

Minutes of a meeting of the Strategy & Resources Committee held at the Oakwood Centre on Tuesday 4 February 2014 at 8.00 pm

Present: *Councillors K. Baker (Chairman); P. Challis; J. Cheng; K. Haines; L. Hayward; C. Lawley; D. Mills; S. Outen; E. Rowland*

Also present: *Councillor M. Walker*

Officers present: *D. Mander, Town Clerk; K. Murray, Service Support Manager; A. Bunn, Leisure Services Manager; L. Matthews, Committee Officer*

60. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

61. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hayward	Agenda item 7b, Budget Estimate 2014/15, in relation to grants	Prejudicial – Councillor Hayward is a Citizens Advice Bureau Trustee
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Councillor Hayward abstained from voting on the amendment regarding the CAB grant.

Councillor Baker	Agenda item 16, WBC consultation on the draft CIL charging structure	Prejudicial – Councillor Baker is a member of the Executive and CIL is within his area of responsibility
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Councillor Baker handed over the Chair and withdrew from the room during the consideration of agenda item 16.

62. **MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2013**

Minute 48: Friday night youth club at Bulmershe Centre

Concern was expressed by Councillors Challis and Lawley that a decision had been taken to set up a new Friday night youth club at Bulmershe Leisure Centre without some Members being aware of discussions regarding the future of the centre. The Chairman explained that at that stage there had not been much progress, that the matter had been confidential because of commercial matters and had been retained within the officer and leadership core; and he believed this was no different to the way the leadership at the Council had worked in the past. In response to a further question, the Chairman confirmed that proposals on the future of the centre were not on the agenda for decision that evening and would come to the committee once all the facts were available to all councillors.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting of 26 November 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

63. **FINANCE**

a) **Budgetary Control**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. SR 1/14.

b) **Payments**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the following payments:

	Current account	Imprest account
November 2013	£107,183.03	£56,212.17
December 2013	£79,199.38	£57,244.97

c) **Short term investment**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the short term investment of £250,000 in a Lloyds Bank High Interest Deposit Account on 27 December 2013 for a period of 3 months at a rate of 0.6% interest.

d) **HMRC**

The Service Support Manager reported that the Council had had a routine visit from HMRC which had identified some areas, including the employee status of some individuals and taxable employee benefits, which required clarification and adjustments to how they were implemented in future. In response to questions he confirmed that the employee benefit matters related to mileage and accommodation and that these were not related to the functions carried out by the Council's payroll service company. The Chairman confirmed that the Council was co-operating fully with HMRC.

64. **CHARGES 2014/15**

a) **Oakwood Centre charges 2014/15**

An amendment to the charges was proposed by Councillor Challis:

- To reduce the charges at the Oakwood Centre for Woodley residents and community groups by 20% from the 2013/14 rates, on weekday evenings from 5pm and all day on Saturdays and Sundays.

This was seconded by Councillor Rowland.

Councillor Challis referred to the aim that daytime business bookings subsidise residents' use in the evenings and at weekends and the healthy state of the Council's finances. He also believed that reducing rates could promote use and the impact may be lower than the £2,000 estimated cost of this proposal.

During discussion of this amendment, Members referred to the reasonable rates at the centre, the increasing costs of delivering services and some of the restrictions at the centre, as well as the need to make the centre more available to community groups.

After being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 5

RECOMMENDED:

- ◆ That the 2014/15 charges at the Oakwood Centre, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2014/15 Appendix, be approved.

Voting: For: 5 Abstentions: 4

b) **Leisure Services charges 2014/15**

Councillor Challis proposed the following amendments to the Leisure Services charges:

- To limit concessionary charges to a 3% increase except where the non-concessionary rate increase was higher than 3%, in which case the concessionary increase be set at the same rate of increase as the non-concessionary rate.
- To retain the 2013/14 charges for plaques at the Garden of Remembrance.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Rowland.

Councillor Challis referred to the recently proposed increases for over 60 year olds at the allotments, which had not been agreed by Council, and believed that younger and older citizens in particular should not have to pay above inflation increases. The estimated cost to the Council of these amendments would be £400.

The Chairman responded that there were very few concessionary increases over 3% and that the Leisure Services Manager had carried out price comparisons to ensure the charges were competitive.

On being put to the vote the amendments were lost.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 5

RECOMMENDED:

- ◆ That the 2014/15 charges for Leisure Services, as set out in the Proposed Charges 2014/15 Appendix, be approved.

Voting: For: 5 Abstentions: 4

65. **REVISED ESTIMATES 2013/14**

a) **Strategy and Resources Committee**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. SR 2/14. Members thanked the Town Clerk for the work carried out to produce the budget figures.

On being put to the vote, it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the contents of Report No SR 2/14.
- ◆ To approve the 2013/14 Revised Estimates Budget, as set out in the Budget Appendix

b) **Leisure Services and Community Services Committees**

On being put to the vote, it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the 2013/14 Revised Estimates Budget of the Leisure Services and Community Services Committees, as set out in the Budget Appendix.

66. **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2014/15**

a) **Strategy and Resources Committee**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. SR 3/14. In response to a question it was confirmed that the budget figures included funding for three Woodley Herald newsletters in the year, rather than the four currently published.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the 2014/15 Budget Estimates for the Strategy and Resources Committee form part of the 2014/15 Budget and be presented for approval.

Voting: For: 5 Abstentions: 4

b) **Leisure Services and Community Services Committees**

Councillor Challis proposed the following amendments to the proposed grants awards:

- To fully fund the grant of £5,940 requested by the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- To reduce the proposed grant funding to the Lend and Play Toy Library to £570.

Councillor Rowland seconded the amendments.

In support of the amendments Councillor Challis referred to the CAB's request for funding, the level of which was linked to their activity in Woodley, and believed that this service was valuable to many people. He noted that the Lend and Play Library had been established after a similar group had lost funding from the Borough Council and that over the past year only 57 of the users were Woodley residents. It was his view that the CAB provided a more important service to Woodley residents than the Lend and Play Library. The increase to the budget figures overall would be £707.

The Chairman responded that the CAB's grant had increased in line with inflation and there had been no change in approach by the Council. This was challenged by Councillor Challis who said that last year's grant request had been submitted in line with usage in Woodley. The Chairman said he believed it was important to support the Woodley-based Lend and Play Toy Library and that the CAB would still be receiving a large sum from the Council.

On being put to the vote the amendments were lost on the casting vote of the Chairman.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 4 Abstentions: 1

Councillor Challis proposed the following amendment to the Amenities budget:

- To remove the £1,000 allocation for a community refuse vehicle.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Rowland.

Councillor Challis referred to the budget information on this allocation which indicated this had been included as a contingency, should a refuse vehicle become available to provide a monthly service at the Airfield Centre. He believed that should the service be able to be provided, funding could be requested and approved as it had been this year.

On this matter Councillor Hayward reported that further information on the reasons for the community refuse service not being available in 2014/15 had been sought. The Town Clerk informed Members that having contacted the Waste Services Manager he had explained that the service being provided at the Airfield Centre in January, February and March this year was being covered by a vehicle that was not entirely suitable and that this couldn't be used on a long term basis. Unfortunately he had over-committed the service when initially responding to the Council's request.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To remove the £1,000 contingency allocation for a community refuse vehicle in the Community Services amenities budget.
- ◆ That the 2014/15 Budget Estimates for the Leisure Services and Community Services Committees, as amended, form part of the 2014/15 Budget and be presented for approval.

Voting: For: 8 Abstentions: 1

c) **Budget and Precept 2014/15**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. SR 4/14. Concern was expressed at the decision by Wokingham Borough Council not to pass on the full level of precept grant from government to town and parish councils this year, and that it proposed to reduce the grant by 50% in 2015/16 and make no grant in the year after.

In response to questions about his role as a member of the Executive at Wokingham Borough Council and this matter, the Chairman reported that this had not been a matter voted on by the Executive. His understanding was that the sum was not ring fenced and had been rolled into the general fund, the allocation of which he had not been privy to.

The loss of this grant funding and the use of reserves to fund the Council's activities was questioned. The Chairman believed that the proposed budget was prudent and that the Council should have a more robust multi-year budget plan to encompass the concerns expressed and he intended to work on developing such a plan.

At this point in the discussion Councillor Challis proposed the following amendment:

- That the £30,000 allocated to an earmarked reserve to fund a bookings system be transferred to revenue.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Rowland.

Councillor Challis believed that the funding allocated for a bookings system would not be required if proposals in respect of Bulmershe Leisure Centre were agreed and that this sum should be used to support revenue expenditure.

The Chairman said he understood the points being made about this earmarked reserve and that he believed that consideration of the capital programme would be the appropriate time to re-evaluate earmarked reserves, including the one allocated for a bookings system.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 5

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the contents of Report No. SR 4/14.

RECOMMENDED:

- ◆ That the budget for 2014/15 be presented to Council for approval
- ◆ That a precept level of £1,030,349 for the 2014/15 financial year be presented to Council for approval.

Voting: For: 5 Abstentions: 4

67. **RECOMMENDATION FROM THE LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Members considered the recommendation from the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 7 January 2014, minute No. 33 and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the Council proceed with the project to install a 3G artificial grass pitch and associated works at Woodford Park.
- ◆ That the Council instruct Sports Solutions to proceed with the preparation and submission of a planning application for the proposed 3G artificial grass pitch and associated works.
- ◆ That the Council allocate a sum of £4,500 from the special projects earmarked reserve to cover the costs of the application and possible surveys.
- ◆ That the Council seek and identify funding to cover the estimated £200,000 required for the project to meet the 50% partnership funding required under the terms of potential grant funders.
- ◆ To allocate funding to prepare and submit a planning application for the project, and subject to sufficient of those funds being available, officers be delegated to commission any surveys required as part of the planning application process.

68. **INVESTMENTS WORKING PARTY**

The Chairman presented Report No. SR 5/14 of the Investments Working Party meeting held on 23 January 2014, and drew Member's attention to the recommendations in respect of the 2014/15 Treasury Management Strategy

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. SR 5/14.

RECOMMENDED:

- ◆ That the Treasury Management Strategy 2014/15 (enclosed) be recommended to Council for approval.

69. **STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS WORKING PARTY**

The Chairman presented Report No. SR 6/14 and explained that some of the revisions being proposed related to clarification of matters that were identified in the run up to the last Annual Meeting of the Council.

Councillor Challis, a member of the working party, reported that he had not been in agreement with one revision on which the working party had voted and in relation to that item he proposed the following amendment to the draft standing orders:

- That Standing Order 1 s vii, "To receive such communications as the Leader of the Council may wish to lay before the Council" be deleted from the draft standing orders.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Rowland.

Councillor Challis believed that the inclusion of this standing order would have the effect of creating an executive leader role and give the Leader the opportunity to speak before other reports were considered by Council at its meetings.

The Chairman informed the committee that there would be no recommendations in the Leader's report and that, unlike the previous administration, he used it as an opportunity to report on his activities as Leader and aid transparency.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 5

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. SR 6/14.

RECOMMENDED:

- ◆ That the Standing Orders (enclosed) be adopted.
- ◆ That the revised protocol for attendance at meetings by Councillors who are not members of those bodies, attached to the Standing Orders, be approved.

70. **CATERING PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PANEL**

Councillor Haines presented Report No. SR 7/14. She reported that the back rent owed was soon to be paid in full and that the parasols were due to be installed that week.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. SR 7/14.

71. **PUBLIC TOILETS WORKING PARTY**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Public Toilets Working Party would be held on 20 February 2014.

72. **WAR MEMORIAL/CIVIC SPACE**

The Service Support Manager presented Report No. SR 8/14 and reported that revised costings for a smaller project costing between £35,000 - £45,000 had been received. In order to meet the very tight deadline for the installation of the memorial and civic space it was proposed that officers be delegated to decide on the design detail while liaising with the Council representatives appointed to the Woodley War Memorial Project group (WWMP).

The WWMP group now estimated that their fundraising would reach £24,000 - £26,000. The actual cost of the memorial will be £25,772 and an order would be placed that week.

In response to a question the Service Support Manager confirmed that following contact with planning officers the memorial and civic space would require a certificate of lawful development, rather than having to go through the planning application process.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. SR 8/14.
- ◆ That the Service Support Manager progress the project in liaison with the Chairman of the Woodley War Memorial Project group and the Council's representatives on that group and update the committee on progress.
- ◆ That £8,400 be allocated from the special projects earmarked reserve to commission works from Emma Bramhill Design as detailed in the report.

73. **SECTION 106 DEVELOPERS CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Service Support Manager presented Report No. SR 9/14. The Council was still waiting for a response to a request for funds for the civic space and the Service Support Manager reported that he had liaised with Sports Solutions regarding potential Section 106 monies for the proposed 3G artificial grass pitch.

In response to a question regarding the consultation on the play equipment at Malone Park the Service Support Manager said this would end the following week. The consultation forms had been placed on the website with printed copies available for completion at the Oakwood Centre and the leisure centres. Schools had also been contacted about the consultation. The Service Support Manager apologised for not informing councillors directly about the consultation and believed this had been included in his report to the Leisure Services Committee. It was requested that in future all councillors be directly informed of consultations being undertaken

In response to a question regarding the lack of a closing mechanism on a gate at Malone Park, the Service Support Manager agreed to investigate this matter.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the information contained in Report No. SR 9/14.

74. **BULMERSHE LEISURE CENTRE**

In opening the discussion on the proposals for the future of Bulmershe Leisure Centre, which had now been agreed by Wokingham Borough Council, the Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the third recommendation in the Executive Report provided. In his view, if there was no satisfactory outcome on discussions regarding dilapidations the proposed arrangement could not be agreed.

In response to points raised, the Chairman informed the meeting that he had declared a prejudicial interest and retired from the meeting when this item had been considered by the Executive.

Concern was expressed by some Councillors at the wording in the report which appeared to indicate that the Town Council had already agreed to an early surrender of the lease, when this was not the case.

Councillors Challis and Rowland expressed their disappointment that the Chief Executive of Wokingham Borough Council had not delivered on an undertaking he had made, during their discussions with him on the future of the centre, that a joint briefing be issued to all Town and Borough Council members representing Woodley before any actions were taken.

It was proposed by Councillor Rowland, seconded by Councillor Challis and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the Town Clerk write to the Chief Executive, Wokingham Borough Council, expressing the Council's concerns regarding this matter, the content of which to be agreed by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

In concluding the discussion, the Chairman informed Members that an extraordinary meeting of the committee would be arranged to discuss the proposals on the future of Bulmershe Leisure Centre, once more information had been received on the implications and intentions of the proposals. The Town Clerk would arrange this extraordinary meeting on a date when all members of the committee were able to attend.

75. **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT CIL CHARGING STRUCTURE**

Councillor Haines took the Chair for this item. Members' attention was drawn to the reference on the level of CIL allocation to town and parish councils and the lateness of this process to establish arrangements in respect of the CIL.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To make no response to the consultation, but that clarification be sought on the cap to be applied to the allocation of CIL funds to town and parish councils with no Neighbourhood Plan.

76. **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

Members noted the briefing on VAT and asked the Town Clerk to report on any further information received.

77. **BOROUGH PARISH CONFERENCE 2013**

Members noted the minutes and workshop reports from the Borough Parish Conference held on 6 November 2013.

78. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

It was requested that an agenda item regarding the provision of the new Friday night youth club should be included if it is decided that the lease on Bulmershe Leisure Centre is to be given up.

Following discussion, Members agreed that the special meeting to be held regarding the future of Bulmershe must include full consideration of all the issues, such as the future of the youth club and school use. The Chairman asked all Members to notify the Town Clerk of the issues they believe should be addressed in the meantime.

79. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

It was agreed that information be displayed on the website stating that no decision has yet been made regarding the future of Bulmershe Leisure Centre.

The meeting closed at 9:40pm
