



## Cricklade Town Council

First Town on the Thames

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### POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING

Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011

7pm at Ockwells

Councillors present - Cllr D Tetlow (Chairman)

Cllr B Beasley

Cllr G Chapman

Cllr M Clarke

Cllr J Harmer

Cllr M Hatton

Cllr A Jensen

Cllr J Norman

Cllr R Szybiak

Cllr Colmer (Wiltshire Councillor and non-voting member of this committee)

Five members of the public were also present.

**Fire evacuation instructions were pointed out before commencement of the meeting.**

**Public Question Time** - There were no questions.

### MINUTES

#### 11.10 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor T Robertson.

#### 11.11 Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Type of Interest	Nature of Interest	Action
Cllr B Beasley	6 – Town Council Grants	Personal	Christmas Lights Team	Voted
Cllr M Hatton	6 – Town Council Grants	Personal	Member of Christmas Lights Team	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Jensen	5 – Correspondence	Personal	Member of Cricklade Festival Committee	N/A

#### 11.12 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting dated 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 11.13 Clerk's Report. The Clerk's report was **NOTED** as follows:

11.04	<b><u>Clerks Report</u></b> <b><u>CCTV</u></b> – The CCTV Supervisor had drawn up user instructions for use by volunteers to monitor the Base Station. A timetable of training sessions now needed to be agreed. <b>Ongoing</b> <b>Ockwells - See Minute 11.17</b>
11.07	<b><u>Thames Hall</u></b> – See Minute 11.16

11.08	<b>Insurance</b> - At the meeting on 4 <sup>th</sup> July, Members resolved that, in line with comments made by the Internal Auditor, the Fidelity Guarantee be raised to £500,000 for an additional premium of £61.48. This had been added to the policy. <b>Closed</b>
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**11.14 Correspondence**

Members **NOTED** the following items of correspondence both thanking the Town Council for grant funding to local projects:

- i) Letter from Friends of St Mary’s Church
- ii) Letter from Cricklade Town Festival Committee

**11.15 Town Council Grants**

There were 3 grant applications to consider:

Cricklade Bloomers – Members **RESOLVED** to award £1,000 (With Powers) to the voluntary group towards helping to maintain the high level of success in the RHS Britain in Bloom at regional and national levels. The money was specifically for a heavy duty trolley, insulation and shading for the Bank Garden’s greenhouse and poly tunnel and bulbs for sustainable plaiting.

Lake 12 Partnership – Members **RESOLVED** to award £100 (With Powers) as a contribution to the newly formed group and its fighting fund to take over the South Cerney Outdoor Education Centre at Lake 12.

The Christmas Lights Team – Members **RESOLVED** to award £600 (With Powers) towards Christmas festivities being organised by a new voluntary group if an application to the Area Board was not successful. (The Town Council had already purchased Christmas lighting so had, in effect, already contributed to the project.)

Members **NOTED** that the balance remaining in the 2011/12 budget was **£1,945**.

**11.16 Thames Hall**

Members **NOTED** a report by the Town Clerk updating Members about progress on the management of the Thames Hall particularly with regard to concerns raised by user groups, remedial work to the floor and the requirement for an industrial cleaner to ensure that the new flooring is properly maintained.

Members **RESOLVED** that:

- i) A new temporary agreement between the Town Council and the Thames Hall Management Committee (THMC) is drawn up extending to end March 2012
- ii) A meeting should be held between the Chair of the THMC, hall users and CTC’s representatives to discuss concerns raised
- iii) Investigate with other local groups the possibility of acquiring an industrial floor cleaner for use in the Thames Hall and other community buildings.

**11.17 Ockwells**

Members **NOTED** a report by the Town Clerk and considered a recommendation from the Ockwells Working Party about the renewal of the Town Council’s lease.

Cllr Colmer reminded Members that the future of Ockwells was enveloped with the campus proposal and that Wiltshire Council’s policy was to rationalise its property portfolio and sell more than 90 of its Council-owned buildings. However, this should not affect the tenancy rights of the Town Council.

Other points of discussion included:

- The possibility of the building being sold
- The importance of early negotiations with Wiltshire Council
- That an extension of the existing lease may be offered during the transition to a campus (should this proposal be taken forward and involve Ockwells)
- That the Town Council had requested that Ockwells be transferred to the Town Council as a Community Asset

The Town Clerk updated Members about a recent telephone conversation with the Strategic Projects and Development Manager at Wiltshire Council who had indicated that Ockwells was an *operational* asset not an *office* asset and therefore outside of the 94 office buildings currently being looked at for disposal. There were no plans to sell the property. There should be no problem with a renewal of the lease but it was difficult at this stage to comment further on the possibility of it being considered as a Community Asset Transfer which (if it went ahead) may require a long lease back to WC for library use under a peppercorn rent. At this stage, the Wiltshire Council Officer felt it may be best to await the outcome of the campus consultation.

Members **RESOLVED** that delegation is given the Town Clerk through the Working Party:

- i) To liaise with the relevant officers at Wiltshire Council to meet with the Working Party as soon as possible to properly start the lease renewal process
- ii) To explore the possibility of an Internal Repairing Lease so long as it is not to the disadvantage of the Town Council
- iii) To bring back to the P&R Committee any request by WC to temporarily extend the existing lease under the same terms and conditions
- iv) To instruct the Town Council's solicitors, as necessary, to invoke a Section 26 Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 Notice on WC requesting a new tenancy and the authority to ask for relevant advice around the lease and legal position on possible equity rights on the original purchase of the building.

Members **AGREED** that the Town Clerk should liaise, informally, with former Councillors or employees with historical knowledge of the original Ockwells purchase and lease negotiations.

*Cllr Colmer left the meeting to attend a meeting of Latton Parish Council*

#### 11.18 Tourism

Members **NOTED** a report by the Town Clerk and considered recommendations from the Tourism Working Party about improved tourism promotion. Councillor Clarke, Chair of the Working Party, updated Members on the findings of the Working Party in line with the brief given by the P&R committee. These included that:

- Statistics around the opening of the Front Office during weekends of the Fritillary season in April and May indicated that there was demand for seasonal opening of the Tourist Information Point (TIP) in the future
- With the change of Front Office staff and new library opening hours, there was an opportunity to extend current hours offering a better service for residents and visitors to the town
- A list to improve tourism promotion had been drawn up to include proposals to be met within current budgets, those with some budget implication and larger more collaborative projects as well as possibilities for increased income generation.

The Town Clerk informed Members that other town and parish councils generally dealt with tourism issues through their Policy and Resources or Finance Committees. However, at some councils it was dealt with through a dedicated Tourism Committee with a budget providing a focus for events, running the TIP, In Bloom competitions, sales of promotional goods, etc and usually worked closely with the local Chamber of Commerce (as in Malmesbury).

Cllr Clerk asked that appreciation was passed on to officers for the work undertaken in drawing together a list of proposals to improve tourism promotion from the TIP.

Members **RESOLVED**

- i) To support and note the revised opening hours for the Front Office and TIP
- ii) That there is some requirement for weekend seasonal opening to include voluntary support by Councillors
- iii) To delegate to the Town Clerk through the Working Party the prioritisation and implementation of proposals particularly with regard to cost implications
- iv) That due to budget and other resource constraints that a dedicated Tourism Committee is not considered at this stage

- v) That the Town Council/Cricklade Business Association Liaison Group meets soon to discuss tourism in the town, how the Association is working with the North Wiltshire Economic Partnership on tourism, etc.

Members **AGREED** that Cllr Tetlow arranges a meeting with the Association following the next meeting of the Tourism Working Party.

#### **11.19 Front Office Opening Hours**

Members **NOTED** the contents of a report by the Town Clerk. Members **RESOLVED** to

- i) Agree the new opening hours for the Front Office which would be 10am – 5pm, Monday – Thursday and 10am – 4.30pm on Fridays
- ii) That the funding for the increased hours from 19.5 to 25 hours for the new Administrator/Receptionist beyond end March 2012 would be revisited during the 2012/13 precept round
- iii) Delegate authority to the Town Clerk for a start date for the revised hours (dependant on the start date of the new member of staff) and any publicity around this (Chronicle, Notices, etc)

#### **11.20 Budget 2011/12 – Precept Planning Process**

Members **NOTED** a report by the Town Clerk which included points to consider around a number of budget lines and undertook an initial discussion around the 2012/13 precept. Although, the precept setting timetable indicated that the Town Council's budget should be set on Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> December, Members were forewarned that this may not be possible due to uncertainty around:

- The renewal of the Ockwells lease
- How the Localism Bill (currently going through the House of Lords) would impact on the precept. It could be that any excessive tax rises will be subject to local referendum (it was not clear what *excessive* was considered to be though this may not affect small towns and parishes). The outcome of this may not be known until a statement is made by the Secretary of State in November/December.

Members asked that the Town Clerk specifically researched the following for the next P&R meeting:

- Predicted salary costs for 2012/13
- Budget allocations for grants at other Town Councils in Wiltshire
- Proposals that Cricklade Bloomers may have which will impact on the Town Council
- The possibility of adding budget lines for Cricklade Bloomers and the Cricklade Festival.

#### **11.21 Working Party Updates**

Members **NOTED** updates for the Ockwells and Tourism Working Parties.

#### **11.22 Exclusion of Public and Press** - Due to the special nature of the agenda item, the Chairman proposed the following resolution – 'That the following item is conducted under the Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960 – therefore the public and press will be excluded.' This was unanimously agreed by Members and the public left the Committee Room.

#### **11.23 Staff Matters**

Members **NOTED** a report by the Town Clerk. Members **RESOLVED**

- i) That an agreed paragraph dealing with eye tests and glasses reimbursement is added to the Employee Handbook
- ii) To adopt the Employment Handbook and Employee Statement of Terms and that the revised Statements are signed by staff

**The meeting closed at 8.40pm**