

OPEN SESSION: There was one member of the public present.

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on 16th September 2009 at 7.00pm PRESENT: Cllr J D Heron (Chairman)

Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine (Vice Chairman)

C Ford Cllr N J Chard Cllr N R G Clarke Cllr L
Cllr B H Terry Cllr M J Urwin

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk

Martin Townsend, Finance Manager

Claire Perrens, Meetings Administrator Richard

Eldred, Technical Officer

Cassie Ware, Student Advisor

Cllr M A Steele

Cllr A C Wiseman *The Chairman welcomed new*

Student Advisor, Cassie Ware, to her first Committee Meeting. **F/4445 APOLOGIES** The Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr B

F/4446 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST *Cllr Wiseman declared a personal and prejudicial interest in F/4462 Ringwood Town Football Club as she lives close by. Cllr Wiseman made a statement and answered questions and then left the room and took no part in the discussions or decision made. Cllr Chard declared a personal interest in F/4462 Ringwood Town Football Club, due to his connections with Bisterne Football Club.*

The Town Mayor, Cllr Ford, declared a personal and prejudicial interest in F/4466 Town Twinning Advertisement, as a close colleague and friend of the person in question. Cllr Ford left the room and took no part in the debate or decision made.

F/4447

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2009, having been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

F/4448 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

The Finance Manager presented a report on the receipts and payments of the 2009 Town Festival (*Annex 'A'*). There was a net deficit for the Festival of £1,511. The Council's approved budget included £3,000 to underwrite any deficit arising from the Festival. In anticipation of achieving a surplus on the Festival, its Committee had nominated two charities to benefit from the event. Since a loss had occurred this could not be achieved unless this Committee agreed that part of the budget to underwrite any loss could be used to grant aid the nominated charities. Members were therefore asked whether they wished to allow part of the unused Festival budget of £1,489 to be distributed between the two charities selected to benefit from the Festival, with the balance being vired to the Town Council's grants budget.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the list of cheque payments on the Imprest account be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Rippon-Swaine signed the report;
- 2) That the list of Petty Cash payments be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Rippon-Swaine signed the report;
- 3) That the Statement of Town Council Balances be received and noted;
- 4) That the Inter Account Transfers be authorised. Cllrs Heron and Rippon-Swaine signed the report;
- 5) That the Finance Manager's report and Summary Budget Reports be received and noted;
- 6) That the deficit for the Festival 2009 be noted;

- 7) That £700 be vired from the unused Festival budget to the Grants Paid budget; and that the Festival Committee be allocated £789 to be divided between its two charities: 2515 (Ringwood & Fordingbridge) Squadron Air 8 Training Corps and Age Concern-Day Care Trinity Centre, Ringwood.

ACTION Martin Townsend

F/4449GRANT AIDMembers considered applications for Grant Aid from NF Disability Information Service, Ringwood Debt Advice Centre and Woofability Community Interest Company.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That in view of the level of its unrestricted reserves, NF Disability Information Service be not awarded a grant;
- 2) That Ringwood Debt Advice Centre be not awarded a grant, but that further information about how previous grants were utilised and a simple statement of accounts be requested prior to any further application;
- 3) That, under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, a grant of £100 be awarded to Woofability Community Interest Company, to help fund the training of a puppy as an assistance dog for a disabled person in Ringwood.

ACTION Alyson Greenfield

F/4450COMMUNITY LED PILOT PLANNING LAUNCHMembers considered the appointment of two representatives to attend the meeting on 29th September from 6pm-9pm at Minstead Village Hall. Cllr Rippon-Swaine would be attending in his capacity as County Councillor.**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That Cllr Heron and Cllr B Terry be appointed to attend the Community Led Pilot Planning Launch on 29th September; and
- 2) That payment for their reasonable travel expenses to Minstead Village Hall and subsistence expenses be authorised.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4451

HEALTHIER HAMPSHIRE Members considered the Town Clerk's report (*attached as Annex 'B'*) regarding the Health & Wellbeing Partnership Strategy Consultation. They noted that there was currently no representation of Town and Parish Councils on The Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board, and commented that representation would be advantageous. The Town Clerk had prepared a Draft response to the consultation, following discussions with the Chairman. Members discussed the details of the response. Cllr Clarke commented that he had submitted a personal response also.**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Hampshire Association of Local Councils be invited to consider requesting the Partnership to invite one Member of the Association to serve on its Board; and
- 2) That the Draft response *attached as Annex 'B'* be approved for submission to the Partnership Board.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4452PROPOSED WORKS TO FIRST FLOOR OFFICESThe Technical Officer reported on proposed works to the Town Council's First Floor Offices. Following a condition survey, and consultation with a letting agent, he had identified items of work required and obtained some

quotations. He had also examined the lease document to ascertain the responsibilities of landlord and tenant. The outgoing tenant was responsible for redecoration and a quotation of £2,500 had been obtained for this work. Although in general good order, the lighting and electrical wiring and ring mains required updating to meet current standards. He circulated plans showing the existing large kitchen divided into a kitchenette and a fifth office, which should help to attract new tenants. This would only cost an extra £500 over and above the estimated £2,800-£2,900 to complete all works. The current tenant had left his telephone equipment and trunking for network cables, which may be of use to a new tenant.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Technical Officer's report on works to the first floor offices be noted;
- 2) That £2,800-£2,900 be approved from Reserves for works to first floor offices and that quotations for electrical, redecoration and plumbing works be accepted;
- 3) That £500 be approved from Reserves for the works to divide the kitchen to create a new office and update the kitchen; and
- 4) That the telephone equipment and trunking for network cables be left in situ in case they may be of use to a new tenant.

ACTION Richard Eldred / Martin Townsend

F/4453NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILSCllr Steele had attended the meeting to speak on this item, as he and Cllr Clarke represent the Town Council on the New Forest Association of Local Councils (NFALC). Cllr Steele said that he was very concerned about the situation with the management of NFALC. Cllr Clarke said he would compile a three year business / finance plan for NFALC. This would provide a framework of minimum consultative functions and the writing of some key papers, along with a finance plan. It was hoped that if this business plan was accepted, no further action against NFALC would be necessary.

The Town Clerk commented that the aims of NFALC are not being met and that the business plan would force recognition of this fact. He suggested that it was important no changes were made to the constitution as proposed by NFALC at a Special General Meeting on 17th September, until Cllr Clarke's plan was in place.

Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) had also addressed the Town Council's concerns about the use of funding by NFALC, until a review had been conducted (*Minute F/4439 15.07.09 refers*). HALC now had this in hand.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the preparation of a business plan for NFALC proposed by Cllr Clarke and Cllr Steele be approved;
- 2) That it be recommended that no change to the NFALC constitution be made until the business plan is in place.

ACTION Cllr Clarke, Cllr Steele, Terry Simpson

F/4454MAYOR'S CONSORTMembers considered the purchase of a small badge for the Mayor's Consort, similar to that approved for the Mayor's Cadet (*Minute F/4426, 17.06.09 refers*). The badge will be suitable for a male or female consort. The Finance Manager suggested that, if necessary, the unallocated £100 Mayor's allowance could be used to fund this.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That a badge for the Mayor's Consort be purchased, if necessary funded from the unallocated Mayor's Allowance budget of £100; and
- 2) That it be noted the badge is not a cost related to the post of Town Mayor as a consort's badge would also have been necessary for a consort to the Chairman of the Council.

ACTION Sue Godwin / Martin Townsend

F/4455

HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (HALC) Members considered the appointment of two Town Council representatives to attend to the HALC AGM on 10th October 2009 in Winchester.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the appointment of Cllr Clarke and Cllr Steele, as Town Council representatives at the HALC AGM on 10th October be confirmed; and
- 2) That payment for their reasonable travel expenses to Winchester and subsistence expenses be authorised.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4456

STANDARDS COMMITTEE The Town Clerk drew Members attention to *Ethical Bulletin No 3* from Standards Committee (previously circulated with Bulletin 20.08.09) and proposals that standards issues be included for discussion at Council meetings. This was not considered necessary or appropriate. Members were always fully informed on probity matters and arrangements were already in place for standards issues to be reviewed on an annual basis. The *Ethical Bulletin* would continue to be circulated.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That standards issues not be included for discussion at regular Council meetings; and
- 2) That the current arrangements for consideration of standards issues and the annual reminder of the need to complete a Standards Declaration of Interest form be continued.

ACTION Jo Stannard

F/4457 JUBILEE LAMP

The Town Clerk reported that the Jubilee Lamp would need maintaining on an 'ad hoc' basis as it was now unsuitable for an annual maintenance contract. It was proposed that a working group, to include at least one Member, be set up to investigate and make recommendations on a refurbishment scheme for the Jubilee Lamp. The Town Clerk had already found a number of members of the public to volunteer and two new Student Advisors had also agreed to join the group. There were other facilities in the Market Place, such as the Town Safe, Sundial and 'Human Clock' and these could be included in the remit of the working group, creating, with the Lamp, a more attractive package for grant applications.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That it be noted that the Jubilee Lamp cannot now be included on an Annual Maintenance Contract in its current state;

- 2) That interim arrangements for its maintenance be approved;
- 3) That a Jubilee Lamp Working Party be appointed to investigate renovation of the Jubilee Lamp and other notable features in the Market Place and to report back to the Committee with its recommendations on the extent of the work to be undertaken;
- 4) That Cllr Heron, Cllr Rippon-Swaine and Cllr Wiseman be appointed to the Jubilee Lamp Working Party;
- 5) That the following members of the public be invited to be part of the Working Party: Ted Baker, Jeff Wickens, Dick Sheerin;
- 6) That the appointment to the Working Party of two Student Advisors , Adela Halls and Amelia Jenkinson, be confirmed; and
- 7) That the interest of Mr K Carr, a contractor, in the project be noted.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4458TOWN CRIERMembers considered whether it would be appropriate to investigate the appointment of a Town Crier, and noted that this would have cost implications.**RESOLVED:** That it was not appropriate to appoint a Town Crier at this time.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4459SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIESThe Town Clerk had received an approach from a group (unlockdemocracy.org.uk) asking the Town Council to press the local MP to support an Early Day Motion relating to The Sustainable Communities Act Amendment Bill. **RESOLVED:** That the approach from the group be not supported.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4460STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACYMembers considered responding to a consultation paper issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government. A copy of the consultation paper and suggested responses prepared by the Town Clerk and discussed with the Chairman of the Committee had been circulated. The Chairman commented that he was pleased that the Town Council took the trouble to respond to this sort of consultation. Cllr Clarke thanked the Town Clerk and the Chairman for their work on this.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the responses to a consultation paper issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (*Annex 'C' attached*) be approved; and
- 2) That a copy be forwarded to HALC and NFALC.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4461IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Members received an update prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk on events since the commencement of the support contract with Blue Chip. Since the appointment of Blue Chip as the Council's IT Maintenance and Support Contractor from 1st April, there had been a number of unexpected issues with the IT equipment and systems. Much of the equipment required updating, and it became apparent that the back-up system required replacement, probably due to its age. It had been necessary to use up much of the 'support time' purchased for the year.

The Chairman commented that the problems were not the fault of the new IT contractor, which had performed well. He also congratulated the Deputy Town Clerk on her handling of the IT difficulties.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the action taken in consultation with the Chairman to purchase a new tape drive and tapes at a total cost of £1,703 be approved; and
- 2) That the unspent budget provision in 2008/09 of £2,000 for the GIS Partnership be vired to the 2009/10 IT maintenance budget.

ACTION Jo Stannard

F/4462RINGWOOD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Cllr Wiseman declared a personal and prejudicial interest in F/4462 Ringwood Town Football Club as she lives close by. Cllr Wiseman made a statement and answered questions and then left the room and took no part in the discussions or decision made. Cllr Chard declared a personal interest in F/4462 Ringwood Town Football Club, due to his connections with Bisterne Football Club. Members consider the recommendation (OS/5128 02.09.09 refers) of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee that Ringwood Town Football Club be offered a grant of £6,000 and a loan of £3,000 towards essential works to the Clubhouse. Cllr Wiseman had been concerned that excessive funds were being paid to support football and felt the support now proposed should not be approved. She was also concerned about a lack of accounts, however the Chairman was in possession of a budget and financial plan. As the current management committee had taken over from a different group, previous year accounts were not relevant. Cllr Chard commented that all clubs also had to submit accounts to the Football Association, which provided a check. Cllr Wiseman left the Meeting.

The Town Clerk confirmed that no grant had been made to the Club for at least six years. Other sports, including tennis, bowls and rugby had received a great deal of support.

The suggested terms and conditions for the loan were read out by the Chairman.

Cllr B Terry and Cllr Urwin, as members of the Football Club Working Party, considered that the Football Club had already made great strides in raising funds and in improving the facilities. The works in question were vital to the survival of the Club.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That Ringwood Town Football Club be offered a grant of £6,000 and a loan of £3,000 repayable over five years towards the cost of electrical upgrading and the provision of a suspended ceiling in the main Clubhouse; and
- 2) That the excess costs over the budget provision be met from the Town Council's reserves.

ACTION Martin Townsend

F/4463NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (NFNPA)

Cllr Heron reported on a public meeting of the NFNPA held on 2nd September to discuss the National Park Management Plan and Core Strategy. The interim Chief Executive had promised that the contentious elements in the original Plan, such as zoning, service villages and car parks closed to dog walkers, would not now happen. Retrospective planning consent would not be required for existing established grazing for horses, although it was necessary to obtain consent

for new proposals to convert agricultural land to grazing for horses. There had been concern that the Chairman of the NFNPA was not present and the Chief Executive's post was temporary. However it was expected the new revised draft Strategy, due out on 22 October, would be in place before he left.**RESOLVED:** That the Chairman's report be noted.

ACTION Terry Simpson

F/4464 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & 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' attached*).

F/4465 STAFFING

Members considered three staffing issues. Cllr Terry commended the Deputy Town Clerk for her handling of a difficult personnel issue whilst the Town Clerk was away.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That actions taken to extend the retirement age of an employee beyond age 65 to 31 December 2009 be approved;
- 2) That actions taken to renew the contract for the Health & Safety Advisor for a further six months be confirmed; and
- 3) That action taken to request an occupational health consultation be confirmed.

ACTION Jo Stannard / Terry Simpson

The Town Mayor, Cllr Ford, declared a personal and prejudicial interest in F/4466 Town Twinning Advertisement, as a close colleague and friend of the person in question. Cllr Ford left the room and took no part in the debate or decision made.

Cllr Ford left the Meeting at 9pm.

F/4466 TOWN TWINNING ADVERTISEMENT Members received a verbal update from the Town Clerk regarding the incorrect publication of the date of the Twinning Meeting in a local newspaper (*Minute F/4444 15.07.09 refers*). As the newspaper's response was that it was not prepared to meet the Town Council's requests, Members discussed whether any further action was appropriate.

RESOLVED: That the letter from the local newspaper be acknowledged and the Town Clerk be instructed to proceed in the manner now determined.

ACTION Terry Simpson

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.07pm.

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

RECEIVED & ADOPTED 30th September 2009
TOWN MAYOR
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN