be paid.

**F/4166  
AIR TRAINING CORPS CIVILIAN COMMITTEE**

The Town Clerk reported that the next meeting of the Air Training Corps Civilian Committee would take place at 7.30pm on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September in Fordingbridge and that former Cllr Scriven had been appointed to attend previous meetings.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllr Ford be authorised to attend the next meeting of the Air Training Corps Civilian Committee and that her reasonable travel expenses be paid.

**F/4167  
EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:** That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they were instructed to withdraw. (*Annex 'C'*)

**F/4168  
FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2008/09 TO 2011/12**

Members considered the Finance Manager's report (*Annex 'D'*), which included recommendations for preparing budgets for 2008/09.

Members determined that the indicative forecast budget level for 2008/09 is £316,000, after allowing for inflation (3%) and after deducting the non-recurring expenditure items included in the base budget for 2007/08 (£48,170), but not including transfers from the General Reserve or any new bids.

It was noted that the Council Tax level would increase from 2008/09 by 1% for approximately every £3,700 increase in the net revenue budget.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) That the indicative base budget for 2008/09 be £316,000.
- 2) That Standing Committees be requested to follow the guidelines set out below when preparing budgets for 2008/09:

- i) Identify any essential and mandatory revenue expenditure/income bids.
- ii) Identify other revenue expenditure/income bids and rank them in order, with no. 1 being the highest ranking.
- iii) All capital expenditure bids must be assessed, and show how each one will be financed. Those that will be financed fully or partly from revenue must be prioritised with the other revenue expenditure bids.
- iv) Identify savings in existing revenue budgets and indicate the effect on the service.

**F/4169  
STAFFING**

The Town Clerk advised members on arrangements to replace the Support Services Assistant and proposed reorganisation of the administrative posts to give greater flexibility.

**RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

**F/4170  
MOUNT PLEASANT LANE**

Members discussed correspondence relating to the right of way through Mount Pleasant Lane.

**RESOLVED:** That the latest position be noted.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.05pm.