

**MINUTES**  
**of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee**  
 held at  
**The Guildhall, Church Street**  
 on  
**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7.05pm**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Councillors Armstrong (sub for Fowler), Calver, Chable, Saunders, Todd and Wade</b>
<b>In the Chair:</b>	<b>Councillor Morrison</b>
<b>Clerk:</b>	<b>Ms Lucy Ballard</b>
<b>Also present:</b>	<b>0 members of the public, 0 members of the press Asst. Clerk Maree Ratcliffe and Estate Supervisor Andy Wells.</b>

**Public questions:** None

<b>F76/24</b>	<b><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b> Cllrs Fay, Fowler (Sub Armstrong) and Richardson
<b>F77/24</b>	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS</u></b> None
<b>F78/24</b>	<b><u>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</u></b> <b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2024 (previously circulated) be approved by the committee and signed by the chairman as a true record.
<b>F79/24</b>	<b><u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>F51/24</b> – Confirmation that <b>CCTV at the skatepark</b> installation will commence on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. All permissions have been granted and there was no increase in the cost.</li> <li>• <b>F60/24</b> – Confirmation that recruitment process is underway for <b>Seasonal Leisure Attendants</b> and may require an extraordinary meeting to ratify the appointments.</li> <li>• <b>F60/24</b> – Members noted additional expenditure of £56 for 1x tonne of replacement sand for the pétanque. The Estate Supervisor felt a further tonne would be necessary but all in it would still be within the original budget owing to a reduction in the cost of other materials for the repairs.</li> <li>• <b>MIN F61/24</b> – Confirmation that condition report will be requested in early 2027 to coincide with 10 years of the original survey.</li> <li>• <b>F65/24</b> –Confirmation that <b>gov.uk domain</b> is in place and all emails and website now use the gov.uk suffix. Total cost of IT support was £160.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To retain the following domain names harwichtowncouncil.co.uk and harwichtowncouncil.org.uk at an estimated cost of £25 per annum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>F70/24</b> – Confirmation that precept payments for 2025/26 will be on 3<sup>rd</sup> April and 9<sup>th</sup> October.</li> </ul>
<b>F80/24</b>	<p><b><u>MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MIN F15/24</b> – Confirmation that Managing Difficult People and Conversations training date is still to be confirmed.</li> </ul>
<b>F81/24</b>	<p><b><u>HARWICH MUSEUM</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To award a £600 grant.</p>
<b>F82/24</b>	<p><b><u>TEEN TALK</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:</b> To award a £2500 grant.</p>
<b>F83/24</b>	<p><b><u>THE MAZE GROUP</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:</b> To award a £1080 grant.</p>
<b>F84/24</b>	<p><b><u>ESTATES SUPERVISOR REPORT</u></b></p> <p>Members acknowledged the latest report from Estate Supervisor, Andy Wells, which detailed recent and current projects/issues concerning the Council's estate, including a change of lock at the Hill School Site and refurbishment works at the Putting Green. Members passed on their gratitude to Andy for being Master of Ceremonies at the Holocaust Memorial Day.</p>
<b>F85/24</b>	<p><b><u>INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS</u></b></p> <p>Members received a report from Cllr Chable following a review of the accounts for the periods Oct-Dec on 24<sup>th</sup> January. No anomalies were found, and everything appeared to be in order.</p>
<b>F86/24</b>	<p><b><u>LEISURE SEASON 2025</u></b></p> <p>Members considered the Pricing for the 2025 season. Members acknowledged there had been an increase in 2024 and the need to keep prices affordable. Cllr Calver felt that with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon, it was difficult to know what might happen with the facility so was best to keep the status quo.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To retain the current prices as follows:</p> <p>Putting Green and Crazy Golf £3 adult; £2 child (up to 16 yrs); Combined ticket £5 adult; £3 child; Pétanque to remain at £3 per person per hour.</p>
<b>F87/24</b>	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL REGULATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Members reviewed the Financial Regulations. The clerk relayed that minor amendments to FRs 5.4, 5.7 and 5.11 had been notified since the publication of the agenda and which had been implemented.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To accept the amendments and adopt for 2025/26.</p>
<b>F88/24</b>	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members reviewed the Financial Risk Assessment conducted by the RFO and the measures put in place to mitigate any risk. The clerk drew members' attention to any risks that required addressing.</li> </ul> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To accept the Financial Risk Assessment and confirm that measures taken to mitigate risk are adequate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members further reported on the current System of Internal Control (the measures in place to safeguard the Council's finances) following a review its effectiveness on 3<sup>rd</sup> March.</li> </ul>

	<p>Cllr Chable informed members that the working part had worked with the clerk to add a clause regarding the ICE pack which is provided to the mayor of the day and a minor amendment to clause 3.3.2 regarding how invoices and debtors in relation to the casual hire of the Guildhall, are treated.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To accept the System of Internal control with amendments and agree that the systems in place for the prevention and detection of fraud are effective.</p>
<b>F89/24</b>	<p><b><u>LONE WORKER RISK ASSESSMENT AND POLICY</u></b></p> <p>Members reviewed the Lone Worker risk assessments for Harwich Town Council employees and the measures put in place to mitigate any risk.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To accept the Lone Worker Risk Assessments and confirm that measures taken to mitigate risk are adequate.</p>
<b>F90/24</b>	<p><b><u>COUNCIL INSURANCE</u></b></p> <p>Members noted year 3 of a 3-year long-term agreement with current insurer will commence 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. The clerk relayed that some changes to cover had been made due to amendments to the Asset Register and was confident that cover was adequate and met the council's needs.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To acknowledge minor additions/removals from the cover for 2025/26.</p>
<b>F91/24</b>	<p><b><u>HILL SCHOOL CCTV</u></b></p> <p>Members considered an upgrade to the system to facilitate a longer retention capacity of recordings, at a one-off cost of £425.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To accept the cost of £425 and proceed with the upgrade of the equipment to be expended from the 2025/26 Hill School budget.</p>
<b>F92/24</b>	<p><b><u>FLAVIA HOT DRINKS DISPENSER</u></b></p> <p>Members considered the following options following the end of the current lease agreement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Return the equipment and make alternatives arrangements</li> <li>2. Upgrade the equipment to the next model and commence as new leases agreement at £413.40 per annum (exclusive of consumables)</li> <li>3. Pay admin fee of £25 to continued use of equipment on a free loan basis.</li> <li>4. Purchase title outright for the cost of £154.20.</li> </ol> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To proceed with option 4 at a cost of £154.20 to be expended from the 2025/26 Drinks Machine budget.</p>
<b>F93/24</b>	<p><b><u>NEW LAPTOP</u></b></p> <p>Members considered replacing an office laptop and <b>RESOLVED:</b> To purchase a Lenovo V15 G4 IRU 15inch laptop at the cost of £399.13 to be expended from the ITC EMR.</p> <p>Members also considered the optional 3-year warranty and <b>RESOLVED:</b> To purchase the Lenovo onsite support at a cost of £46.65 to be expended from the ICT EMR.</p>
<b>F94/24</b>	<p><b><u>WALL LIGHTS</u></b></p> <p>Members considered options for the purchase of appropriate wall lights for the ground floor of the Guildhall, which included those which attach to picture frames or the wall. <b>RESOLVED:</b> To proceed with purchasing a sufficient number of the Slimline LED picture lights in Antique Brass up to the cost of £250 expended from the 2025/26 Maintenance &amp; Consumables budget.</p>

F95/24	<p><b><u>SMOKE DETECTORS</u></b> Members considered recommendations for the replacement of smoke detectors in the Guildhall. The Estate Supervisor recommended that those needing to be replaced within the next two years should be replaced which he would be able to install.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To replace 14x Apollo Series 65 Optical smoke detectors at a cost of £172.06 to be expended from the 2025/26 Fire &amp; Safety budget.</p>
F96/24	<p><b><u>MATTERS RECEIVED IN THE POST OR RAISED BY MEMBERS</u></b> Members <b>noted</b> receipt of the following correspondence: <b>Grant acknowledgements received from:</b> Spring Meadow Primary School. <b>Evaluation form following grant received from:</b> None.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important Changes to Barclays Bank accounts WEF 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025.</li> <li>• Investigations are to commence on the provision of a suitable handrail from the Chamber to the Archive Suite.</li> </ul>
F97/24	<p><b><u>MATTERS TO BE REPORTED</u></b> Members <b>noted</b> the following matters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 137 expenditure limit for 2025/26 is set at £11.10 per elector.</li> <li>• The Data Protection annual fee is expected to rise from £40 to £52 with a £5 discount eligible to those paying by Direct Debit.</li> <li>• An update on the Local Government Pay Claim 2025/26, which had been circulated to members on 4/2/25.</li> <li>• Expenditure of £52, under delegated authority, for the purchase of 1x name badge for the Asst. Clerk and 3x photo ID badges for council employees, to be expended from the Stationery budget.</li> <li>• Expenditure of £164, under delegated authority, on FOI Essentials, GDPR Online, New Clerk’s training and Devolution webinar registration for Asst. Clerk. To be expended from the Training budget.</li> <li>• Expenditure of £20.42, under delegated authority, for the purchase of a carbon monoxide detector, expended from the Fire &amp; Safety budget.</li> <li>• Expenditure of £59.40, under delegated authority, for the upgrade of domain hosting from Ruby to Emerald package to facilitate unlimited storage.</li> <li>• A reduction in the interest rate on Barclays Business Premium (Saver) Account from 1.35% to 1.25% WEF 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025.</li> <li>• A reduction in the interest rate on NS&amp;I Income Bonds Account from 3.44% to 3.26% WEF 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025.</li> <li>• The clerk briefed members on the leases for Hill School tenants, which were expiring this summer and that all had expressed an interest in renewing. Following discussions with the solicitors she would bring a quotation to Full Council for authorising.</li> </ul>
F98/24	<p><b><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></b> The next meeting of the Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee will be held on <b>a date to be confirmed in June/July 2025</b> at <b>The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich, at 7.00pm.</b></p>
F99/24	<p><b><u>EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS</u></b> <b>RESOLVED:</b> 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"><li>• <b>Annual Leave</b></li><li>• <b>Annual Play Inspection</b></li></ul>
--	---

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

**CHAIRMAN**

**DATE**