

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
 held
Remotely
 on
Tuesday 8th December 2020 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors Calver, Fay, I Henderson, J Henderson, Powell, Richardson, D Smith, G Smith and Todd.
In the Chair:	Councillor Morrison
Clerk:	Ms Lucy Ballard
Also present:	Cllr Davidson, 0 members of the public, 0 members of the press and Estates Supervisor Peter Barrenger.

Public questions: None

F32/20	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> None
	The Chairman informed members that an item of business had been brought to her attention today in relation to a request to sponsor a town Christmas tree and that this would be discussed as an emergency item after the Declarations of members interests.
F33/20	<u>DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS</u> None
F34/20	<u>TOWN CHRISTMAS TREE</u> The chairman read aloud a request which had been received requesting that the council sponsor a Christmas tree for the town centre. The Clerk advised members that the Financial Regulations didn't provide for expenditure of this nature to be considered when not previously detailed on the agenda the requisite number of days in advance and that she had also had no opportunity to carry out any due diligence. The chairman suggested this is dealt with via delegated authority. Members agreed to note the advice of the clerk but due to the importance of the business and the tight timeframe, RESOLVED: To proceed with sponsoring a Christmas tree up to a level not exceeding £500 upon receipt of an invoice.
F35/20	<u>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</u> RESOLVED: That the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 th October 2020

	(previously circulated) be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.
F36/20	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</u> Members noted the following:</p> <p>F19/20 – Brickwork on buildings at the Hill School site is in progress. F18/20 – Re-routing and replacing of AV cabling at the Hill School site is now complete as is the removal of the sycamore tree. F21/20 – Putting Green lease has been signed and is being finalised by TDC. F22/20 – HTC has made contact with TDC over management of allotment land and is awaiting this to be progressed. F23/20 – Images have been printed and sent to the framer who will contact when ready. F24/20 – Funds have been wired F25/20 – Difficulty in sourcing an Emergency Services Day flag</p>
F37/20	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES</u> F19/20 – Members considered the proposal to carry out periodic re-inspections as advised by tree surveyor and, for continuity, to retain the services as previously instructed. To be expended from the External Support Contingency Fund. RESOLVED: To continue with periodic re-inspections as advised and retain the services as previously instructed.</p>
F38/20	<p><u>GRANT REQUESTS</u> None</p>
F39/20	<p><u>ESTATES SUPERVISOR REPORT</u> The Estates Supervisor, Peter Barringer, reported on recent and current projects/issues concerning the Council's estate, including that all roofs, facias and guttering is complete at the HHS (guttering on the single story storage facility of the DTG); brickworks are in progress. Lockable cabinet put in storage facility; large spotlights have been serviced and replaced as necessary on the DTG building and a new sensor replaced on the bollard lighting. All panels are now removed on the youth shelter. All obstacles of the crazy golf have been removed completely following vandalism recently. The clock has been refurbished at the Putting Green kiosk and all the Christmas lights are up and working in the town and along the quay. Cllr Calver thanked Peter for his wonderful service to the council and wished him a happy retirement.</p>
F40/20	<p><u>INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS</u> Cllr D Smith reported findings following a review of the accounts on 3rd December for the period Jul-Sep. He reported that everything appeared to be in very good order, and he found no irregularities. The Chair thanked Cllr Smith for his time.</p>
F41/20	<p><u>YEAR END CLOSEDOWN (ANNUAL RETURN)</u> Members considered contracting the services of RBS Rialtas to conduct the Accounts Year end closedown procedure. RESOLVED: To proceed with arranging the services at a cost of £560 to be expended from the Administration – Software Support budget.</p>

	FURTHER RESOLVED: To continue with annual support and maintenance services in 2021/22 at a cost of £387; also to be expended from the Administration – Software Support budget.
F42/20	<u>CHRISTMAS 2020 GUILDHALL CLOSURE</u> Members considered closure of the Guildhall and Council offices over the Christmas period and RESOLVED: To close from 1pm on Thursday 24 th December 2020 – 9.30am on Monday 4 th January 2021.
F43/20	<u>LEISURE SEASON 2021</u> Members considered opening dates and times for the Council-managed leisure facilities for the 2021 season. RESOLVED: That the opening hours are to remain at 11am – 4pm and that for 2021 the following open dates will apply: Easter (2 nd – 5 th Apr); weekends from June and full opening from 24 th Jul – 31 st Aug). It was additionally agree to open the facility on the dates of the following events: Harwich Half Marathon (April) Tour de Tendring (May) Motorcycle Rally (Sep)
F44/20	<u>PAYROLL SERVICES</u> In considering the services provided over the last financial year, members RESOLVED: to renew the contract for payroll services with Ladywell Accountancy on an ongoing basis, commencing 2021/22 at cost of £495, allowing for a marginal increase in cost each year (Apr-Mar) to be expended from the Administration – Subscriptions/Fees budget, with provision to be reviewed every 3 years.
F45/20	<u>CCTV MAINTENANCE</u> RESOLVED: To renew the maintenance contract for the 2021/22 financial year with Homeview at a cost of £218 to be expended from the Hill School Repairs & Maintenance budget.
F46/20	<u>LANDSCAPING AT THE HILL SCHOOL SITE/PLANTING AT THE PUTTING GREEN</u> RESOLVED: To renew arrangement with Tendring District Council for landscaping services and planting at the council-managed sites on an ongoing basis, commencing 2021/22 at a cost of £1262, to be expended from the respective maintenance budgets, with long-term provision to be reviewed during 2021.
F47/20	<u>LITTER PICK AT SKATE PARK</u> Members reviewed services for 2020/21 and RESOLVED: To renew contract with Veolia for litter picking services at the skate park in 2021/22, at the current intervals/frequencies, at an estimated cost of £815 to be expended from the Leisure budget.
F48/20	<u>SLCC MEMBERSHIP</u> RESOLVED: To renew subscription for the Clerk 2021/22 at a cost of £234 to be expended from the Subscriptions budget.
F49/20	<u>GRANT FUNDING POLICY</u> With reference to MIN F16/20 members reviewed the current grant policy and gave consideration to concerns raised over the use of live animals at events

	<p>and whether any amendments should be made. Cllr Morrison made a suggestion on how to address the concern by including the wording 'If your event involves the use of animals, please provide details' and ' Harwich Town Council will not support a grant application that it believes may compromise animal welfare issues'. Furthermore, the chair referred to the issue previously raised about the grant scheme being unable to support projects which discriminate on the ground of race or religion. It was suggested that this be amended to read '..... on the grounds of race, religion or disability'.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To amend the grant policy accordingly.</p>
F50/20	<p><u>DATA AUDIT</u> RESOLVED: To approve the Data Audit and Data Protection Policy for Harwich Town Council.</p>
F51/20	<p><u>CRAZY GOLF</u> Members considered the repairs required to the crazy golf following damage sustained on 21st October, at a cost of £414. Members discussed whether to make a claim through the council's insurance to consider making a claim through the Council's insurance. The excess for claims is £100. RESOLVED: To proceed with the replacements and claim on the insurance.</p>
F52/20	<p><u>ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES</u> Members considered the requirement to arrange energy assessments at the Hill School site following completion of replacement roofs to buildings 3, 4 and 5, at a cost of up to £1000. RESOLVED: To proceed with energy assessments to be expended from the EPCs earmarked reserve.</p>
F53/20	<p><u>MOBILE PHONE</u> Members considered purchasing a mobile phone to facilitate work undertaken away from the Guildhall and act as a contact for external contractors and which could be used for communication within the council in the event of an emergency. The clerk provided information to members on a suitable handset and confirmed that it would be more cost effective to take on a SIM only contract as with a PAYG, the unused minutes aren't much cheaper but the unused minutes are often not carried over. RESOLVED: To proceed with purchasing a suitable handset at an estimated cost of £80 and a SIM only deal at an initial cost of £6p/m for 12 months, to be renewed as necessary.</p>
F54/20	<p><u>PC</u> The clerk confirmed that this was replacing an old desktop and funds had been earmarked accordingly. The clerk also asked members about the disposal of the old machine and it was agreed to seek to gift this to a local good cause, such as Teen Talk, once it had been stripped down. RESOLVED: To purchase a new desktop PC for the office along with 3-year service warranty at the cost of £661 to be expended from the ICT EMR.</p>
F55/20	<p><u>EMERGENCY PLANNING FUNDING</u> Cllr I Henderson asked members to consider a request by the E&C Committee to investigate a process whereby funds could be released immediately in the event of a local or national emergency. He suggested £1k b earmarked for such purposes. The clerk confirmed that this would require a small amendment to the Financial Regulations and suggested it provide for the clerk in consultation with others to agree to release funds, without the need to hold a meeting, and which would be subsequently reported to Council. Members discussed various ways in which this could be facilitated</p>

	<p>and it was suggested that any funds be expended from the general reserve so as not to tie up monies. After considerable debate it was RESOLVED: To authorise the clerk in consultation with the chair of F&GP to proceed with amending the Financial Regulations to facilitate this request and for the procedure to be that the chairman of the E&C Committee will consult with the clerk over any requests for the release of funds, to ensure the proper practices were being followed.</p>
F56/20	<p><u>BUDGET/PRECEPT 2021/22</u> Members considered the estimates for income and expenditure for the 2021/22 financial year including recommendations to earmarked funds.</p> <p>The chairman gave a rundown of what would be achieved with this budget.</p> <p>The clerk confirmed the amount received in LCTSS grant since 2014/15 and that there was no expectation of a grant going forward.</p> <p>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: that the council precept on Tendring District Council for £205861 (the LCTSS grant has ceased), having an impact of £37.79 per annum for a Band D council taxpayer based on a provisional tax base of 5448 and representing a zero increase on 2020/21. The justification being that HTC would be able to maintain all current provisions including the Grants and Economic Development budgets and would only cost a Band D householder 73p per week.</p> <p>The vice-chair congratulated the clerk on a job well done in bringing the budget together.</p> <p>The clerk confirmed that the Tax Base would be confirmed shortly and final figures would be circulated prior to the Full Council meeting on 5th January when the precept would be formally set.</p>
F57/20	<p><u>MATTERS TO BE REPORTED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the purchase of 1x laptop riser and 1x monitor stand to facilitate home working at a cost of £36.38 to be expended from the ICT budget. • To approve the purchase of 2x webcams for office PCs to facilitate virtual (Zoom) meetings at a cost of £36.37 to be expended from the ICT budget. • To approve cost of £295 for recruitment advertising, to be expended from the Training and Consultancy budget. • To confirm that a sum of £2727 has been returned to the council for unspent grant funding from the Harwich International Shanty Festival, whose event was cancelled in 2020 as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. £523 has been expended on approved costs from the £3250 awarded. • To approve the cost of £98 for replacement photocell and bulb and service of outside lighting at the Hill School Site to be expended from the Hill School maintenance budget. • To approve the cost of fault finding on floodlights at the skatepark and supply, installation and testing of new contactor timer at a cost to be expended from the Skatepark maintenance budget. • To approve cost of £110 for purchase of PC monitor and digital cable for dual working/training purposes to be expended from the ICT EMR. <p>The above items were noted.</p>
F58/20	<p><u>MATTERS RECEIVED IN THE POST OR RAISED BY MEMBERS</u> None</p>

F59/20	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u> The next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee will be held remotely on Tuesday 23rd March 2021 at 7.00pm.</p>
F60/20	<p><u>EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS</u> Members RESOLVED: That Pursuant to Sub-Section 2 of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the meeting was closed to the press and public for the transaction of the under-mentioned business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary Reviews

The chairman closed the public part of the meeting at 7.58pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE