

OPEN SESSION: There were 3 members of public present, who did not wish to speak.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 20th June 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 W S Rippon-Swaine.

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Heron declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 11 as his daughter was a member of Ringwood Rangers Youth Football Club. He also declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 16 as one of Council's nominees and Chairman of the Ringwood Youth Club Management Committee.

Cllr Ford declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6, as she was a member of the Friends of Ringwood Medical Centre Committee.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Martin Townsend, Finance Manager
Cllr A C Wiseman

F/4125

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th May 2007, having been previously circulated, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/4126

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 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.

F/4127

REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Members considered the Finance Manager's report (*Annex 'B'*). It was noted that the Government now required Councils to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of systems of internal control and publish a statement on internal control.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and arrangements be made for the next review to be carried out between January and March 2008.

F/4128

INTERNAL AUDIT 2006/07

The Finance Manager presented the Internal Audit Report for 2006/07 (*Annex 'C'*) 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.

RESOLVED: That the response to the Internal Audit Report 2006/07 as shown at Annex 'C' be approved.

F/4129

DRAFT FINAL ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2007

The Finance Manager presented the Draft Final Accounts and Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2007 (*Annex 'D'*).

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That the actual income and expenditure accounts for 2006/07 and balance sheet as at 31st March 2007 be approved.
- 2) That the transfer from the General Reserve of £29,580.09 for 2006/07 be approved.
- 3) That the Annual Return for 2006/07 be approved.

F/4130

GRANT AID

Members considered applications for grant aid.

Cllr Mrs Ford declared her personal and prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting during the discussion of the grant application from Friends of Ringwood Medical Centre.

Cllr Heron suggested that the Council could purchase the item required by the Medical Centre and could loan it to the Centre and therefore save the VAT of £47.25.

Cllr Cracknell whilst not against support for the Medical Centre believed the Council should avoid setting precedents for this type of grant. However, members agreed that this was a facility providing a great benefit to the community.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That, under Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972, £50 be awarded to Hampshire Children and Families Forum to assist with the provision of high quality play opportunities for young people with severe to moderate special needs.
- 2) That, under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, £200 be awarded to Friends of Ringwood Medical Centre towards the cost of a leg treatment stool.

F/4131

RINGWOOD SHOPWATCH SCHEME

The Town Clerk reported that Ringwood Police was in the process of trying to set up a Shopwatch Scheme with the aim of protecting shoppers and shops and forging better links amongst the community of retailers to enable them to deal with crime in a more focused way. It was noted that the cost of the scheme in the first year would be £3,175.

Cllr Heron reported that there had been a previous attempt to launch this scheme in the town, but there had been no interest from traders. He therefore suggested that, until the Police received a strong expression of interest from traders, the Council should not commit financially to the scheme.

RESOLVED: That the Shopwatch scheme be supported in principle and that the request for funding be reconsidered on receipt of firm evidence of support from the traders.

F/4132

FINANCIAL REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES

The Town Clerk reported that the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee had given further consideration to tennis facilities in the town and had agreed to the removal of the tennis pavilion and to introduce full public access to the hard and grass courts. The Committee had also agreed to contribute £500 towards promotion of tennis and holding a tournament, to be organised by Ringwood Health and Leisure.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

F/4133

SMOKE FREE POLICY

Members considered a draft Smoke Free Policy (*Annex 'E'*), as required by the Smoke Free Regulations due to come into effect on 1st July 2007.

RECOMMENDED: That the Smoke Free Policy be adopted.

F/4134

VANDALISM

The Town Clerk advised Members that there was a high level of vandalism and antisocial behaviour being reported at Carvers Recreation Ground. He had recently met with a Police Officer on site to discuss several issues and had been informed that police were not always rostered to be on duty in the town every Friday and Saturday night. This was a concern as whilst there appeared to be a shortage of resources at times when officers were needed two uniformed officers and two PCSOs had been seen on duty in the town at the same time during the day.

He also reported that he had been in touch with Hampshire Constabulary since January offering £6,000 towards Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), subject to the inclusion of a provision in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that officers issue fixed penalty notices for offences such as dog fouling and dropping of litter. The Hampshire Constabulary took the view that as this task was included in the PCSOs job descriptions, it was therefore not necessary to include an additional item in the SLA. However, it was noted that the Chief Constable could unilaterally alter this job description and the Council would have no control. The Town Clerk indicated that if the PCSOs were going to issue fixed penalty notices then in the spirit of true partnership there was no reason not to include a provision in the SLA. It was also noted that although funding for PCSOs in the New Forest had been reduced and there would be one third less PCSOs appointed (30 down to 19) the number allocated to Ringwood had been halved (4 to 2).

Cllr Heron said that there was a need to make provision for young people but also for the Police to attend promptly and to be available at the times when problems were likely to occur, i.e. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights.

It was noted that Members would have an opportunity to discuss these issues with Inspector Fry when she attended the next Full Council meeting.

RESOLVED: That this information be noted.

**F/4135
USE OF TOWN CREST**

Cllr Heron declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the room during discussion of this item.

Members considered a request from Ringwood Rangers Football Club (formerly New Forest Rangers) to use the Town Crest as part of its new logo, to show the Club's association with the town. It was noted that the football shirts were yellow and green and it had therefore been proposed that the banners be coloured in green, rather than yellow, which wouldn't show up on the shirts.

Cllr Terry suggested that a template be developed, with a blank banner at the bottom of the crest, which could be used by any clubs or organisations in the town.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That the request from Ringwood Rangers Football Club be not approved but,
- 2) That the Club be advised that the design would be acceptable if the two footballs were removed.

**F/4136
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

Members considered the notes of the Christmas Lights Working Party held on 11th June 2007 (*Annex 'F'*). The Town Clerk reported that proposals had been prioritised by the Working Party. However, it was noted that additional lights in the churchyard would cost approximately £10,000, which was about £3,000 in excess of the budget available; including the £1,000 offered by the Chamber of Trade. Other projects could only then be achieved with sponsorship.

RESOLVED: 1) That the notes of the Christmas Lights Working Party held on 11th June 2007 be received and the proposals therein be approved;
2) That £3,000 be taken from Reserves to meet the additional costs of providing lights in the churchyard; and
3) That the further additional lighting identified and presented in the notes be provided only if sufficient sponsorship is obtained to cover the full costs.

**F/4137
RINGWOOD FESTIVAL**

Members considered the minutes of Ringwood Festival Steering Committee meetings held on 29th May and 11th June 2007 (*Annex 'G'*).

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received and proposals approved.

**F/4138
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 'H'*)

F/4139

GRAFITTI AT CARVERS SKATE PARK

The Town Clerk reported on the responses from the parents of the young people who had vandalised the skate park with graffiti.

RESOLVED: That in the exceptional circumstances now reported no further action be taken to recover the cost of repainting the skate park.

F/4140

CONNEXIONS

The Town Clerk reported that the work of Connexions was being transferred to the control of Hampshire County Council. Cllr Heron said that he would not want to see this move lead to a reduction in provision in the town.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30pm.