

## Henley Town Council – FS&M Report for 2019-2020

### 1. Appointment of Town Clerk

The HR and Legal Committee instituted a recruitment process to recruit a new Town Clerk who took up the post on 2 September 2019. Cath Adams (Proper Officer) and Liz Jones (Responsible Financial Officer) covered the interim period between the outgoing and incoming Town Clerk. The Working Group and Interview Panel administered and led by Councillor Hinton carried out the appointment process.

Subsequently the Town Clerk has carried out a reorganisation of HTC staffing. One change is that Cath Adams is now appointed Deputy Town Clerk.

### 2. Policies and Other Documents

The new Town Clerk has undertaken a major review of Town Council Policies. Many of these were in need of reviewing and updating. The following have been updated.

- Standing Orders
- Scheme of Delegation
- Financial Regulations
- CCTV and Surveillance Policy, t
- Staff handbook
- Pensions Discretionary Policy Statement

Others have also received minor changes. The remaining policies will be reviewed and approved shortly. New policies required will also be submitted for approval to FS&M shortly.

### 3. Investments

The annual review of investment strategy was carried out in Oct 2019. Following on from this a further meeting took place to ensure that Henley Town Council's reserves are invested in an ethical manner in particular consistent with the Climate Emergency. The obvious example is a need to disinvest from companies which rely on income from fossil fuel.

The meeting to discuss an ethical investment strategy was very successful and a report to FS&M making proposals achieving this will be presented for approval on 14 April.

### 4. Finance:

HTC approved a precept request of £632,500 for 2020-2021. This included a revenue deficit of £102.5k. This also included a 13% increase in the Ave Band D council tax from £96 per year to £108.50.

The Town Clerk's report to the FS&M agenda of 10 Dec 2019 demonstrated that from 2011 annual rises have been a little over 1.5% on average per year. The rise continues to keep council tax increase below inflation since 2011. The rise was need to prevent the revenue deficit rising unsustainably.

The report also showed that since 2011, the following additional services have been funded by Henley Town Council with costs for each year as follows

- Additional grants to local groups £56,000

- Climate emergency management £15,000
- Town bus service management £5,000
- Additional tree maintenance £17,000
- Street cleaning £20,000
- Christmas Festival net increase in contribution £5,500
- Weedkilling £1,500
- Bus shelter maintenance £1,500
- Bands at Mill Meadows £6,500
- Town Centre management net increase £16,000
- Neighbourhood Plan management £10,000
- Officer time on two major capital projects £30,000

TOTAL £184,000

Approval of the budget included an instruction to the Town Clerk to lead a consideration by officers to:

- ensure best value is obtained from suppliers;
- revenue income is increased;
- and council processes and procedures be reviewed to ensure efficient use of staff time and resources.

#### 5. Columbarium

A contract has been awarded to convert the unused Chapel at the cemetery into a columbarium (a building or room with special spaces for holding urns containing the ashes of dead people). This should be complete and operational by the end of 2020. This is expected to return useful revenue as well as a valuable service. It also finally finds a use for this unused building.

#### 6. GDPR

HTC has implemented a review of its procedures to ensure it is compliant with the Directive. This has resulted in the provision to all cllrs and officers of a Town Council mailbox for use for Town Council business. This provides a more secure and robust procedure for the Town Council, for example in response to Freedom of Information requests.

#### 7. 3573-257 Reading Road

This project continues, including a successful public consultation in Summer of 2019. The contract with the developer (TA Fisher) and negotiation continues with the Hockey Club and AFC Henley on the re-provision of the sports facilities.

The next step for this complex project based on the provision of 34 dwellings including 14 affordable units, and the new sporting facilities will be the signing of the agreement with the developer planned to happen shortly.