

OPEN SESSION: There were several members of the public present, who gave notice that they wished to speak on an item on the agenda.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 21st November 2007 at 8.10pm

Apologies

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr N J Chard, Cllr D E Cracknell, Cllr M F J Daly and Cllr L C Ford.

Declarations of Interest

There were none.

PRESENT: Cllr J D Heron (Chairman)
Cllr N R G Clarke
Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine
Cllr B H Terry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Martin Townsend, Finance Manager
Cllr P Chambers
Cllr Mrs A Wiseman
Rachel Giles, Student Adviser
James Fullick, Student Adviser

F/4187

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

F/4181: It was noted that Members had agreed to pay Ringwood and Fordingbridge Talking News £25 per issue for the production of an audio version of the Council's quarterly newsletter, a total of £100 per annum. The minutes were amended accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2007, as amended, be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/4188

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 Terry signed the report.
- 2) That the list of Petty Cash payments be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Terry signed the report.
- 3) That the Statement of Town Council Balances be received and noted.
- 4) That the Inter Account Transfer be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Terry signed the report.

F/4189
GRANT AID

Members considered applications for grant aid.

Mrs J Gratwick from Bisterne Village Committee explained that the Committee's annual accounts showed that £3,000 had been spent on internal decoration and new curtains last year. The accounts showed a deficit of income over expenditure of £800. Funding was now required to improve the fire exits to comply with new regulations. Members agreed that the community spirit in Bisterne was the envy of most small villages in the area and were pleased to support a grant towards essential works to the Village Hall.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That, under Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972, £150 be awarded to Ringwood Rotary Club towards costs of the Christmas Eve carol service in the Market Place.
- 2) That, under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, £300 be awarded to Victim Support Hampshire and Isle of Wight towards the cost of training volunteers.
- 3) That, under Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972, £600 be awarded to Forest Forge Theatre Company to support the Company's programme of work in 2008, and in particular the Youth Theatre.
- 4) That, under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, £350 be awarded to Bisterne Village Hall Committee towards fire safety and refurbishment costs.

F/4190
COMMITTEE BUDGET 2008/09

Members considered a Report and Appendices in respect of

- 1) Expenditure items included in the Budget for 2007/08;
- 2) New Budget Proposals for 2008/09;
- 3) Revised Budget for 2007/08 and Original Budget for 2008/09 for the Policy and Finance Committee.

In considering the Committee's new budget proposals, the following comments were made:

Item 8 – It was noted that the Town Plan Coordinating Committee had recommended that this item be deleted, as it could not justify the employment of a Project Officer following completion of the Town Plan to undertake work that was already within the work programmes of existing officers. However, it was recommended that £3,000 be included in the budget for residual costs of issuing and implementing the Town Plan.

Item 12 – Members supported the need for noticeboards to be located in areas where residents did not receive local newspapers. However, it was agreed to reduce the budget to £1,000 to enable the provision of one noticeboard in 2008/09 and include a similar sum in the 2009/10 budget for a second one.

Items 13 & 14 – Members agreed that GIS mapping and a File Management System would help to improve efficiency in the office

Item 15 – It was noted that the Youth Management Committee had agreed that there should be a meeting of all agencies providing for young people to determine who is doing what and where funding is going. Members would then be in a better position to consider any application for funding from the WOTS project.

Christmas Lights – it was agreed to reduce the budget by £2,000 to £8,400 for 2008/09.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Expenditure Report in respect of the Budget Provision for 2007/08 (*Annex 'B'*) be noted.
- 2) That the Committee's prioritised Budget Proposals for 2008/09 (*Annex 'C'*) be approved.
- 3) That the revised Budget 2007/08 and Original Budget 2008/09, as amended, for the Policy & Finance Committee (*Annex 'D'*) be approved.

F/4192

COUNCIL BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2008/09

Members considered a Report and Appendices on the Council's budget and precept for 2008/09.

The Finance Manager reported that the Council's revised budget for 2007/08 showed savings in the region of £20,000. As a result, it would be possible to transfer a maximum of £29,000 to the 2008/09 budget to maintain the General Reserve balance of £150,000.

Members considered the provisional Precept requirement, which was based on the assumption that all new budget proposals would be approved, and the effect this would have on the Council Tax Levels. It was agreed that there was a need to make further savings. Members therefore considered the individual Committee budgets as follows:

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee

At the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr Chambers explained that the Committee had prioritised its list of new budget proposals with the expectation that savings may be required. It was therefore agreed to delete items 14 and 15 and reduce item 13 to £20,000, with the remaining £20,000 deferred to 2009/10, as it would be possible to phase the work over two years.

Planning, Town & Environment

It was noted that the Committee's first priority for street lighting may now be carried out as part of a bid to the County Council's Country Towns Initiative (CTI), and that the second priority may only require one additional lighting column. It was therefore agreed to reduce the budget for street lighting to £1,000. It was further agreed to delete the item for bicycle racks as provision may also be included in the CTI bid.

It was further agreed that each Committee should be requested to review its budget in order to make further savings, in advance of the Precept being recommended to the December meeting of Full Council.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the provisional base budget for Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee, as set out in *Annex 'E'* be approved.
- 2) That the provisional new budget proposals in *Annex 'F'* for Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee, as amended at the meeting, be accepted and included in the Council's overall budget for 2008/09.
- 3) That the provisional base budget for Planning, Town & Environment Committee, as set out in *Annex 'G'*, be approved.
- 4) That the provisional new budget proposals in *Annex 'H'* for Planning, Town & Environment Committee, as amended at the meeting, be accepted and included in the Council's overall budget for 2008/09.
- 5) That the provisional base budget for Policy & Finance Committee, as set out in *Annex 'D'* be approved.

- 6) That the provisional new budget proposals in *Annex 'C'* for Policy & Finance Committee be accepted and included in the Council's overall budget for 2008/09.
- 7) That the provisional budget for each Committee be referred back to each Committee for further consideration.

F/4193

DOG CONTROL ORDERS

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report (*Annex 'I'*), which referred to consultation by New Forest District Council on the options available to implement new provisions under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

RESOLVED: That, in line with decisions made by the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces and Planning, Town & Environment Committees, Option 4 be the Council's preferred option and that a composite Order be made by the District Council for the whole of the district.

F/4194

HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS – MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk reported that Hampshire Association of Local Councils had launched a new Management Development Programme for Chairmen and Councillors and that Cllrs Wiseman, Chambers and Urwin had expressed an interest in attending some or all of the modules.

RESOLVED: That Cllrs Wiseman, Chambers and Urwin be authorised to attend HALC's Management Development Programme and that their reasonable travel expenses be paid.

F/4195

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 'J'*)

The Student Advisers left the meeting.

F/4196

STAFFING MATTERS

Members considered matters in relation to staff contracts and arrangements for the reorganisation of the office staffing structure.

RESOLVED: That the staffing proposals as reported be approved.

F/4197

MOUNT PLEASANT LANE

The Town Clerk informed members of correspondence received regarding the right of way over Mount Pleasant Lane.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.40pm.