

HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL
 Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich, Essex CO12 3DS
 Tel: 01255 507211
 email: info@harwichtowncouncil.co.uk

**MINUTES of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes
 Committee
 held
 Remotely
 on
 Tuesday 28th July 2020 at 7.00pm**

Present:	Councillors Calver, Fay, J Henderson, Powell, Richardson, D Smith, G Smith (until 7.24pm returning at 7.26pm) and Todd.
In the Chair:	Councillor Morrison
Clerk:	Ms Lucy Ballard
Also present:	0 members of the public, 0 members of the press, Assistant Clerk Michelle Townsend, Estates Supervisor Peter Barrenger and Admin. Assistant Shannon Lenyk.

Public questions: None

F01/20	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Cllr I Henderson
F02/20	<u>DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS</u> None
F03/20	<u>PHASED RETURN TO WORKING FROM THE GUILDHALL</u> Members considered the risk assessment which would inform the phased return to working and operating from the Guildhall in light of the Government measures to ease the lockdown associated with Covid-19. The clerk confirmed that guidance was still to work from home unless you are unable to but that all staff members were keen to return to some form of normality and any extended period of home working would come with its own issues that Council would have to address. Initially, the chair suggested that members consider a return which would see only 2 team members in the building at any one time, 1 in each office and that additional signage would not be necessary under this phase. She said that no members of the public would be permitted and councillor visits would be on an appointment only basis. Peter Barrenger asked about screens being erected which would enable same office working. Shannon Lenyk added that some tasks would prove difficult if an office couldn't be shared. She felt that returning to the office would aid motivation.

Cllrs Fay and Henderson felt screens worked well in their respective place of work.

Michelle Townsend referred to the benefits on mental health in returning to a more familiar way of working and that with the right measures in place, it could work well.

Cllr Calver stated that things were moving much faster than originally expected and that at any time the arrangements weren't working, staff members weren't to feel pressured into all working together and remote working could continue. Cllr Morrison added that she didn't want the team to feel pushed into returning altogether but felt this could be facilitated if that was the preference.

Cllr Todd asked whether the staff were happy with the PPE in place (referring to use in the communal areas), and what measures would be in place if councillors attend the office. It was explained that measures had already been considered to enable social distancing in the kitchen along with the separation of toilet and wash facilities. It was suggested and agreed that members do not enter the offices and remain either in the hallway or another separate room. The clerk confirmed that all redundant furniture had been moved to the Gaol. Cllr Calver suggested the situation is kept under constant review and the clerk said the risk assessment could be updated to reflect any change in guidance or the situation overall.

The clerk asked for confirmation on the rota system as the issue wasn't so much the 2-person restriction, more so the not being able to work in the same office. Cllr Henderson felt that with the necessary measures in place, it would seem unnecessary to have a rota in place and members agreed that this would enable all 4 staff members to return to working together in the Guildhall.

The clerk suggested what members would need to resolve to enable the execution of phase 1 of the return as well as the eventual, gradual return to other operations from the Guildhall as the situation and guidance allows, without further reference to the committee.

RESOLVED: 1. To accept the risk assessment and agree to a phased return, commencing with all 4 team members returning to working from the Guildhall; 2. To purchase the necessary safety equipment as outlined in the RA at an initial estimated cost of £260; 3. Agree to additional expenditure as necessary to facilitate the return of all other aspects of Guildhall operations up to the designated expenditure limits for the Clerk and Chair of F&GP.

Cllr Calver thanked all officers for their remarkable services under what has been very difficult circumstances.

The clerk added her thanks to both the committee for meeting to facilitate this return and to Michelle, Shannon and Peter.

The chairman closed the meeting at 7.40pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE