Haverhill Town Council

Minutes of a Meeting of Haverhill Town Council's

COMMUNITY EVENTS WORKING PARTY

Held on Monday, 05 October 2026 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillor J Burns (Chair)
Councillor B Davidson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor P Hanlon
Mayor L Miller-Jones
Councillor A Luccarini (from 7.20pm)
Councillor D Page

Apologies: Councillor Q Cox

In Attendance: Colin Poole, Town Clerk
Vicky Phillips – Deputy Clerk
Sara Marsh – Events Manager
Gary Wilson – Operations Manager
Saffron Carter – Town Centre Manager
Steven Marsh – Deputy Technical Manager

There were no members of public present.

MINUTES

ACTION

CE26 /034 **Welcome**
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that as a Working Party it has no delegated authority, and all recommendations must be ratified by the Leisure and Community Committee or implemented by the Clerk under delegated powers.

CE26 /035 **Apologies for Absence**
The above apologies were noted.

CE26 /036 **Declarations of Interest and requests for Dispensation**
None.

CE26 /037 **Minutes of the previous meeting**
It was proposed by Councillor P Hanlon, seconded by Councillor B Davidson that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2026 be agreed as a true record. **RESOLVED**

CE26 /038 **Matters Arising not on the agenda**
C26/30 – Sara Marsh confirmed she had circulated an update on events as requested.

CE26 /039 **Public Speaking**
The member of public did not wish to speak.

CE26 /040 **Community Events 2026**

To receive a report on delivered events:

a) Chalkstone, Parkway Fun Day, Clements Fun Days and Picnic in the Park

Sara Marsh reported that the summer events went off as expected and to budget. This year the budget was spread across a number of smaller events and hired professionals to provide more individual activities, which worked well and was popular with those that attended. We also charged for face painting. There were some stalls cancelled at the Chalkstone Fun Day due to the hot weather.
Despite the weather, Picnic in the Park had a good turnout despite the rain.

b) Haverhill in the Park

Steve Marsh provided a report on Haverhill in the Park. He was pleased overall with the event, with improvements to the logistics, staffing and build-up and breakdown arrangements helping the event to run smoothly.

Attendance was estimated at around 3,000, which was broadly similar to the previous year. However, it was noted that attendance appeared to have plateaued and that there were fewer people outside the fenced event area than in the previous year. Members expressed concern that attendance remained relatively low in comparison with the cost of staging the event and discussed ways of encouraging more people to attend and enter the event site.

Members praised the quality of the event and the work of the staff and volunteers. It was highlighted that there were some gaps between acts, particularly during the Queen tribute, and that the weather had possibly affected attendance. It was suggested that greater consideration should be given to maintaining the audience's interest between performances.

The bar, which had been operated by the Town Council for the first time, was considered to have worked well. However, the amount of staff time involved was discussed, and consideration was given to whether it would be more cost-effective to use an external operator in future or whether the Town Council could operate the bar more efficiently now that it had gained experience.

Members also discussed the number of people remaining outside the fenced area. It was suggested that some people may not realise that Haverhill in the Park is free to attend, and the use of prominent signage or banners stating that the event is free was suggested.

The policy regarding alcohol being brought onto the site was also discussed, including the potential impact on the bar, licensing requirements and security. It was suggested that the policy could be reviewed to consider whether allowing a limited amount of alcohol onto the site might encourage more people to enter.

Other matters discussed included the positioning of stalls, the children's play area and the possibility of expanding the event into a larger area of the recreation ground. It was recognised that any expansion would have implications for fencing, staffing, public rights of way and licensing.

Members suggested that a wider review of the event should be undertaken before future events, considering attendance, the site layout, stalls, children's facilities, signage, the bar, alcohol policy and the overall visitor experience. A public survey or feedback exercise was also suggested to help establish what people liked about the event and why some chose not to attend or remained outside the fenced area.

Steve Marsh would circulate the budget breakdown. **Steve Marsh**

c) **Halloween Scavenger Hunt and Halloween Party – Saturday 31st October, Haverhill Town Centre**

Sara Marsh provided an update on the plans for this year's Halloween event, aimed primarily at children under 12 and would take place between 2pm and 5pm.

The event will comprise a Halloween party at Haverhill Arts Centre, including fancy dress and dance competitions, musical games, spooky storytelling and book giveaways. Tickets for the party will cost £1.50 per child, with adults attending free of charge.

Additional entertainment will take place in the Market Square, including performances by local groups and circus-style entertainment. A town-centre Halloween activity will also be organised in partnership with local businesses, with children following a map between participating shops, where they will encounter a scary(ish) gatekeeper at each location, where they would collect a stamp and win a prize. Sara Marsh confirmed that she had worked alongside Saffron Carter to create the route and the businesses involved had responded positively and were keen on being given the opportunity to attract visitors into the town centre and raise their profile.

Members discussed the change from the traditional Halloween trail at East Town Park and the comments received on social media. It was agreed that the event should be presented positively, with FAQ's available on the Town Council's website.

Members acknowledged that some members of the public may be disappointed by the change but noted that the new format was an opportunity to try a different approach. It was emphasised that this did not mean the traditional trail could never return, and the success of the new event could be assessed before deciding on future arrangements.

d) **Christmas Event/Christmas Fireworks**

Gary Wilson provided an update on the fireworks for the Christmas event. The fireworks have been booked and the necessary road closures are in place. A good display is expected.
It was noted that the cost of fireworks may increase for 2027 due to issues with the supply of fireworks from China. Members also discussed whether alternative displays, such as drone or other technology-based displays, could be considered in future. Members were supportive of exploring alternative options, taking into account cost and other impacts, but this would not affect this year's event.

Christmas Event Update

Sara Marsh provided an update on the Christmas event, which will take place on Saturday 28 November.

The event will include the usual charity stalls and small traders in the town centre, with the possibility of extending the stalls into Queen

Street from 9.00am. Colin from West Suffolk Council will assist with the positioning and management of the stalls.

The Christmas Carnival parade will take place at 4.15pm. School participation has been difficult, with one school withdrawing and another joining, resulting in broadly similar participation to last year. Current participants include Lisa Mason, SJ Steps, the Brownies and Westfield School. Samuel Ward are creating an approximately 8ft three-dimensional dragon puppet for the parade.

A Chinese association will lead the parade with a lion dance, followed by the Men's Shed Austrian Krampus run and a Morris Dancers. Sara is also looking to include acts that can provide their own sound, to help avoid the parade becoming too quiet and reduce reliance on technical sound equipment.

The parade will not travel down Queen Street this year due to safety and operational issues experienced previously. It will finish at the end of the High Street, with participants then returning into the town centre. The churchyard may not be available due to planned bulb replanting, and the library is being explored as an alternative location.

Westfield School is also creating a Christmas-themed flag for the Mayor as part of a joint pupil art project, with the intention of developing a Haverhill Christmas theme.

The installation of the Christmas tree was also noted, with this due to take place on 17th November.

CE26 /041 **Any Other Business**

The Clerk raised the possibility of including Boyton Place for the fun days next year, possibly at Farrant Road play field / car park.

CE26 /042 **Date of Next Meeting**

12th January 2027 (to be confirmed),

CE26 /043 **Closure**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Signed …….. Date ……

Chairman