

HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL
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MINUTES
of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
 held at
The Guildhall, Church Street
 on
Tuesday 12th December 2023 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors Calver, Chable, Fay, Richardson Saunders Todd and Wade
In the Chair:	Councillor Morrison
Clerk:	Ms Lucy Ballard
Also present:	0 members of the public, 0 members of the press and Estate Supervisor, Andy Wells and Cllr Davidson

Public questions: None

F52/23	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Cllr Fowler
F53/23	<u>DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS</u> None
F54/23	<u>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</u> RESOLVED: That the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 28 th September 2023 (previously circulated) be approved by the committee and signed by the chairman as a true record.
F55/23	<u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIN F29/23 – The clerk provided an update on the acquisition of the Portrait of the King and members RESOLVED: to proceed with an application to acquire a free A3 print and frame when the scheme opens. • MIN F37/23 Members noted that an additional £30k had been invested in bonds with NS&I bringing the balance to £80k with an interest rate of 3.59%. • MIN F39/23 - Cllr Chable briefed members on the investigations into installing additional CCTV at the skatepark. He confirmed that following a site visit with the manager of Dovercourt Lifestyles and their existing CCTV provider, a quote had been received. It was subsequently felt that the deployable camera option was no longer feasible due to its temporary nature and the unnecessary costs this would incur. Enquiries have been made with TDC regarding housing of the equipment, networking and monitoring of the images and responses are awaited. Councillors liked the idea of additional capacity being available with such a system as this would allow for more cameras to be added at a later date.

F56/23	<u>MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES</u> None
F57/23	<u>SPRING MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL</u> The clerk confirmed that this was above and beyond normal school funding. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: To award £1230 s137 grant.
F58/23	<u>HARWICH MUSEUM</u> RESOLVED: To award £444 s137 grant.
F59/23	<u>ESTATES SUPERVISOR REPORT</u> Members acknowledged the latest report from Estate Supervisor, Andy Wells, which detailed recent and current projects/issues concerning the Council's estate, including a small leak in building 5 at the Hill School site, which was being addressed, repairs which are needed to some of the crazy golf obstacles and the continuous graffiti at the skate park. Andy also mentioned services having been carried out to the stairlift and intruder alarm. Cllr Wade raised a concern from a member of the public over visitors parking on the Hill School site. Andy said driving onto the site is actively discouraged. Cllr Morrison commented on how good the new Christmas lights looked.
F60/23	<u>INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS</u> Members acknowledged a report from Cllr Smith following a review of the accounts for the periods Jul-Sep on 17 th November. No irregularities were found, and everything appeared to be in excellent order.
F61/23	<u>CHRISTMAS GUILDHALL CLOSURE</u> Members considered closure of the Guildhall and Council offices over the Christmas period. Cllr Calver suggested following what is customary which involves giving 1 discretionary day. RESOLVED: To close from 1pm on Friday 22 nd December 2023 – 9.30am on Tuesday 2 nd January 2024.
F62/23	<u>EMPLOYEE TEAM BUILDING</u> Members considered facilitating teambuilding activities for the council's 3 permanent employees and RESOLVED: to approve activities and expenditure in consultation with the chair of F&GP.
F63/23	<u>SLCC MEMBERSHIP</u> RESOLVED: To renew subscription for the Clerk in 2024 at a cost of £288 to be expended from the Subscriptions budget.
F64/23	<u>DATA AUDIT</u> RESOLVED: To approve the annual Data Audit for Harwich Town Council.
F65/23	<u>LEISURE SEASON 2024</u> Members considered opening dates and times for the Council-managed leisure facilities for the 2024 season. Cllr Calver briefed members on discussions regarding the future of the greens and other facilities which could be considered. The clerk relayed that Easter would be earlier next year and that very low income was taken during the Harwich Half Marathon and Motorcycle Rally in 2023. RESOLVED: That the opening hours are to remain at 11am – 4pm and that for 2024 the following opening dates will apply: Weekends from June and full opening from 24 th Jul – 1 st September.

	<p>Additionally, it was agreed to open the facility on the dates of the following events:</p> <p>Tour de Tendring (19th May)</p> <p>It was also RESOLVED: To proceed with the recruitment of Seasonal Leisure Attendants as necessary with the process being managed by the Clerk.</p> <p>An hourly rate was also considered for Seasonal Leisure Attendants, and it was RESOLVED: to pay all post holders at the relevant NLW applicable at the time.</p>
F66/23	<p><u>HEATH & SAFETY AND FIRE SAFETY</u></p> <p>Members considered the respective risk assessments and the measures needed to mitigate risks.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the risk assessments.</p> <p>Members further considered a new Fire Safety Policy which had been compiled in response to new regulations. The clerk drew members' attention to parts of the policy in relation to designated responsible persons during meetings. Cllr Calver suggested that the responsible person be the clerk and chair for council meetings and then appointed as necessary for meetings where no employee is present.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED: To adopt the policy.</p>
F67/23	<p><u>HILL SCHOOL RESTORATION PROJECT</u></p> <p>The clerk briefed members on the progress made in carrying out recommended works following receipt of a condition report in early 2017 and that the outstanding repairs as recommended will continue to be monitored by the Estate Supervisor. It was confirmed that the only remaining works that could become necessary would be the roof replacements on the DTG occupied buildings and that earmarked funds would need to be monitored to ensure there was sufficient when the time comes.</p>
F68/23	<p><u>NEW OFFICE PCs</u></p> <p>The clerk reported that 2 office PCs were applicable for replacement but were working without fault and could be replaced later and since there would be funds in the ICT EMR to draw from. Cllr Wade asked about compatibility with the proposed new CCTV system.</p> <p>RESOLVED: to leave their replacement with equivalent specification at the discretion of the clerk in consultation with the chair, to be expended from the ICT EMR.</p>
F69/23	<p><u>CONSORT'S REGALIA</u></p> <p>The chair asked members to consider investigating options for regalia to be worn by a mayor's consort.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To investigate options and costs and bring back to a future meeting.</p>
F70/23	<p><u>MAYOR'S JABOT</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: to purchase an additional jabot at a maximum cost of £134.50 plus £7.50 for delivery to standardise those worn by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, to be expended from the Civic Expenditure budget.</p>
F71/23	<p><u>LANDSCAPING AT THE HILL SCHOOL SITE/PLANTING AT THE PUTTING GREEN</u></p> <p>Ref: MIN F32/21 - Members reviewed the current arrangement, which the Estate Supervisor said was working well.</p>

	<p>RESOLVED: to extend agreement with Tendring District Council on an ongoing basis from April 2024, with provision to be reviewed in 3 years. Costs agreed at £1318 for 24/25 and £1384 for 25/26 and 26/27.</p>
F72/23	<p><u>LITTER MANAGEMENT AT THE SKATEPARK AND PUTTING GREENS</u> Ref: MIN F47/20 - Members reviewed the current arrangement and RESOLVED: to extend agreement with Veolia on an ongoing basis from April 2024, with provision to be reviewed in 3 years. Costs expected to be £652 for 24/25, £739 for 25/26 and £838 for 26/24 based on current rate of RPI.</p>
F73/23	<p><u>5-YEAR PERIODIC ELECTRICAL INSPECTION – GUILDHALL</u> The clerk confirmed this was a mandatory inspection and the cost quoted did not include any works which may arise, but an amount had been budgeted. RESOLVED: to accept the quote of £725 to be expended from the Fire & Safety budget.</p>
F74/23	<p><u>RECYCLING BINS</u> Members considered a request by Tendring District Council to become a collection point for residents to purchase additional recycling bins. The clerk confirmed this would require the council purchasing a collection of bins and then reselling them at TDC’s proposed resale price. Cllr Calver was concerned that the decision taken by TDC to charge for additional bins could leave HTC employees open to abuse by aggrieved residents. He suggested that Dovercourt Lifestyles, a TDC premises, would offer a more suitable location. RESOLVED: not to take up the offer from TDC.</p>
F75/23	<p><u>BUDGET/PRECEPT 2024/25</u> Members considered the estimates for income and expenditure for the 2024/25 financial year including recommendations to earmarked funds. Cllr Calver reported that this budget allowed for the council to retain all its current provisions and maintain sufficient reserves. The clerk confirmed that the Tax Base was still to be confirmed and the final figures would be circulated prior to the Full Council meeting on 10th January when the precept would be formally set. An increase in the tax base would generate more precept whilst keeping the ‘per property’ figure unchanged. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: that on a total estimated budget of £237456, the council precept on Tendring District Council for £212406 having an impact of £37.79 per annum or 73p per week for a Band D council taxpayer based on a provisional tax base of 5621 and representing a zero increase on 2023/24. It was additionally agreed that any remaining underspends at year end would be allocated at the first Finance meeting of the new financial year. The budget has been set to allow the council to retain all its current provision. The clerk confirmed that final figures would be circulated prior to the Full Council meeting on 10th January when the precept would be formally set. Members also RESOLVED: the following mid-year virements: Credit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £10k to Building Maintenance EMR • £5k to Elections Expenses EMR </p>
F76/23	<p><u>MATTERS TO BE REPORTED</u> Members noted the following matters.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NJC had reached agreement on the 2023-24 pay awards to apply a flat rate payment of £1925 on each scale point, which has been implemented for all applicable employees, along with the necessary back pay. No agreement has been made on the 2024-25 pay awards.
F77/23	<p><u>MATTERS RECEIVED IN THE POST OR RAISED BY MEMBERS</u></p> <p>Members noted receipt of the following correspondence:</p> <p>Letters of thanks for grants received from: Harwich Quay Fireworks Committee.</p> <p>Evaluation form following grant received from: Harwich Cultural & Community Projects and the Harwich Kindertransport Memorial & Learning Trust.</p>
F78/23	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></p> <p>The next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee will be held on Thursday 21st March 2024 at The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich, at 7.00pm.</p>
F79/23	<p><u>EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS</u></p> <p>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"> • Putting Green Licence

The chairman closed the public part of the meeting at 8.38pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE