

Haverhill Town Council

Minutes of Haverhill Town Council's

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held remotely on Tuesday 20th October 2020 at 7.45pm under regulation 6 of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020



Present: Mayor Councillor J Burns (Chairman)
Councillor B Davidson
Councillor P Hanlon
Councillor L Miller-Jones (from F20/026)
Councillor D Roach
Councillor L Smith

Apologies: Councillor P Fox

In Attendance: Councillor A Brown
Councillor A Luccarini
Councillor J Mason
Colin Poole (Responsible Financial Officer)
Martin Page (Finance Administrator)

No members of the public were present.

Welcome:

Mayor J Burns welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting was being recorded.

- | | Action |
|---|--------|
| F20 /018 <u>Apologies for Absence</u>
The above apology was received after the meeting. | |
| F20 /019 <u>Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and requests for Dispensations</u>
None. | |
| F20 /020 <u>Minutes of the Last Meeting</u>
It was proposed by Councillor P Hanlon, seconded by Councillor B Davidson that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 th July 2020 be agreed as a true record.
RESOLVED | |
| F20 /021 <u>Actions Arising</u>
Covid-19 has had an impact on the normal running of the council, so some works have not been possible | |

- a) F18/045c – Review of booking terms and conditions used by the Council and Trust: Currently not open as all user groups have declined to use it at this stage. The terms and conditions continue to be reviewed to try and keep up with the prevailing Covid-19 government guidelines.
- b) F18/055 – Banking: The RFO confirmed no further progress completing the Barclays bank application form had been made.
- c) F19/034c – Cleaning Contract specification: The working group on tendering will see the specification before it is used.
- d) F20/006c - Panto cost analysis: This work is in abeyance until such time as we have a proposal for a panto to cost. The Finance Administrator confirmed that December 2019 rotas are available.

**Operations
Manager**

RFO

**Operations
Manager**

F20 Public Forum

/022 No public were present.

F20 Report from Responsible Financial Officer

/023 The RFO presented his report to the meeting (see separate document). He thanked the Finance Administrator for getting the September report done.

- a) The RFO advised that some underspends in certain cost codes may be spent out of sequence. So whilst the Arts Centre is underspent, the cost of the rear extension will reverse some of that, as will any increased cost of operation in November.
 - i. 400-Community – this includes grants to groups, many of which are not meeting right now, but may need financial help when they restart. In any case, this cost centre includes a £10,000 contribution to Volunteer Centre which will be drawn down, and £30,000 for Christmas lighting, which will also go ahead.
 - ii. Unspent funds in 102-Democracy include a significant contribution to the elections reserve.
- b) The RFO advised that, as Company Secretary of Hartseats Ltd, following discussion with his fellow Director Cllr P Hanlon, he has cancelled the supply of staff from the Town Council, to cut costs. Hartseats may ask, in common with the Local History Group, that the Community Trust waives this year's rent as the building was closed, meaning neither body could operate.
- c) Mayor J Burns confirmed he had visited the Arts Centre earlier in the day and checked the printed bank statements against the cashbook figures presented, and they all matched.
- d) The Finance Administrator provided narrative on the minor debtors that remained outstanding. Councillors approved all actions.
- e) It was proposed by Councillor B Davidson, seconded by Councillor J Burns that the debtor of £72.50, having recently just made a further payment, its to be contacted and advised the debt is cancelled, it not being in the public interest to pursue it.

RESOLVED

F20 Date of next Meeting

/024 7pm on January 19th 2021.

F20 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

/025 It was proposed by Councillor D Roach, seconded by Councillor L Smith, that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the public and representatives of the media be excluded due to the confidential business to be transacted, as publicity would be prejudicial to unfettered debate as it would undermine this process and result in less robust, well-considered or effective policies..

RESOLVED

F20 **Budget priorities**

/026 Councillors heard a report from the RFO in respect of the 2021/22 budget and discussed what they felt were the priorities for the council.

It was noted that the taxbase figure would be supplied by West Suffolk in early November. The pandemic may negatively impact the collection rate and the number of households contributing. This may offset the additional households as a result of housebuilding.

Councillors would need to balance conflicting dynamics on what increase in council tax was tenable. It was noted that freezing the council tax stored up financial challenges for the future, but any underspend from 2021/22 may be used as a one-off offset.

Underspends from 2020/21 due to cancelled events and reduced operations may be applied to support services for which there is no project funding secured next year, contribute toward 'big ticket' investment in new facilities for the town or an enhanced events calendar. Councillors asked that the list of potential projects be revisited anyway, as many seem to have not progressed beyond being proposed.

Councillors expressed a wish to see increased budgets for local works improving the High Street, potentially taking on tasks that have historically been carried out by West Suffolk.

The Action Plan for becoming carbon neutral may also indicate for calls on the budget.

The RFO thanked Councillors for their input.

F20 **Closure**

/027 The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 21:23

Signed
Chairman

Date.....