

Haverhill Town Council

Minutes of Haverhill Town Council's

FINANCE WORKING PARTY

Held remotely on Tuesday, 11 October 2022 at 7.00pm



Present: Councillor J Burns (Chair)
Councillor P Hanlon
Councillor A Luccarini
Councillor J Mason
Councillor D Roach
Councillor D Smith
Councillor L Smith (Vice Chair)

Apologies: Councillor A Brown
Mayor B Davidson

In Attendance: Colin Poole (Responsible Financial Officer)
Martin Page (Finance Administrator)

No members of the public were present.

Welcome:

Councillor J Burns welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that the Working Party has no delegated authority and may only make recommendations to Full Council. Urgent actions may be taken by the Clerk under delegated powers and reported to the next Full Council meeting. The Clerk advised that the meeting was being streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel.

- | | | Action |
|---------------------------|---|--------|
| F22
/019 | <u>Election of Chair</u>
It was proposed by Councillor P Hanlon, seconded by Councillor L Smith that Councillor J Burns be elected as Chair
RESOLVED | |
| F22
/020 | <u>Election of Vice Chair</u>
It was proposed by Councillor P Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Smith that Councillor L Smith be elected as Vice-Chair
RESOLVED | |
| F22
/021 | <u>Apologies for Absence</u>
The above apologies were noted. | |
| F22
/022 | <u>Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and requests for Dispensations</u>
None. | |
| F22
/023 | <u>Minutes of the Last Meeting</u>
It was proposed by Councillor D Roach, seconded by Councillor L Smith that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 th April 2022 be agreed as a true record.
RESOLVED | |

F22 **Actions Arising**

/024

F22/016b Meeting dates: The Assistant clerk is drafting a new calendar and will be cognisant of the need to schedule Finance meetings towards the end of the month where possible.

F22/016d Debtors: This has been resolved

F22/016e Community Kitchen: This has been actioned.

Assistant Clerk

F22 **Public Forum**

/025

No public were present.

19:06 Cllr Luccarini joined the meeting

F22 **Report from Responsible Financial Officer**

/026

a) **Haverhill Town Council budget report to 28th February 2022**

The RFO presented his report to the meeting (see separate document).

b) **Narrative to Budget Report**

In answer to questions, the RFO advised that part of the budget for the splashpad project includes improving the outside area around the kiosk and a new area for picnic tables opposite the Splashpad, but for various reasons it was not possible to deliver these in year 1, but the intention is to deliver these in Y2. The capital costs within the kiosk budget would be transferred to the splashpad project reserve.

Cllr Burns will advise the Clerk the name of the contractor who surfaced some of the railway walk.

More publicity and marketing was required for Y2, which should be easier with the branding in-place. A banner facing the road may help raise awareness.

Ideas for helping the Zone recover from the impact of the pandemic were discussed. Sales could be reviewed in detail using the till system designed by Councillor Burns, to look for targeted improvements. Publicity and marketing were key. The RFO observed that a more attractive branding and the ability to see from the road that the soft play centre is there were all important. Councillor Mason asked for a concerted effort on weekly promotions, get the menu on the website and gain feedback from customers.

Consideration should be given to whether the café could offer off-site sales to surrounding businesses, for lunches.

Cllr J B

Clerk

c) **Bank Reconciliations**

Councillor J Burns confirmed that he signed off the bank balances as a match for the statements received from the banks.

The meeting asked that some of the current account gets transferred to the instant access account to obtain interest.

RFO

d) **Debtors and Creditors**

The Finance Administrator that there are currently few debtors. The majority of the debt is between the council and the Community Trust which has been settled, and only £200 remains outstanding.

e) **Haverhill Community Trust**

The RFO advised Trust is reasonably on-target with no concerns of note.

f) **90-day debtor**

This was an opportunistic charge for someone who sat in the (closed) café area hoping to do some business on antique valuation. The RFO

said this was an idea which didn't work and there was no cost incurred in allowing him to sit there, so there was little benefit in chasing the bill. It was proposed by Councillor J Burns, seconded by Councillor D Roach that the debt be written off.

RESOLVED

F22 **Utility Costs**

/027 The RFO updated the meeting on the issue of energy costs for the council this winter and into next year. The council is with Corona Energy for the Zone and Ecotricity for the Arts Centre & Leiston Centre. For 2021/22 the total cost of heat and light was just over £40k. We have spoken with the FD over at West Suffolk Council and spoken to their provider. The best deal we can get so is from YU Energy and indicates a cost of £162,000 from now through until next September. Of this, £110,000 is for electricity for the Arts Centre.

These figures do not include the promised support from the government for non-domestic energy use, as there is no coherent explanation available on what is being proposed.

The RFO advised that this appears to be the best deal, but it still looks appalling. The green energy credentials are what they are, we really don't have the luxury to shop around.

Councillor Mason referred to Urban Chain as energy creators and the potential for West Suffolk to sell energy direct to us at a good price.

The RFO advised that he was concerned about a number of issues in the run up to budget-setting for 2023/24, including energy costs but also insurance costs, staff costs, and the tax base, so there is a limit to investment capacity right now.

The Finance Administrator asked for two bank signatories to sign a direct debit mandate for Yu energy as soon as possible, to allow the contract to be submitted by 4pm tomorrow.

The RFO advised that as we were about to be out of contract we will see our costs rocket very quickly, so we need to secure a new contract very quickly.

F22 **Date of next Meeting**

/028 The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Monday 23rd January 2023 November 2022.

F22 **Closure**

/029 The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20.07

RFO

**Cllr J Burns
Cllr D Roach**

Signed
Chairman

Date.....