

HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL

The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich, Essex CO12 3DS

Tel: 01255 507211

email: info@harwichtowncouncil.gov.uk

MINUTES

of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee

held at

The Guildhall, Church Street

on

Tuesday 9th December 2025 at 7.05pm

Present:	Councillors, Calver, Chable, Fay, 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, Matthew Newman

A minute's silence was held to mark the passing of the council's former archivist, Ray Plummer.

Public questions: None

F049/25	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Cllrs Armstrong, Richardson and Saunders
F050/25	<u>DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS</u> None
F051/25	<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 23 rd September 2025, (previously circulated) be approved by the committee and signed by the chairman as a true record.
F052/25	<u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MIN F48/25 – The clerk informed members that since the last meeting when the utilities supplies were agreed, the supplier for gas services would be British Gas Lite and not YuEnergy since the latter required the clerk to be credit checked and this was deemed inappropriate for a commercial supply. The difference in cost is expected to be around £80 per annum.
F053/25	<u>MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MIN F79/24 – Members noted a new condition report would be commissioned in late 2026 for the Hill School Site.• MIN F27/25 – The Estate Supervisor reported on feedback from English Heritage in relation to the project to install a Handrail on the stairs to the Archives. Members agreed to proceed with the project subject to agreement on the costs which would be discussed under confidential business.
F054/25	<u>SPRING MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL</u>

	<p>Members discussed a grant application from Spring Meadow Primary School for funds towards putting on a production of Disney's 'Dare to Dream'.</p> <p>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: To award a grant of £1320.</p>
F055/25	<p><u>HARWICH INTERNATIONAL SHANTY FESTIVAL</u></p> <p>Members discussed a grant application from the HISF for funds towards improved communications (new website and production of festival maps).</p> <p>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: To award a grant of £3000.</p>
F056/25	<p><u>ESTATES SUPERVISOR REPORT</u></p> <p>Members acknowledged the latest report from Estate Supervisor, Matthew Newman, in which he reported on various matters including the need for maintenance to the putting green hut, fire risk assessments and the need for a replacement storage shed at the Guildhall. He also reported that the lights still had not been installed at the High Lighthouse.</p> <p>Cllr Morrison also referred to the work carried out in cleaning the blue chamber chairs, as well as the re-waxing of the tables.</p> <p>Matt reported that the lights installation had not yet taken place at the High Lighthouse.</p>
F057/25	<p><u>INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS</u></p> <p>Members acknowledged a report from Cllr Smith following a review of the accounts for the periods Jul - Sep on 2nd December. No irregularities were found, and everything appeared to be in excellent order.</p> <p>The clerk reported that she would be coordinating the review of the System of Internal Control prior to the next meeting in early March 2026.</p>
F058/25	<p><u>CHRISTMAS GUILDHALL CLOSURE</u></p> <p>Members considered closure of the Guildhall and Council offices over the Christmas period. The clerk confirmed that annual leave would be taken by all employees on 24th and requested that members consider a discretionary day on 2nd January to avoid the office being open for 1 day only.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To close from 1pm on Tuesday 23rd December 2025 and reopen on Monday 5th January 2026 at 9.30am, which includes two extra statutory days and a discretionary day.</p>
F059/25	<p><u>SLCC MEMBERSHIP</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: To renew subscription for the Clerk in 2025 at a cost of £316 to be expended from the 2025/26 Subscriptions budget.</p>
F060/25	<p><u>DATA AUDIT</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the annual Data Audit for Harwich Town Council with a minor addition under Part C and an amendment under part D.</p>
F061/25	<p><u>LEISURE SEASON 2026</u></p> <p>Members considered opening dates and times for the Council-managed leisure facilities for the 2026 season. The clerk relayed that in 2025 the facility opened at the beginning of June owing to low footfall during Spring including on occasions when opening for the Harwich Half Marathon and Tour de Tendring.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the opening hours are to remain at 11am – 4pm and that for 2026 the following opening dates will apply:</p> <p>Weekends only from June and daily opening from 20th Jul – 31st August.</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 and set an hourly rate consistent with 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>Replace 3x plywood shutters (£120); Repaint hut inside and out (£100); replace padlocks (£80).</p>
F062/25	<p><u>KEYHOLDER/ALARM RESPONSE</u></p> <p>Members reviewed the existing service and considered renewal. The clerk confirmed that this was an estimated cost and would report back if the confirmed cost was markedly different.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To proceed with renewing keyholding and alarm response services with current provider for a period of 3 years, commencing 2026/27 at an estimated cost of £250 per annum plus £50 callout charge, to be expended from the 2026/27 Premises budget.</p>
F063/25	<p><u>ACCOUNTS MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT</u></p> <p>Members considered the continuation of a maintenance support agreement for RBS accounts in 2026/27 and RESOLVED: to proceed at a cost of £613 for up to 5 users. To be expended from the Accounts Software budget.</p> <p>Members noted year-end close down support is in place under the 'Gold' Scheme for a further 2 years, at a cost of £938 in 2026/27.</p> <p>Members considered the implementation of an Allotments and Sales Ledger add-on to the Rialtas accounts package at a one-off installation cost of £2275, to be expended in 2025/26 from the Allotments Key Priority EMR, with ongoing cost of maintenance and support in 2026/27 of £520 to be expended from the 2026/27 Accounts Software budget.</p> <p>Members thanked the Asst. Clerk for staying late to ensure the allotment invoices got sent out with minimal delay following the difficulties with the database.</p>
F064/25	<p><u>BUDGET/PRECEPT 2026/27</u></p> <p>Members considered the estimates for income and expenditure for the 2026/27 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 including the creation of a small Earmarked Reserve for LGR, with a small increase in the 'per property' figure, the first in 6 years.</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 13th 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 and there was the possibility of the LCTSS being paid again.</p> <p>RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: that on a total estimated budget of £254775, the council precept on Tendring District Council for £228121 having an impact of £39.68 per annum or 76p per week for a Band D council taxpayer based on a provisional tax base of 5749 and representing a 5% increase on 2025/26. It</p>

	<p>was additionally agreed that any remaining underspends at year end would be allocated at the first Finance meeting of the new financial year.</p> <p>Members also RESOLVED: the following mid-year virements: Create: LGR EMR and credit with £12k.</p>
F065/25	<p><u>MATTERS TO BE REPORTED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The clerk reported on the claim presented by the NJC unions to National Local Government Employers in relation to the 2026-27 pay awards, which are effective 1st April 2026. • Members noted The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) deposit protection limits increased from £85k to £120k on 1st December 2025. • Members noted the following expenditure, authorised by delegated authority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £24.84 for the purchase of 2x replacement drain covers at the Skatepark, expended from the Skatepark Rent & Maintenance budget; • £8.32 for the purchase of a replacement gate padlock for the Hill School Site gate, expended from the Hill School Repairs & Maintenance budget; • £34.97 for the purchase of wood restorer and associated materials, expended from the Consumables & Maintenance budget; • £158.26 for the purchase of a new paper shredder, laminator, kitchen kettle and double switch socket, expended from the Photocopier and Office Equipment budget; • £5.84 for the purchase of a 2x cupboard door handles, expended from the Maintenance & Consumables budget; • £29.16 for the purchase of a new kitchen light, expended from the Maintenance & Consumables budget; • £26.12 for the purchase of a new First Aid Kit, expended from the Health & Safety budget; and • £72 for Allotments training webinars for both the Asst. Clerk and Estate Supervisor, expended from the Training budget.
F066/25	<p><u>MATTERS RECEIVED IN THE POST OR INFORMATION RAISED BY MEMBERS</u></p> <p>Letters of thanks/acknowledgement for grants received from: None</p> <p>Evaluation forms for grants received from: Thera East</p>
F067/25	<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 17th March 2026 at The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich.</p>
F068/25	<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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handrail on the Stairs to the Archives
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The chairman closed the public part of the meeting at 8.11pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE