

OPEN SESSION: There were no members of the public present.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on 19 November 2008 at 7.00pm

Apologies

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

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Urwin and Cllr Clarke indicated that they would be declaring a personal and prejudicial interest in the grant application from Forest Forge, as they are both members of the Board. Cllr Christine Ford indicated that she would declare a personal interest as a Friend of the Forest Forge Theatre Company (see F/4325).

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Martin Townsend, Finance Manager
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Bryannie Thurston, Student Advisor
James Fullick, Student Advisor

F/4321

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2008, having been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

F/4322

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 Cllr Mrs Woodfield signed the report.
- 2) That the list of Petty Cash payments be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Cllr Mrs Woodfield 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 Cllr Mrs Woodfield signed the report.

| |
|-------------------------------|
| ACTION Martin Townsend |
|-------------------------------|

F/4323

COMMITTEE BUDGET 2009/10

Members considered a review of new budget proposals approved for 2008/09 (*Annex 'B'*). It was noted that only two items had not yet been implemented, those being the external redecoration of Greenways and refurbishment of the Jubilee Lamp.

Members considered the revised budget for 2008/09 and proposed original budget for 2009/10 (*Annex 'C'*). It was noted that, taking out unexpected expenditure and income, the Committee's budget was underspent by approximately £10,000. The Chairman therefore recommended that it might be possible for the budget to be tightened with a contingency amount built in that could only be spent by agreement of the Committee. However, it was noted that the underspend had been achieved by a large number of small savings across most budget heads. The Chairman also recommended that there was a need to look to achieve a balanced budget within two years.

It was noted that income amounting to £2,500 had been omitted from the 2008/09 revised budget. This related to a grant for the drop-in centre.

Members considered new proposals for inclusion in the Committee's budget for 2009/10 and prioritised the items, as shown in *Annex 'D'*.

It was noted that there would be a requirement to purchase a new server in the 2010/11 financial year, which would cost in the region of £5,000. The Chairman suggested that, in future, the base budget should include a provision for replacement IT equipment, to allow for such expenditure.

Members also considered issues arising from Town Plan consultations to be dealt with in the short term (years 1-4), and the extent of any provision to be made in the budget for 2009/10 and future years for. It was agreed that priority should be given to climate change and the design of a town brand and that further information and costings should be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the review of new budget approvals for 2008/09 (*Annex 'B'*) be noted.
- 2) That the revised budget for 2008/08 and draft base budget for 2009/10 (*Annex 'C'*) be approved.
- 3) That the new proposals for inclusion in the Committee's budget for 2009/10 be approved for consideration as part of the Council's overall budget and ranked in order of priority as shown in *Annex 'D'*.

| |
|--------------------------------------|
| ACTION Martin Townsend |
|--------------------------------------|

F/4324

DRAFT COUNCIL BUDGET 2009/10

Members considered the draft budget and precept proposals for 2009/10 (*Annex 'E'*).

The Finance Manager advised Members that it would not be prudent to reduce the general reserve any further and it would therefore be necessary for Members to decide at what level they wished to set the Precept, which would then determine how much would be available for new budget proposals. Members felt that it would not be possible to fund all new proposals and therefore agreed to ask all committees to identify critical items within their prioritised list of proposals.

The Town Clerk informed Members that an opportunity had arisen to purchase a slightly newer ride-on mower than the John Deere that requires a new deck (item 4 in Recreation Committee's new budget proposals) and to trade in the John Deere for £1750. In addition, a potential purchaser for the old Massey Ferguson tractor had been identified. He therefore asked Members to consider the transfer of funds from the general reserve to enable the replacement of both the tractor and ride-on mower in the current financial year rather than wait until 2009/10 when the current opportunity may be list.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That funds be transferred from the general reserve to enable the Massey Ferguson tractor and John Deere ride-on mower to be replaced in the current financial year.
- 2) That the provisional base budget for Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee be noted.

- 3) That the provisional priority proposals for Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee, with the exception of items 4 and 8 which would now be funded in the current financial year, be noted.
- 4) That the provisional base budget for Planning, Town & Environment Committee be noted.
- 5) That the provisional priority proposals for Planning, Town & Environment Committee be noted.
- 6) That all committees be asked to review their prioritised budget proposals to identify those items critical to the Council's operational needs and service provision.

| |
|--|
| ACTION Martin Townsend, Claire Perrens (item 6) |
|--|

**F/4325
GRANT AID**

Members considered applications for grant aid.

It was noted that the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group held large reserves and that they had not visited any farmers in the town during the last year.

Cllr Clarke and Cllr Urwin declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the application from Forest Forge as they are both members of the Board. They both made a statement and left the room whilst this item was discussed.

Cllr Ford declared a personal interest in the application from Forest Forge as she is a Friend of the Theatre Company. The student advisors also declared personal interests as they both have friends involved in Forest Forge.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That no grant be awarded to Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.
- 2) That, under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, a grant of £300 be awarded to Victim Support Hants & Isle of Wight to train community based volunteers.
- 3) That, under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, a grant of £200 be awarded to Ringwood Debt Advice Centre towards running costs.
- 4) That, under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, a grant of £150 be awarded to Ringwood Rotary Club for Christmas Eve Festivities.
- 5) That, under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, a grant of £700 be awarded to Forest Forge to maintain its outreach programme of works.

| |
|---------------------------------|
| ACTION Alyson Greenfield |
|---------------------------------|

**F/4326
RINGWOOD FESTIVAL**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Ringwood Festival Steering Committee (*attached as Annex 'F'*).

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Ringwood Festival Steering Committee held on 27 October 2008, and the proposals therein, be approved.

| |
|--------------------------|
| ACTION Sue Godwin |
|--------------------------|

**F/4327
DIRECT ELECTIONS TO ENGLISH NATIONAL PARKS & BROADS AUTHORITY**

Members considered a draft response being made by New Forest District Council in respect of the consultation issued by the Government on the introduction of direct elections of members to the National

Park bodies. The Government's proposal provides only for direct elections to replace those members currently appointed/nominated by local authorities. The Government is not proposing to change or reduce the number of, or way in which, government nominations to the National Park are made.

RECOMMENDED: That the Council's response to the consultation be based on the District Council's response (*Annex 'G'*), with the addition of the following comments:
1) The Council is of the opinion that there is no necessity for national members.
ii) The Council is of the opinion that all directly elected members should come from the area covered by the national park.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4328

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS

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' attached*).

P/4329

PROPOSED EXTENSION TO RINGWOOD CEMETERY

Members noted the results of the tendering process carried out by the District Council for the tier one soil investigation. The total sum was well within the estimated amount as set out in the Feasibility Report.

RESOLVED: That action taken by the Town Clerk to accept the tender be approved.

ACTION Terry Simpson

P/4330

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

Members considered arrangements for undertaking the duties of Responsible Finance Officer for the Town Council. It was noted that the Town Clerk currently held this position but that, as the accounts were now being dealt with by a qualified accountant, it was recommended that this responsibility be moved to the Finance Manager.

RESOLVED: That the Finance Manager take on the roll of Responsible Finance Officer with effect from 1st December 2008.

ACTION Jo Stannard

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.05pm.

Note: The text in the Action Boxes above does not form part of these minutes.