

# WHERE NOW TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF OUR IMPORTANT SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS?

## 1 INTRODUCTION:

1.1. This document is circulated to promote discussion that will lead to the parish council providing an effective and supportive framework for our vital trusts and groups to flourish and grow. **The council does not want to take over any group**, the intention is to provide direct support at the levels required and a safety net for those who may struggle to achieve their responsibilities. The organisations are too important to our town to be left to wither away.

1.2. It is clear from a range of discussions with our local organisations that the charities and other significant organisations in Henley share challenges to secure a sustainable future.

1.3. The admirable model that emerged after the second world war and into the 50s and 60s, whereby talented residents who worked in and around or lived in the town who worked as engineers, lawyers, and other professionals were able to combine their principle responsibilities for their work with a reasonable time for volunteering within the community. Thus our charities were able to recruit committed, young, active and appropriately talented trustees. Those young entrants to our caring environment have stayed the course and our trusts are largely managed by the some of the same people who are now in their seventies. Any planning for succession seems impossible as the modern version of those who fulfilled the need years ago are having to commit much greater time and level of performance to their work.

1.4. Whenever we face officer vacancies in our essential social organisations, it is really difficult. Almost inevitably the group concerned ends up with someone who feels pressured into taking the post. The Town needs these organisations to succeed and thus maintain the life of Henley that creates the treasured town we all appreciate.

1.5. The purpose of this document is to generate a discussion on the level of involvement by the council in devising an approach that gives the sustainability, without which the quality of the of our town is under threat.

## 2. PARISH COUNCIL'S ROLE (ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES)?

If we believe that taking no action is not an option then a widely accessible discussion needs to take place on the sensible level of involvement to be awarded to the council by the community.

The ideas set out below are three possible solutions.

### 2.1. EMPLOY A SHARED ADMINISTRATOR

Providing funds only to a scheme that groups the charities together to be administered by a centralized team/individual, possibly employed by the council. Sufficient funds assembled to pay a suitably qualified administrator funded jointly by the council, and the supported organisations.

*This would entail an increase to the precept. A committee representing all participating groups and the council would manage the staff. Instructions for specific work would remain with each of the organisations contributing to the scheme.*

### 2.2. THE PARISH COUNCIL COMMISSIONS

2.2.1. Identify the charities delivering the essential aspects of our social and welfare activities.

2.2.2. Separate out these organisations from the existing community grants system.

2.2.3. Establish clear written council policies describing what the town would wish from these essential groups and what they will deliver to the town.

2.2.4. Talk to each group about these objectives.

2.2.5. The council would then commission each organisation with sufficient funds to deliver the ambitions of the residents as crystalised by the council.

2.2.6. These aims would be concluded in consultation with the residents.

*Built into these commissions would be targets that when met would generate additional funding. It should be possible, under this scheme, to agree three year contracts between the council and the organisations if this is done for next April's budget. This is the impact of a new council being elected every 4 years. The third year would be after elections and allow for a renegotiation with the newly elected council.*

### 2.3. THE PARISH COUNCIL ORGANISES

2.3.1. Identify any organisations that wish for direct management.

2.3.2. Where necessary reach agreements to take over the direct management of such resources as the Memorial Hall, the Memorial Playing Fields, the Library, The Hub@Henley Community Centre, Henley-in-Bloom, Christmas lights and celebrations. (This is not an exclusive list.)

*If after consultation the organisation felt that some aspects of the town's social infrastructure were too important to be left to the higher risk volunteer management then the council would employ appropriate staff as well as co-ordinating the contribution of volunteers, manage the finances and maintenance. This would be funded by income generated by the use of the facilities where appropriate, fundraising from the community and grant applications and direct funding from the council provided by increases in the Precept.*

2.4. The eventual plan for the town could be a combination of any or all of the above adapted to suit specific requirements of each individual organisation. **Any change would be at the instigation of the organisation after discussion and agreement with the council.**

### 3. WHERE NOW?

In the longer term, without action, the satisfactory provision of our Memorial Hall, Sports Grounds, Library, The Hub@Henley Community Centre, Henley-in-Bloom, Christmas festivities and decorations and lights and others may have a limited life as they are largely dependent on ageing groups of dedicated volunteers. Our modern and rapidly changing life styles determine that innovative management systems have to be considered.

*Are we prepared to risk the essential groups disappearing because they have no managers?*

**We shall be consulting widely during August and September. Remember the council sees its duty to work alongside the town's treasured organisations, not take them over.**

*Please contact Gill Bailey the Clerk to arrange a meeting with a councillor.*

Notes for the council only, not for circulation;

- 3.1. Revision of this report to match the ideas agreed for discussion by the council. *Reported to September Council meeting.*
- 3.2. The final agreed document publicised and shared widely in the town. Offer meetings to the committees of any Trust or group to discuss the ideas outlined above. *September/October*
- 3.3. The working party would revise the policy document in the light of discussions with residents and groups. The final document discussed directly with affected boards of Trustees. Present to October Meeting of the council and publish for Town Meeting. *October*
- 3.4. Town meeting to discuss the report along with the impact on the council's budget and the setting of the precept. *October*
- 3.5. Analysis of the responses to the above and the preparation of a blueprint for the future including a timetable for implementation. *November Budget discussions*