

# Haverhill Town Council

## Minutes of Haverhill Town Council's

### FINANCE WORKING PARTY

Held remotely on Tuesday, 23 January 2024 at 7.00pm



HAVERHILL  
TOWN COUNCIL

**Present:** Mayor D Smith (Chair)  
Councillor R André (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor J Burns  
Councillor B Davidson  
Councillor A Luccarini  
Councillor L Smith

**Apologies:** Councillor P Hanlon

**In Attendance:** Colin Poole (Responsible Financial Officer)  
Kerry Wallis (Finance Administrator)

No members of the public were present.

### Welcome:

Councillor D Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting was being streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel.

- F24 /001** **Apologies for Absence**  
The above apology was noted.
- F24 /002** **Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and requests for Dispensations**  
None.
- F24 /003** **Minutes of the Last Meeting**  
It was proposed by Councillor R André, seconded by Councillor J Burns that the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 be agreed as a true record.  
**RESOLVED**
- F24 /004** **Actions Arising**  
F23/061 Mutiny in Colour: The Finance Administrator had collated the figures. Overall there was a small deficit of around £100, but this was less than the usual cost of summer activities at the Arts Centre, so financially the exhibition was a success, but only because of the funding given by West Suffolk District Council.  
F23/061 Zone financials: Entrance fees and café sales will be separately shown from April 2024. However, the financials that are generated from the till system were shown to the Working Party. It was noted that party income is strong, but café sales and entrance fees are not keeping pace with budget expectations. The 2024/25 budget has taken this into account.
- F24 /005** **Public Forum**  
No members of the public were present.

Action

KW

F24  
/006

**Report from Responsible Financial Officer**

**a) Haverhill Town Council budget report to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

The RFO presented his report to the meeting.

**b) Narrative to RFO Report**

The RFO reported that this is the YTD P8: two-thirds through the financial year. In addition to the narrative, the meeting discussed the following matters:

Kiosk & Coffee Bar: Councillor R André asked if these figures could be separated so that the performance of each could be considered. The Finance Administrator provided a breakdown of the kiosk performance. This showed that the key expenditure was having two staff on duty as a minimum, rather than lone working. This was a staff safety requirement. Councillor J Burns offered to analyse the kiosk till data to review the opening hours and identify the best times for the kiosk to be open.

Cllr J Burns

**c) Treasury**

The RFO presented an HTC Treasury graph to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to show how the different funds are held. There may be a need to draw down on the 32-day account to cover April, as the precept won't be received until the end of the month and this means payroll needs to be covered. The decision will need to be taken at the end of February.

RFO

**d) Bank Reconciliation**

Councillor Burns will visit the office later this week to check and sign off the bank reconciliation.

Cllr J Burns

**e) Payments, Debtors and Creditors**

The Finance Administrator reported that there are three queries at present, but they are of no significant concern.

F24  
/007

**Draft Budget 2024/25**

a) The RFO presented the latest draft of the budget for 2024/25. This was more robust than the first draft as it benefitted from data from November and December. The draft budget required a 5.7% uplift to the precept.

b) **Haverhill In The Park**: The Working Party considered the discussion that took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> January at the Community Events Working Party regarding seeking savings at events. The Working Party had requested a revised budget for Haverhill In The Park for a two-day event, and flagged the potential for the event taking place alternate years. The Finance Working Party agreed that costing a two-day event was the preferred option over holding the event biannually. Savings may not be commensurate with the reduction as the bulk of the costs are in the set-up and take-down, not in the number of days equipment is on-site. Savings would be made on security, staffing and the cost of acts.

RFO

The RFO highlighted that the changing spaces tent for disabled people had been provided for two years running at considerable cost, with no disabled person using it. The Chair of the DAG had lobbied for it, but subsequently said they wouldn't use the facilities in a tent. We will provide the accessible viewing space, steward as concierge and the wheelchair-accessible portaloos, but delete the changing space. This would save £2k and open space for an additional hospitality outlet. Marketing the headliners earlier would also help boost attendances which creates income through hospitality outlets.

- c) **Arts Centre:** Councillor A Luccarini asked if there was scope to limit the number of days per week The Arts Centre was open. The RFO advised this might be possible, but closing the doors may impact community groups if they cannot meet on a different day, and if there was scope to fit them in. In any case the building needs to be open for the bank so we would need box office.

It may be possible to review the days when cinema is offered, with NT Live and the Royal Opera House showings the ones that break even. Members queried if there was a case for showing mainstream movies after they had been at Cineworld and were available on streaming services. The Working Party asked for data regarding attendances at the Arts Centre cinema. The RFO will endeavour to obtain stats on this.

RFO

Councillor R André counselled against reducing opening hours. He highlighted the purpose of the Arts Centre is to provide cultural development. Councillor A Luccarini clarified he wasn't proposing change this year, but that the possibility be considered over the year.

The RFO will advise Sara Marsh that she need not feel the need to put on cinema for the sake of it.

RFO

- d) **Volunteer Centre:** This had been unsuccessful in applying for revenue funding from the Community Chest, as the number of volunteers being placed wasn't achieving the social returns on investment that would demonstrate value for money. The current budget fully funded the Volunteer Centre from the Town Council precept. The RFO set out potential options:

- a. Work with the Link and Volunteer Centre Co-ordinator to see if the barriers to success could be overcome.
- b. Retain the full funds but look for an alternative way of supporting community and volunteering groups.
- c. Recommend to Full Council that the Volunteer Centre close and allocate 6 months budget to achieve an orderly closure. This would save £13k and could either boost the grant budget to support community groups or reduce the precept uplift to just under 5%.

It was proposed by Councillor A Luccarini, seconded by Councillor J Burns, that the closure of the Volunteer Centre be recommended to full council, with 50% of the budget used to fund an orderly closedown and the balance to reduce the precept.

**RESOLVED**

It was proposed by Councillor J Burns, seconded by Councillor A Luccarini, that the draft budget, amended for the Volunteer Centre budget line, be recommended to Full Council for adoption, alongside a further option including an amendment to the Haverhill In The Park budget.

**RESOLVED**

**F24** **Date of next Meeting**

**/008** The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024

**F24** **Closure**

**/009** The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20:26pm.

Signed .....  
**Chairman**

Date.....