

OPEN SESSION: There was one member of the public present, who did not wish to speak.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 23rd January 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 D E Cracknell and Cllr M F J Daly.

Declarations of Interest

There were none.

PRESENT: Cllr J D Heron (Chairman)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr N R G Clarke
Cllr L C Ford
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 Mrs A Wiseman
Cllr P Chambers
Rachel Giles, Student Adviser
James Fullick, Student Adviser

F/4210

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2007 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

F/4211

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

The Finance Manager reported that the forecast for the Council's net expenditure was likely to be in excess of the revised budget by approximately £2,000, due to a reduction of income from rental of 92 Southampton Road. Members agreed that every effort should be made to obtain the rent arrears, if necessary through the small claims court and use of bailiffs.

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

F/4212
ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2007

The Finance Manager reported that the District Auditor's certificate had been received for the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2007, with no recommendations.

RESOLVED: That this information be noted.

F/4213
CONTRACT FOR INSURANCE COVER FOR 2008/09

The Finance Manager reported that he would be inviting tenders for the Council's insurances during February 2008, in order that a new contract could be effected from 31st May 2008. Tenders would be invited on one, three and five year periods.

RESOLVED: That the Finance Manager's proposed action to invite tenders for the Council's insurance supplier be approved.

F/4214
COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Members considered a recommendation from the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee to remove reference to the provision of community facilities in the town from that Committee's Capital Programme at the present time.

RESOLVED: That reference to the provision of community facilities be removed from the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee's Capital Programme at the present time.

F/4215
FILE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Town Clerk reported that a quotation had been received from a local company for a new File Management System, provision for which had been included in the 2008/09 budget. He asked for Members approval to continue working with this local company in order to develop an efficient system, with adequate local support.

Cllr Chard was concerned that the Council would not be seeking three quotations. However, he said that he would be satisfied provided officers involved the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee in the process.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That Financial Regulations and Standing Orders relating to contracts be waived by not obtaining three quotations, to enable officers to work with a local company to develop an efficient File Management System.
- 2) That the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee be kept apprised of work relating to the provision of the system.

F/4216
RINGWOOD SCHOOL – SPONSORSHIP OF YEAR 6 QUIZ EVENT

Members considered a request from Year 13 Leisure students from Ringwood School for a donation of £20 to cover the costs of a quiz being organised for Year 6 students from local feeder schools.

RESOLVED: That a contribution of £20 be made to Ringwood School towards the organisation of a Year 6 quiz event.

F/4217**HAMPSHIRE PENSION FUND – 2008 SCHEME CHANGES**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that, with effect from 1st April 2008, pension contributions paid by employees would be based on an agreed table of pay ranges. It was therefore necessary for the Council to agree a policy of when to change an employee's contribution rate when the employee's pay moves into a new pay range during the financial year.

RESOLVED: That, should an employee's pay move into a new pay range for contributions to the Hampshire Pension Fund during the financial year, their contribution rate should change with immediate effect.

The Finance Manager left the meeting at 7.25pm.

F/4218**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR NEW FOREST 2008-2012 AND HAMPSHIRE 2007-2017**

Members considered the Town Clerk's report and the draft responses to the two community strategies that had been prepared with the Mayor and Chairmen of the Policy & Finance and Planning, Town & Environment Committees (*Annex 'B'*).

With regard to section 12 Transport in the District Council's strategy, Cllr Mrs Wiseman said that congestion on the A31 had a knock on effect in Christchurch Road and Moortown Lane, as well as Eastfield Lane, and asked for these roads to be included in the response. This was agreed.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That the responses to the Hampshire County and New Forest District Council's Sustainable Community Strategies, as amended, be approved.
- 2) That, with regard to the District Council's Strategy, the Town Council further comments that:
 - i) The period covered by the Strategy is too short; and
 - ii) The document does not fulfil the essential requirement of a Strategy and that, to achieve this, the District Council be urged to give consideration to including within the priority/outcomes columns in the document an additional column showing how the outcome will be achieved and any threats or obstacles which might affect achievement of those outcomes.

F/4219**COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP**

Cllr Chambers suggested that the Council make representation through Hampshire Association of Local Councils against the Government's proposals to transfer public assets to non-democratically elected bodies.

Members were concerned that, under the proposals, any group of people could ask to take over public facilities. There was also concern that, if the new arrangements did not work, local councils would be responsible for putting things right.

RECOMMENDED: That the Council make representation through Hampshire Association of Local Councils against the Government's proposals to transfer public assets to non-democratically elected bodies.

F/4220
RINGWOOD FESTIVAL

Members considered the minutes of Ringwood Festival Steering Committee meeting held on 7th January 2008 (*Annex 'C'*).

It was noted that £6,252.60 had been committed to date and that the budget, including the £3,000 that the Council had agreed to underwrite the event, was sufficient to cover these costs. However, it was now important for members of the Festival Committee to seek sponsorship in order that the event could raise money for the charities it had agreed to support.

In response to a question from Cllr Clarke about the District Council's proposed new application form for road closures, the Town Clerk reported that it had been agreed that, until the issues of concern had been resolved, the current arrangements would continue.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Festival Steering Committee meeting held on 7th January 2008 be received and the proposals therein be approved.

F/4221
MEMBERS TRAINING

It was noted that Hampshire Association of Local Councils was offering a series of training courses, as follows:

- Partnership Working and Community Engagement – 18th February – Botley
- Core Skills for (New) Councillors – 19th March – Alton
- Representing and Leading Communities – 19th June - Southampton

In addition, the New Forest Community Safety Partnership was organising a free seminar in Calshot on 6th March on crime and disorder issues.

RESOLVED: That up to four members be authorised to attend each of the training courses and that their reasonable travel expenses be paid.

F/4222
ECO-FRIENDLY COTTON BAGS

The Town Clerk reported that he had received an approach from a natural eco-friendly cotton bag supplier to purchase cotton bags in order to minimise the use of plastic bags in the town. The cost to the Council of purchasing 5000 bags would be £4,950.

Cllr Heron said that the Chamber of Trade had previously looked at providing these bags. However, there was no support from the supermarkets and, although some of the smaller shops were interested, they could not afford to give the bags away unless they were subsidised.

James Fullick commented that there would be a need to determine where the bags came from, as Ringwood was a Fairtrade town.

RESOLVED: That the Council does not purchase cotton bags, due to the costs involved.

F/4223
ELLINGHAM AND RINGWOOD RUGBY CLUB

The Town Clerk reported that the draft Lease between Hampshire County Council and the Rugby Club now incorporated provision for all the items raised by the Committee at its meeting on 18th July 2007. He

therefore asked Members to authorise the release of Developers' Contributions up to the maximum previously agreed upon completion of the Lease.

Members were conscious of the delay in agreeing the Lease and were concerned this may have a knock on effect on the cost of the project. It was therefore agreed that a clear undertaking was required that the scheme would be completed in accordance with the approved plans and that the Council would not be approached for additional funding.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the release of Developers' Contributions be authorised up to a maximum of £185,000, including costs already incurred on fees, upon completion of signing of the engrossed Lease.
- 2) That the Rugby Club be asked for a clear undertaking that the project would be completed and that they would not approach the Council for additional funding or for further funding from Developers' Contributions.

F/4224

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 'D'*)

Cllr Mrs Wiseman and the Student Advisers left the meeting.

F/4225

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WORKING PARTY

Members considered the notes of the Christmas Lights Working Party held on 15th January 2008 and the recommendations therein.

Members were concerned that virtually all the funding for Christmas Lights had come from the Town Council and that the retail premises, which were benefiting from them, were making little contribution. It was suggested that the selected contractor could be asked to work in partnership with the Chamber of Trade to look at how the lights could be improved in future years.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That a Sub Committee comprising Councillors N Chard, J Heron and P Chambers be appointed to interview selected contractors and to allocate the contract for the next three year period.
- 2) That Mrs B Woodifield and Mrs B Charlton should be invited to attend the Sub-Committee meeting when the selected contractors are interviewed.
- 3) That Blachere and Millennium Quest be advised that their tenders will not be accepted on this occasion.
- 4) That Lighting & Illumination Technology Experience Ltd, Solent Power Systems Ltd, The Flag & Flagpole Company Ltd and Lamps & Tubes be invited to meet with the Sub-Committee in order that the Sub-Committee can determine which tender to accept.
- 5) That each company should be requested to provide details of work undertaken over the past three years for Members' consideration.
- 6) That, following the poor take-up of Christmas trees on shops last year, the decision of the Chamber of Trade not to be involved in provision of Christmas trees be noted.
- 7) That, in view of the decision taken by the Chamber of Trade, the Town Council writes to all commercial premises within Southampton Road, High Street, the Market Place, West Street that Christchurch Road adjoining Fridays Cross enquiring whether each one would be prepared to contribute towards the provision of cabling and Christmas trees on each

premises on the basis that all work associated therewith would be undertaken by contractors.

F/4226
STAFF MATTERS

The Committee had previously agreed a reorganisation of the office staffing structure and Members now considered the proposed job titles, hours of work and salary scales.

RESOLVED: That the changes to the office staffing structure, including the proposed salary scales, be approved.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20pm.