



HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

Haverhill Town Council

Minutes of a Meeting of Haverhill Town Council's

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held remotely on Tuesday, 21st October 2025 at 7.00pm

- Present:** Mayor Q Cox (Chair)
Councillor J Burns
Councillor J Crooks
Councillor B Davidson
Councillor P Hanlon
Councillor D Smith
Councillor L Smith
- Apologies:** Councillor A Luccarini
Kerry Wallis, Finance Administrator
- In Attendance:** Councillor J Teixeira
Colin Poole, Town Clerk

No members of the public were present.

Welcome:

Councillor Cox welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting was being streamed live on the Council's You Tube channel.

MINUTES

- F25 /031** Apologies for Absence
There were no apologies.
- F25 /032** Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation
None.
- F25 /033** Minutes of the Previous Meeting
It was proposed by Councillor L Smith, seconded by Councillor P Hanlon, that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd July 2025 be agreed as a true record.
RESOLVED
- F25 /034** Matters Arising not on the agenda
Actions arising relevant to the budget-setting process will be actioned during that process.

ACTION

F25 Public Forum

/035 There were no members of the public present.

F25 Report from Responsible Financial Officer Part 1 – Town Council

/036 a) Town Council budget report to end of August 2025

- i. Generally speaking, things are bubbling along just fine - not quite as financially healthy as the total numbers suggest as there are costs still to be allocated under the receipts and payments system we use, but we are the right side of the line on most metrics.
- ii. The RFO anticipates events eventually being over-budget. This reflects the inflation in the events sector and something that we know will need to be allowed for in the 2026/27 budget.
- iii. The Arts Centre is looking healthy with sales figures running well ahead of last year. The theatre bar is tracking just below last year's performance whilst the coffee bar is actually performing above last year, despite the income curve really favouring the second half of the year - which also applies to the theatre bar, so these look good.
- iv. The kiosk performance has been satisfactory, breaking even more or less. This was obviously helped by the good weather, but also the far better opening hours which minimised unproductive staffing of the kiosk.
- v. The Zone headline is flattering to deceive. A deeper dive indicates activity is down overall, with entrance fees and café takings down. Party income is tracking last year's performance, but that was underwhelming. However, expenditure is down against budget by a greater margin, reflecting the reduced activity. In particular the actual cost of employment is well below budget. This is likely to be a mixture of the employment budget overestimating costs as part of protection against a worst-case scenario and local management reducing the staffing on-duty where possible. Work to produce and present a new business model is ongoing. Key issues are:
 1. The competition from nearby McDonalds, where parents are taking their children rather than eating at the Zone. The menu will be reviewed again to see if there are any savings to be made with a slimmer menu.
 2. Cost of living pressures meaning parents may not be able to afford to bring their children so often and
 3. The house rules on older children playing in the soft play area meaning there is limited appeal to parents where one child cannot use the equipment provided. The RFO has called a meeting tomorrow to review how this might be tackled.

RFO

RFO

b) Balances and Bank Reconciliation

Treasury figures appear to be sound at this point in the cycle and we have been able to retain funds in the 32-day account, which helps keep interest income high.

c) Debtors

Debtors are within normal bounds and there is nothing of concern.

F25 Report from Responsible Financial Officer Part 2 – Community Trust

/037 a) Community Trust budget report to end of August 2025

- i. The Town hall is having refurbishment work done - the carpets in the public areas are being replaced, including the main stairs and

- landing. This will alter the above figures for Oct-Dec. The Clements Centre also has new door security arrangements funded by a grant.
- ii. Haverhill in Bloom's supplier has sadly retired on ill-health grounds and is closing his business. This is sad for him and we wish him well, but obviously a blow the HiB which is working to source plants for the winter display. This is likely to mean increased costs in the new financial year
 - iii. The Clements Community Centre is doing well financially. There is a planned programme of decarbonisation but it is likely to be in the new financial year.

b) Balances and Bank Reconciliation

The bank account is being maintained at a prudent level.

c) Debtors

Debtors are within normal bounds and there is nothing of concern.

F25 **Tax Base**

/038 The RFO advised the meeting that the provisional tax base figures for 2026/27 had been provided by West Suffolk Council. The tax base had risen by just 89 dwellings (corrected to Band D). This low increase despite the amount of house building in town is due to the high levels of claims for council tax benefits. There is a perception from the figures that there is an under-registration of HMOs that may mean dwellings are recorded as having a single occupant. The RFO will write to the portfolio holder at West Suffolk to highlight the data which leads us to this assumption.

RFO

F25 **Date of Next Meeting**

/039 Tuesday, 20 January 2026
(TBC)

F25 **Closure**

/040 The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.17pm.

Signed Date

Chair