

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT:

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

1 INTRODUCTION:

It is clear from a range of discussions undertaken by a number of councillors with our local organisations that the charities and other significant organisations in Henley share challenges to secure a sustainable future. 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 chosen life's work, leaving them no lifespace to offer their expertise to the communities even of they wanted to. Whenever we face officer vacancies in our essential social organisations, it is really difficult. Almost inevitably the group concerned end 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. The purpose of this document is to generate a discussion on the level of involvement to be played by the council in devising an approach that gives the sustainability, without which, our quality of the life 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 not conceived as the only solutions but the basis for a town wide consultation.

- 2.1. Providing funds only to a scheme that groups the charities together to be managed by a centralized team, possibly employed by the council. Sufficient funds assembled to pay and suitably qualified administrator funded jointly by the council and the charities.
- 2.2. Identifying the charities delivering the essential aspects of our social and welfare activities. Separating out these organisations from the community grants. Establishing clear views of the council as to what these groups will deliver to the town. Commission each organisation with sufficient funds to deliver the ambitions of the council, arrived in consultation with the residents, with further funding dependent on successful achievement of the targets set out in the commissioning document. 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.
- 2.3. To identify organisations that need direct management. Where necessary reach agreements to take over the direct management of such things 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. The council would employ appropriate staff as well as co-ordinating the contribution of volunteers, manage the finances and maintenance 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.

3. WHERE NOW?

In the longer term , without action, the satisfactory provision of our Memorial Hall, Sports Grounds, Library, Community Centre, Henley-in-Bloom, Christmas festivities and decorations and lights and others may have a limited life as they are largely dependent on an ageing groups of dedicated volunteers. Is this something that the council are prepared to risk?

- 3.1. Revision of this report to match the ideas agreed for discussion by the council. *Reported to July Council meeting.*
- 3.2. The final agreed document publicised and shared widely in the town. *August/September*
- 3.3. The final document discussed directly with affected boards of Trustees. *September*
- 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*

This paper has been prepared by Cllr. Crathorne.

It is proposed that the terms of this report as amended at the council meeting 20th June 2016 are forwarded to three councillors xxxxxxxxxxxx, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, and xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. The final proposals to be presented to the July meeting of the council and that the timetable as set out above is approved.