



HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

Haverhill Town Council

Minutes of a Meeting of Haverhill Town Council's

LEISURE AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Held on **Tuesday, 26 May 2026 at 7.00pm** at Haverhill Arts Centre, High Street, Haverhill

Present: Councillor J Burns (Chair)
Councillor A Brown
Councillor Q Cox
Councillor P Hanlon
Councillor A Luccarini
Councillor D Smith (Vice Chair)

Apologies: Councillor D Page
Mayor L Miller-Jones

Absent: Councillor J Teixeira
Councillor M Martin

In Attendance: Colin Poole, Town Clerk
Vicky Phillips, Deputy Clerk
Daniel Schumann, Creative Director
Sam Searle and Emily Bennett, Haverhill Baby Bank

There was one member of the public was present.

Welcome:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting was being recorded.

MINUTES

ACTION

LC26 /026 **Apologies for Absence**
The above apologies were noted.

LC26 /027 **Declaration of Interests and requests for dispensation**
Councillor Q Cox declared a non-registerable interest in item LC/034a due to his connections to Castle Manor Academy.
Councillor D Smith declared a non-registerable interest in item LC/034d as he had previously funded the group.
It was proposed by Councillor A Luccarini and seconded by Councillor P Hanlon that a dispensation be given to allow those members to take part in the discussion and any subsequent vote.

RESOLVED

Councillor A Luccarini declared a non-registerable interest in item LC/030 as he works at the Wisdom building neighbouring the Baby Bank and advised he would leave the room during the discussion.

LC26 /028 Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held Tuesday, 03 March 2026

It was proposed by D Smith, seconded by Councillor P Hanlon that the minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, 03 March 2026 be agreed as a true record.

RESOLVED

LC26 /029 To note progress of actions arising from the minutes not covered by this Agenda

LC26/019 Grant fund totals – The Clerk advised that this had been checked and corrected.

LC26 /030 Haverhill Baby Bank (Item 9c on Agenda)

Ms Searle and Ms Bennett explained to members that the organisation was established in January and officially opened in March, quickly growing to support nearly 70 local families through drop-ins, professional referrals such as health visitors, GPs, social workers, and midwives as well as self-referrals. They were initially supported by the Salvation Army, but they rapidly outgrew the space and have relocated to Wisdom, where services had recently restarted.

The requested grant would help cover initial setup costs, longer-term funding would come from grant applications, fundraising events, community activities such as quiz nights and sponsored walks, and support from the Baby Bank Alliance, which also provides annual grant funding.

There is a high level of demand, and that referrals had increased dramatically within weeks of launching. All support provided to families is free of charge, providing practical support for families with children aged newborn to five years, including clothing, nappies, milk, cereals, stair gates, Moses baskets, and emergency baby packs for families unable to afford essentials.

Both Ms Searle and Ms Bennett work full-time in child and family health roles and were under increasing pressure to manage the rapidly expanding demand.

It was suggested that the Town Council could assist by promoting volunteering opportunities and publicising fundraising events and activities. Members thanked Ms Searle and Ms Bennett for attending and for responding to a clear local need.

It was proposed by Councillor T Brown, seconded by Councillor Q Cox that the sum of £1,700 be granted.

RESOLVED

LC26 /031 Public Forum

The member of public did not wish to speak.

LC26 /032 MANAGERS' REPORTS

Reports attached, see Appendix (i)

a) Creative Director and Arts Centre

The Creative Director highlighted plans to trial an open-air family theatre event on the Recreation Ground in June, featuring a touring production of *The Sword in the Stone*. The theatre company specialises in outdoor performances and had approached him several times. The event is

intended to gauge public interest in outdoor cultural events within the town. He hoped that the event would also increase footfall to the kiosk, with the performance scheduled during kiosk opening hours so visitors could buy refreshments during the interval. The show will take place in the late afternoon, so in case of warm weather, it wouldn't be too hot for audiences. The event was being funded by a County Council grant.

During the recent re-carpeting of the stairs, and that some historic wooden stair treads had been uncovered and recovered during the refurbishment, however, Brian and Charmian Thompson had taken photographs of them which could be used to show the building's heritage.

b) **Youth Skills Manager**

The Clerk explained that work was progressing well on the creation of the Engagement Hub, which was the alternative use for the Zone rather than maintaining it solely as the soft play facility. They have applied to Suffolk County Council for approval as an unregistered alternative education provision and significant work had been undertaken to prepare the required safeguarding, operational, and educational policies, they were aiming to launch in September. Early interest had already been received from Schools and home-educating families. He emphasised that the provision would not deliver formal school education, but was intended to provide supportive engagement activities, mentoring, and structured opportunities for young people.

Th Clerk also explained to members about the staffing changes following restructuring at the Zone. Staff had been retained despite altered working arrangements, with employees now supporting activities at the Arts Centre and Kiosk. While overall takings had reduced due to shorter opening hours, income had not fallen proportionately, as operations were being concentrated around busier period.

The Clerk explained that the Youth Skills Manager has been working with Abbeycroft Leisure on their Explore Outdoor activity, but we now have funding to be able to offer our own program aimed at children and young people who may otherwise become socially isolated during school breaks, particularly those less interested in outdoor-focused schemes. Sessions would provide engaging activities, food, and social opportunities, while aiming to break even financially rather than generate profit. Councillors discussed the importance of coordinating with local schools and other providers to avoid duplication and ensure the activities complement existing schemes. SEND provision was highlighted as especially important, with members praising the positive impact on young people's confidence and social development.

Discussion took place around accessibility as some families struggle to travel to the Zone, the Clerk explained that this was some of reason for the relocation plans to Castle Hill, which was aiming to create a more centrally located facility while using current projects to build experience and make the transition smoother.

Councillors asked the Clerk to pass on thanks to the Youth Skills Manager and her team.

c) Zone Manager

The Clerk highlighted that that detached youth work continues across the town. Youth workers continue supporting young people through outreach work, helping address anti-social behaviour and providing positive activities and support in areas where issues arise.

Zone staff had been adapted well to working across different sites.

Conversation moved on to the Kiosk, which had been extremely popular in the recent hot weather, and this meant that the Kiosk had performed better than expected. Discussion took place around the possibility of improving or expanding the area around the Splashpad. The Clerk advised that West Suffolk Council do have plans for that area.

d) Community Wardens

A list of work that the Community Wardens had undertaken was tabled at the meeting. It was highlighted that there was a problem at the Open Space, with a hole in the fence continually needing to be fixed and that people getting through were leaving a mess.

Councillors raised concerns around Graffiti, litter and overgrown hedges around the town, the Clerk asked that Councillors report any issues they see to him, so he can raise to the relevant team.

LC26 Grant Funds not yet allocated

/033 Noted.

LC26 Grant Requests

/034

a) Castle Manor Academy

It was proposed by Councillor T Brown and seconded by Councillor P Hanlon that £1,500 be awarded towards their year 11 prom.

RESOLVED

b) Haverhill & District Twin Town Association

It was proposed by Councillor D Smith and seconded by Councillor Q Cox that £1,000.00 be awarded towards hospitality costs.

RESOLVED

c) Haverhill Baby Bank

As discussed in earlier item.

d) Haverhill Singers

It was proposed by Councillor D Smith, seconded by Councillor P Hanlon that £1,401.50 be awarded towards the Choral concert on 17th April 2027.

RESOLVED

e) Home-Start Suffolk

It was proposed by Councillor D Smith, seconded by Councillor T Brown that the amount of £1,000 be awarded towards the Mums in Mind course. Councillor D Smith will make up £467.68 out of his locality funds.

RESOLVED

Discussion took place around the Town Council's approach to grants, the outcome being that they would like to continue to support funding but there is a need for greater accountability and that applicants should demonstrate efforts to secure funding from other sources rather than relying solely on the Town Council. It was agreed that the grant offer letter should be amended to encourage applicants to seek alternative funding before applying.

DS

**Deputy
Clerk**

LC26 **Grants not accepted**
/035 None.

LC26 **Grant Recipient Reports**
/036 None

LC26 **Consultation on Public Space Protection Order**
/037 Discussion took place around anti-social behaviour involving illegal E bikes and scooters along the Railway Walk. It was acknowledged that the Police were already taking enforcement action where possible, but Councillor P Hanlon will talk to West Suffolk Council about the possibility of putting in preventative measures, without affecting other users of the Railway Walk.

PH

It was proposed by Councillor P Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Q Cox that the Town Council support the PSPO and the requested extensions by the Police

RESOLVED

LC26 **Working Parties**

/038 a) Civic Events Working Party:

It was proposed by Councillor D Smith, seconded by Councillor T Brown that the minutes of the meeting held 16th March 2026 be adopted.

The meeting of 18th May 2026 to be carried to the next meeting.

RESOLVED

b) Community Events Working Party

It was proposed by Councillor P Hanlon, seconded by Councillor T Brown that the minutes of the meeting held 20th April 2026 be adopted.

RESOLVED

LC26 **Date of Next Meeting**

/039 Monday, 13 July 2026

LC26 **Closure**

/040 The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.51pm

Signed

Date.....

Chairman

Appendix (i)

Item 7: Manager's Reports

Haverhill Town Council Leisure and Community Committee 19th January 2026

Item 7: Manager's Reports

7a) Arts Centre Report

Box Office Update

Notable shows have included:

- Totally Blondie - Sold Out
- Elvis Memories of a King - Sold Out
- Forbidden Nights - Sold Out
- Psychic Sally - Sold Out
- Rod Steward Songbook - Sold Out
- The Sound of Music (Centre Stage) - Sold Out
- Top Secret: The Magic of Science - 160 sold (Part of Haverhill Science Festival)

Future Sales

The following have all made a particularly healthy start:

- Coldplace
- Meatloaf
- Vicky Jackson as P!nk

Cinema

Notable successes within our cinema programme have included:

- Exhibition on Screen: Turner & Constable
- NT Live: All My Sons
- RBO: Giselle
- ROH: The Magic Flute

Our Dementia Screenings in partnership with The Terrific Tuesday Club continue to go well. These are being helped with funding from the warm spaces fund.

Pantomime

The pantomime this year (SNOW WHITE) has now been announced, and we have also announced the cast, including ANITA HARRIS starring as the Wicked Queen. We already have 3 schools booked and one sold out show! We are currently tracking ahead of last year.

Visual Arts Exhibitions

We were pleased to host a new *Eduardo Paolazzi* exhibition from The Hayward Gallery in June/July. This will be accompanied by some free artist workshops which will take place once a week in the Arts Centre café - this as part of our Suffolk Culture Fund project.

Suffolk County Council Culture Fund

Youth Theatre and Holiday Workshop

Since moving HYT to its own regular slot on a Sunday morning and ensuring the sessions can always take place in the Auditorium, the youth theatre has been much more successful and popular. These weekly youth theatre sessions are now consistently going well and numbers are growing. We now have 16 members in one of the classes which is extremely encouraging for the future. We recently launch two summer holiday performing arts workshops, one inspired by *The Lion King* and one inspired by *The Greatest Showman*.

Kizlar (Turkish Dance and Celebration of Culture Night)

For the first time we held an evening of European music and food. This included a performance by a Turkish Dance company called Kizlar which was part of the Rural Touring Dance Initiative. This was very well received and 46 tickets were sold meaning we exceeded our target for the evening.

The Sword and the Stone

As a trial we have booked a professional open air touring theatre company to visit Haverhill in June with their production of SWORD IN THE STONE. This will take place on Haverhill Recreation Ground and is designed to provide some free family theatre during the summer months while also driving footfall to the Kiosk.

Virtual Museum

The Arts Centre took part in a county wide funding bid to host some virtual exhibitions. The funding bid was successful, so we will be programming these virtual reality sessions into the Starman Room soon.

Renovations

The carpeting is now complete with our new sparkling nosings on the beautiful grand Arts Centre staircase creating a lovely first impression as audiences and Centre users arrive.

Daniel Schumann

May 2026

7b) Youth Skills

Staff Training and Development

Our team continues to grow in both skills and confidence, strengthening the support we provide to young people and families across our services.

Recent staff achievements include:

- Vicky M successfully completing Level 3 Youth Work and Level 3 Safeguarding qualifications.
- Callum achieving his Level 3 Youth Work qualification.
- Rebekah completing her Level 3 Safeguarding qualification.

By continuing to invest in staff training and professional development, we are ensuring that young people receive high-quality mentoring, guidance, and support from a skilled and knowledgeable team.

Engagement Hub

The Engagement Hub is a new project currently being piloted with a small group of students. Originally inspired through conversations and appointments held within the GP surgery, the project has developed into a supportive programme for young people who are struggling to attend school full-time due to anxiety, low mood, or emotional wellbeing challenges.

The Hub provides young people with a safe and welcoming environment where they can reflect, participate in enjoyable activities, and develop practical life skills during their time with us. The overall aim of the programme is to help rebuild confidence, improve emotional wellbeing, and support young people in successfully re-engaging with education.

We are currently working towards county-council approval so we can appear on their list of approved un-registered alternative provisions. We will then be able to take referrals from schools, parents and the county council itself.

Wellbeing Hub – Twilight Youth Zone

The Twilight Youth Zone has successfully resumed following the Easter holidays and continues to provide a positive and engaging space for young people. Access to the equipment has been extremely well received, with attendees enjoying both active play and opportunities to socialise with friends in a relaxed setting.

Average attendance currently stands at approximately 27 young people per session. With the improvement in weather, activities have gradually expanded outdoors into the car park area and now include badminton and short cricket sessions.

While the majority of attendees currently come through Castle Manor, ongoing efforts are being made to increase engagement with students from Samuel Ward and widen participation further.

Sewing Group – Combating Isolation and Building Skills

The Sewing Group continues to offer a welcoming and creative environment where participants can learn new skills, practise techniques, and build confidence. Sessions

remain friendly, supportive, and highly creative, with participants producing a wide range of imaginative pieces.

The addition of another sewing machine has enabled the group to welcome more participants, and it has been encouraging to see original members supporting and guiding newer attendees. This peer-led support is helping to develop communication, leadership, and teaching skills amongst more experienced group members.

Sustainability remains central to the project, with a strong focus on recycling and reusing materials. Donations of old clothing and fabric that may no longer be suitable for charity shops are always welcomed, helping to reduce waste while providing valuable resources for creative projects.

Choices Programme

Overview

During the first part of the financial year, mentoring has remained the primary focus of the Choices Project. The Youth Skills Team has continued to work closely with secondary schools in Haverhill and the Stour Valley area, delivering regular mentoring sessions and receiving an increasing number of referrals from partner agencies.

As the project moves into the next quarter and budgets are confirmed, Choices will be able to expand its offer to include funded activities and counselling support for young people accessing the service. As in previous years, this additional support will help young people develop new skills, improve confidence, and benefit both their physical and emotional wellbeing.

Mentoring with new clients has focused heavily on building trusted relationships and creating supportive networks around young people, ensuring they have safe and reliable people to turn to when they may not feel comfortable speaking to family members or school staff.

Key Achievements

- Delivery of weekly mentoring sessions tailored to individual needs, including school-based sessions, home visits, library meetings, and walk-and-talk support.
- Careful matching of caseworkers to young people, resulting in positive and measurable outcomes.
- Access to trauma therapy and counselling to support emotional regulation, processing past experiences, and reducing behaviours linked to disengagement.
- Participation in positive activities such as sports, gym sessions, yoga, sewing, mindfulness, and games clubs to encourage healthy coping strategies and constructive interests.

Impact

- Increased referrals demonstrate growing confidence in the programme and the support being provided.
- Tailored mentoring and therapeutic support have helped reduce disruption within school and work settings while lowering the risk of disengagement and offending behaviour.
- Positive activities have strengthened resilience, improved emotional wellbeing, and encouraged stronger community connections.

On Track

Our new “On Track” project has now launched and is delivering holistic, skills-based support for young people aged 18–25 every Wednesday between 10am and 2pm at the Zone.

The project combines elements of our previous Job Club and Adult Signposting services, creating a more flexible and welcoming environment where attendees can take part in activities, develop practical skills, meet new people, and receive one-to-one employment support.

The longer session format allows participants the flexibility to attend at their own pace, reducing pressure and helping them feel more comfortable engaging with the service. Detailed weekly session plans and resource handouts are being developed to support the programme. Initial sessions have focused on interview skills and introducing attendees to our new monitoring tool, Upshot.

Parent and Toddler Group

The Parent and Toddler Group is currently undergoing a restructure, with detailed weekly session plans now being developed around themes and issues affecting young children and parents.

As part of this process, parents were invited to share feedback during the first restructured session, and this feedback is helping to shape future delivery. Upcoming sessions will focus on children’s dental health, including the provision of free dental products, information handouts for parents, and reward charts to encourage positive brushing routines for children.

Yoga and Pilates

Yoga and Pilates sessions have recently returned to the service, led by instructor Coco Harrison. The sessions currently engage approximately six young people each week and provide both physical activity and valuable opportunities for mindfulness and relaxation.

Alongside exercise, the sessions incorporate mindful breathing, meditation, and the use of singing bowls, giving young people dedicated time to relax, reflect, and support their emotional wellbeing.

Funded Counselling

Thanks to secured grant funding, we continue to provide funded counselling support for seven individuals locally. Combined with our own mentoring and wellbeing support, this provision is making a significant difference to young people who require additional emotional and therapeutic support.

Young people accessing the service are generally offered mentoring initially, unless counselling is considered appropriate from the outset. Where young people find talking therapy beneficial, they are then supported to progress into counselling to further support their wellbeing and recovery.

Partnerships and Outreach

Haverhill Family Practice

We continue to work closely with Haverhill Family Practice, attending weekly Thursday sessions where staff are provided with appointment lists and access to treatment rooms.

To date, we have supported 45 referrals for young people aged 11–25 with a wide range of support needs. This partnership has helped identify gaps in local services and has already influenced the development of new projects, including the Engagement Hub.

Schools

Staff members continue to work weekly within both Castle Manor and Samuel Ward schools, mentoring selected students and maintaining strong working relationships with school staff.

This regular presence allows us to remain informed about current challenges affecting young people and supports effective partnership working to address issues early and collaboratively.

Job Centre Plus

Job Centre Plus has shown strong support for the new “On Track” project. Similar to our work within GP surgeries, a staff member attends the Job Centre twice monthly to meet clients identified by job coaches as suitable for the programme.

These clients are then introduced to the service and encouraged to attend On Track sessions, helping them access additional support, develop employability skills, and improve confidence and engagement.

Upshot

We are starting to use the new Upshot System CIC. It is a specialist monitoring, evaluation and learning platform designed to help manage data, monitor progress, evidence outcomes and report on impact.

The new system enables us to:

- Record attendance, engagement and participant information securely,
- track outcomes,
- progress and interventions more effectively,
- monitor performance indicators and project delivery,
- produce accurate reports and evidence for funders, commissioners and stakeholders,
- improve communication,
- case tracking,
- store case studies, surveys and supporting evidence in one central system.

Funding

Through our **Surviving Winter funding**, we provided essential support to young people and families experiencing financial difficulty. As part of this support, footwear was purchased to ensure young people had appropriate school shoes and everyday footwear.

For Castle Manor we funded £500 worth of shoes supplied to young people identified as experiencing hardship. The support was provided following referrals and need assessments, ensuring assistance reached those most affected by financial pressures.

This funding helped reduce immediate hardship, supported school attendance and inclusion, and enabled young people to participate more confidently in education and daily activities.

Karen Chapple
Manager, Youth Skills

7c Zone and Youth Work

Staffing – The Zone. No change

Training – All Zone staff have been accessing training with iHasco our new training provider. Congratulations to them all on completing various courses.

Zone Opening Hours These have now changed to Monday – Friday for Youth and family provisions, with Zone soft play at weekends and during school holidays.

Parties:

The figures are of course impacted by the unfortunate need to close with the failure of the old heating system. The new system is installed and fully operational.

Numbers of **parties** held in 2025 and 2026

	2025	2026	
March	21	0	(Closed all of March)
April	13	7	(Reopened mid-April)

Soft Play: Attendees

	2025	2026	
March	1163	0	(Closed all of March)
April	917	84 + 120	Party attendees (This includes the children/parents)

Toddler Time - As we are not open during the week as a soft play centre this does not take place.

Zone Breakfast – Continue to sell well since we have reopened.

SEND Sessions – Funded by Activities Unlimited take place every other Monday during term time. This ensures we have a maximum of 25 children plus parents/carers who have the opportunity to chat with others in similar situations but also sharing what works for them.

Unlimited squash and some healthy snacks are offered to the children. This group has usually had a good uptake. Any children/parents who find our main sessions that are open to the public challenging are given information regarding our Monday SEND session.

Funding – We continue to look for funding to enable us to offer different projects/ activities at The Zone. We are delighted to confirm that funding has been secured from HAF (Holiday Activities and Food programme) to offer activities in the summer holidays for four days a week over the middle three weeks of the holidays. The activities on offer will be aimed at children who do not seek the 'explore outdoor' type activities.

Youth Work

Staffing – Youth Workers' availability is dependent on their other job requirements and family commitments. All staff are casual hours.

Training – We will be looking at putting our new youth workers through recognised youth worker training when it is available and accessible to them.

Funding – We continue to look for funding to help us deliver our youth projects and work with Youth Skills.

Pride Alliance Group – Continues at Castle Manor (term time) for an hour on a Wednesday to meet with Miss Sparks and young people to discuss matters regarding LGQBT+ and other topics of interest. We usually have between 10 to 14 young people

attend. The school is very supportive regarding any concerns or issues the young people come up against.

Detached – We have been going out weekly and visiting areas that have been highlighted as areas of concern from various organisations and the police. We continue to work with the police, communities within Haverhill, Havebury, and other professionals to enable us to provide the best service possible to the young people.

SEND Youth Night – This session invites young people with their families/carers to access pool, table tennis, giant Jenga, giant connect four, colouring, football, basketball and also the chance for the young people and their families to meet up. We welcome younger siblings if this is the only way SEND young people can visit us, but the youngest is usually about 11. These are great evenings and thank you to Activities Unlimited for the funding. Next one is Wednesday 27th May.

Twilight Zone – Young people can play football, basketball, PlayStation 5, giant Jenga and giant connect four. Arts and crafts are available, pool, table tennis and air hockey. Some of the young people like to just sit and chill and catch up with their mates. We invite other professionals in to deliver other activities.

Youth Skills – We continue to work with the Youth Skills to support activities for young people and their families.

On Spot Van – Visits the Market Square, Tesco's car park and attends local community events. We are gathering quotes for replacement 'wrapping' for the On Spot Van as the graphics are past their best, condition-wise.

Chill Out – Is something we ran a few years ago for young people to use the soft play of an evening. We are relaunching this and it is for Key Stage 2 Children in Primary school aged 7 to 11. There is a £5 charge for 1.5 hours and includes a meal and squash. This will take place on a Tuesday teatime 17:30 to 19:00hrs. The parents will need to book and pay to secure a place. Advertising on our website, media platforms and all the primary schools in Haverhill is taking place.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sandra Linnane

Zone Manager and lead Youth Worker.

Commentary from Town Clerk

I am pleased to see that the transformation project refocussing the Zone to contract work has got off to a great start with the work that Karen's team is doing on the Boost Engagement Hub and Sandra's team securing funding for the HAF-funded summer activities. Zone staff are also successfully picking up shifts at the Arts Centre and Kiosk, as well as continuing to work flexibly at the Zone.