

MINUTES
of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
 held at
The Guildhall, Church Street
 on
Tuesday 10th December 2024 at 7.03pm

Present:	Councillors Calver, Chable, Fay, Fowler, 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

Public questions: None

F048/24	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> None
F049/24	<u>DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS</u> Cllrs Calver and Fowler declared an Other Registrable Interest in item 21 as trustees of the Harwich Society (lessees of the High Lighthouse). Cllr Wade declared a Non-Registrable Interest in the grant application for the Parish of the Harwich Peninsula as a member of the Harwich Rotary (third party funding body).
F050/24	<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 Tuesday 24 th September 2024, (previously circulated) be approved by the committee and signed by the chairman as a true record.
F051/24	<u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIN F043/24 – The clerk updated members on the appointment of a new cleaner. Two small businesses have shown interest but only 1 has been able to meet our requirements. Once further details have been discussed, this will need to be formally considered at the Council meeting in January. • MIN 047/24 – Cllr Chable gave an update on the CCTV at the skatepark project. The project has stalled owing to lack of engagement with the landowner (TDC) despite several attempts to move this forward. He conveyed his thanks to Cllr Calver and the clerk for attempting to progress this. The clerk has advised the contractor in case this has an impact on the price quoted.
F052/24	<u>MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIN F015/24 – It was confirmed that Mental Health Workplace First

	Responder training had been completed for the Clerk and Asst. Clerk. The Managing Difficult People and Conversations training is yet to be secured.
F053/24	<u>SPRING MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL</u> Members discussed a grant application from Spring Meadow Primary School for funds towards putting on a production of 'Annie'. RESOLVED: To award a grant of £819.
F054/24	<u>PARISH OF THE HARWICH PENINSULA</u> Members discussed a grant application from the Parish of the Harwich Peninsula for funds towards the provision of hives, bees, beekeeping suits and equipment and educational materials. The clerk alerted members that this application was in addition to the Arrival of St Nicholas application which had already been awarded in this financial year but could be considered at the committee's discretion if funding allows. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: To award a grant of £1000.
F055/24	<u>ESTATES SUPERVISOR REPORT</u> Members acknowledged the latest report from Estate Supervisor, Andy Wells, in which he reported on various matters including an update on graffiti removal at the skatepark, completion of PAT testing, Putting Green repair requirements and the Christmas lights, which were now on display at the Guildhall and in the town.
F056/24	<u>INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS</u> Members acknowledged a report from Cllrs Chable and Smith following a review of the accounts for the periods Jul - Sep on 9 th December. No irregularities were found, and everything appeared to be in perfect order.
F057/24	<u>CHRISTMAS GUILDHALL CLOSURE</u> Members considered closure of the Guildhall and Council offices over the Christmas period. The clerk confirmed that annual leave would be taken by herself and the Estate Supervisor on 24 th . RESOLVED: To close from 1pm on Monday 23 rd December 2024 – Thursday 2 nd January 2025.
F058/24	<u>SLCC MEMBERSHIP</u> RESOLVED: To renew subscription for the Clerk in 2025 at a cost of £300 to be expended from the Subscriptions budget.
F059/24	<u>DATA AUDIT AND DATA PROTECTION POLICY</u> RESOLVED: To approve the annual Data Audit for Harwich Town Council with a minor addition. FURTHER RESOLVED: To adopt the Data Protection Policy for Harwich Town Council and review again in 2027.
F060/24	<u>LEISURE SEASON 2025</u> Members considered opening dates and times for the Council-managed leisure facilities for the 2025 season. The clerk relayed that Easter would be in April next year although historically this has seen very low income, including on occasions when opening for the Harwich Half Marathon and Tour de Tendring. RESOLVED: That the opening hours are to remain at 11am – 4pm and that for 2025 the following opening dates will apply: Weekends only from June and daily opening from 21 st Jul – 31 st August.

	<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 retain the policy of paying all SLAs at the highest applicable NMW rate at the time.</p> <p>It was also RESOLVED: to proceed with carrying out the necessary repairs/purchases as detailed:</p> <p>Pétanque terrain - new wood frame/edging and stakes (£500); New clock (£70); Putting Green Hut - new wood for repairs to shutters and paint (£94); New 'Open' flag (£20).</p>
F061/24	<p><u>HILL SCHOOL RESTORATION PROJECT</u></p> <p>The clerk confirmed that following receipt of a condition report in early 2017, the outstanding repairs to the building occupied by the Harwich Amateur Boxing Club had now been carried. 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> <p>It was agreed to add to the next agenda, to obtain a survey of the roofs.</p>
F062/24	<p><u>HEALTH & SAFETY AND FIRE SAFETY IN THE GUILDHALL</u></p> <p>A review of the Health & Safety Policy was carried out by the clerk and with no amendments, it was RESOLVED: to adopt the Health & Safety Policy for Harwich Town Council.</p> <p>Members also considered a minor amendment to the Fire Safety Policy in relation to the number of fire drills to be carried out annually and FURTHER RESOLVED: to adopt the Fire Safety Policy with the amendment (carry out 1 drill annually). The clerk laid out the rationale for the order in which attendees should leave the building.</p> <p>The Health & Safety Risk Assessment for the Guildhall was reviewed and with no amendments, it was FURTHER RESOLVED: to accept the Health & Safety Risk Assessment (Guildhall) and take all necessary measures to mitigate risk.</p>
F063/24	<p><u>WELLBEING POLICY</u></p> <p>Members considered adopting a Wellbeing policy following the Mental Health Workplace Responder training which the Clerk and Asst. Clerk had carried out in October.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To adopt a Wellbeing Policy for Harwich Town Council, to be reviewed every 3 years or as guidance changes.</p>
F064/24	<p><u>CCTV MAINTENANCE AT THE HILL SCHOOL SITE</u></p> <p>Ref: MIN F57/21 – Members reviewed the service provided by the existing provider and considered extending the agreement for CCTV maintenance services for a further 3-year period.</p> <p>RESOLVED: to extend the agreement for CCTV maintenance services with Homeview for a period of 3 years commencing in April 2025 at a cost of £292.50 per annum, to be expended from the Hill School Repairs & Maintenance budget.</p>

F065/24	<p><u>IT</u> Members reviewed the service provided by the existing provider and considered renewal of IT support services on an ongoing adhoc basis, commencing 2025/26. RESOLVED: to extend the agreement for adhoc IT support services with East Coast Technology chargeable at £22 per hour or £160 per day to be expended from the ICT budget.</p> <p>Members also considered a recommendation to move over to a gov.uk domain, which would see all emails change to [name@harwichtowncouncil.gov.uk] or [cllr.firstinitialsurname@harwichtowncouncil.gov.uk] and the website to www.harwichtowncouncil.gov.uk.</p> <p>RESOLVED: to move over to a gov.uk domain and accept the following costs to be expended from the ICT earmarked reserve.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Registration of the domain name £10 per annum 2. Ruby Hosting Package £110 per annum 3. Work by IT consultant to move over emails, estimated at 3 hrs @ £22 p/hr 4. Work by Web editor to move website and associated work, estimated at £50. <p>Members also considered options for acquiring a WiFi extender in the Chamber and FURTHER RESOLVED: to purchase the in-situ second-hand extender at a cost of £60 to be expended from the ICT budget.</p>
F066/24	<p><u>ACCOUNTS MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT</u> Members considered the continuation of a maintenance support agreement for RBS accounts in 2025-26 and RESOLVED: to proceed at a cost of £589 for up to 5 users. To be expended from the Website/Accounts budget.</p> <p>Members further considered options for year-end close down support. The clerk said that a 5-year agreement was best value but ties the council in for a long time and suggested that a 3-year term might help to balance that and it would only cost £24 more.</p> <p>RESOLVED: to proceed with the 3-year Gold scheme at a cost of £872 in 2025. To be expended from the Website/Accounts budget.</p>
F067/24	<p><u>FINANCIAL REGULATIONS</u> Members considered new Financial Regulations following a review by a working party on 11th October, in light of a completely new model set. Cllr Chable relayed to members that it was a thorough process, taking into account advice and recommendations from the RFO and that amounts/limits were set to reflect current prices and values, which were cross referenced throughout the document for consistency. Members thanked the working party for their thorough work.</p> <p>RESOLVED: to adopt the Financial Regulations with immediate effect, to be reviewed again at the March meeting in readiness for the 2025/26 financial year. And to ensure the Standing Orders were update to reflect the changes in the procurement limits.</p>
F068/24	<p><u>MOBILE PHONE</u> RESOLVED: to authorise renewal of contract for mobile phone at a monthly cost starting at £11.20p/m (to be increased annually each April) on a 3 year-</p>

	contract to include a new handset, unlimited calls/texts and 10GB of data. To be expended from the Telephone budget.
F069/24	<p><u>ILLUMINATION OF THE HIGH LIGHTHOUSE</u></p> <p>Ref: MIN 82/24 – Cllr Calver briefed members on the project to illuminate the High Lighthouse as agreed in principle at a meeting of the Full Council on 5th November. The survey has now identified what was needed to move the project forward and it was RESOLVED: to proceed with the project and expend up to £3760 from the High Lighthouse Illumination EMR to cover costs for materials/equipment identified in the survey.</p>
F070/24	<p><u>BUDGET/PRECEPT 2025/26</u></p> <p>Members considered the estimates for income and expenditure for the 2025/26 financial year including recommendations to earmarked funds.</p> <p>Cllr Calver reported that this budget allowed for the council to retain all its current provisions and maintain sufficient reserves whilst keeping the ‘per property’ figure unchanged.</p> <p>The clerk reminded members that the Tax Base was still to be confirmed and the final figures would be circulated prior to the Full Council meeting on 14th January when the precept would be formally set. An increase in the tax base would result in a higher precept without affecting the ‘per property’ figure. Cllr Calver reassured members that should the Tax Base fall, the surplus year-end underspends would absorb the shortfall to ensure a freeze could be retained.</p> <p>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: that on a total estimated budget of £244968, the council precept on Tendring District Council for £212629 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 5627 and representing a zero increase on 2024/25. It was additionally agreed that any remaining underspends at year end would be allocated at the first Finance meeting of the new financial year. Members thanked the clerk for her efforts.</p> <p>Members also RESOLVED: the following mid-year virements:</p> <p>Credit:</p> <p>Hill School Maintenance EMR (£6k); Skatepark Festival EMR (£6k); Building Maintenance EMR (£6k) and Community Projects EMR (£6k).</p>
F071/24	<p><u>MATTERS TO BE REPORTED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members noted The NJC has reached agreement on the 2024-25 pay awards to apply a flat rate payment of £1290 on each scale point and has been implemented with immediate effect for all applicable employees, along with the necessary back pay. No agreement has been made on the 2025-26 pay awards. • Members noted £100 callout charge for a fire alarm fault, to be expended from the Fire & Safety budget. • Members noted expenditure of £15.82, authorised by delegated authority, for the purchase of a new light sensor for the lobby, plus £42 for fitting, to be expended from the Consumables & Maintenance budget. • Members noted The Interest rate on the Business Premium Account (Barclays) is reducing by 0.10% to 1.40% from 19th December 2024 and the interest rate on the Income Bonds (NS&I) is reducing to 3.44% from 20th December 2024.

F072/24	<p><u>MATTERS RECEIVED IN THE POST OR INFORMATION RAISED BY MEMBERS</u></p> <p>Letters of thanks/acknowledgement for grants received from: Harwich Quay Fireworks, Harwich & Dovercourt Partnership and Electric Palace Trust</p> <p>Evaluation forms for grants received from: None</p>
F073/24	<p><u>DATE FOR NEXT MEETING</u></p> <p>The date of the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is scheduled for 7pm, on Tuesday 18th March 2025 at The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich.</p>
F074/24	<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 it was RESOLVED: to close the meeting to the press and public for the transaction of the under-mentioned business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel – Salary Reviews

The chairman closed the public part of the meeting at 8.21pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE