



# HALESWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

## FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

### FINANCE REPORT no 47

MONDAY JUNE 15<sup>th</sup> 2020 AT 3PM BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

In accordance with (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020)

Present: Councillors;

T Allen, P Dutton, A Fleming, R Lewis (Chair), J Reece, K Prime, D Thomas, D Wollweber,

In Attendance: N Rees (Town Clerk), Joyce Moseley, (Neighbourhood Steering Group), Keith Greenberg (Neighbourhood Steering Group). No other members of the public.

## REPORT

- 1) Apologies: Cllrs; A Dunning, M Took
- 2) Declarations of Interest: To receive declarations for pecuniary & non-pecuniary interests. Cllr Prime, item 5, general pecuniary interest in the Thoroughfare but not specifically related to her business.
- 3) Minutes: The report of the Finance & Personnel Committee meeting held on the Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2020 was accepted as a true record. Cllr Prime abstained as she was not present for the whole meeting.
- 4) Matters arising from the minutes. Cllr Fleming asked about the dog bins at the Millennium Track (in the parish of Wenhaston and Mells) and Dukes Drive agreed at the last meeting. The Clerk confirmed that Wenhaston with Mells PC had agreed to pay half the costs for the Millennium Green dog bin. Both bins were on order with Waveney Norse.
- 5) Neighbourhood Plan: To receive a presentation and documentation on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's 'Town Centre Connectivity' feasibility proposals. The Clerk advised that the presentation should be made prior to considering the proposal from Cllr Allen, which the members had previously received in writing. Joyce Moseley explained that the group considered that the agreement to commission a professional feasibility study for improving the connectivity in the town centre was of vital importance to the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan. The group had estimated the costs to be between £5k and £10k but until three estimates had been obtained it was not possible to put a firm figure on the project. The NPSG would then ask the Town Council to consider the three quotations for best value but wished to have a firm commitment from HTC that it would commission one of them as it was a crucial part of the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Prime expressed concerns over the cost of the feasibility study and in particular the timing of the request with so many businesses struggling to survive during the many weeks of lockdown. Keith Greenberg explained that this was a vision for the future and it was the right time to explore these options. The Council had been looking at how to encourage visitors to other areas beyond the Thoroughfare for many years. Cllr Prime left the meeting.  
Mr Greenberg felt that businesses would benefit in the long term and now was the time to act rather than waiting until everything was back to normal. It was noted that the CIL (Community Infrastructure levy) may be available to fund the study and that the increase in the levy (from 15% to 25%) received by the Town Council, after the Neighbourhood Plan

was in place, would significantly contribute towards the cost of the infrastructure required over a period of time. It was then RESOLVED that the Town Council:-

1. Approves the Thoroughfare / Market Place Connectivity Feasibility study brief as submitted to HTC by the HNPSG
  2. Approves the HNPSG identifying a minimum of three suitably qualified professional individuals / organisations to submit quotations for undertaking the feasibility study.
  3. Approves the principle of quotations being considered on the basis of "best value", not lowest price, and that the HNPSG and HTC will agree a criteria for assessing quotations accordingly, prior to receiving them.
  4. Notes that the dispatch of quotation requests and receipt of quotations will need to be managed by HTC although the HNPSG will provide the documentation and representatives of both HTC and the HNPSG will be present when quotations are opened and assessed.
  5. Approves a budget to a maximum of £10,000 for funding the feasibility study.
  6. Recommends approval on points 1 to 5 to the full Council meeting in July 2020.
- 6) Finances: The Committee received and noted the monthly report of expenditure against the budget. The Clerk confirmed that he had not applied the usual adjustments for all the various budget headings but would categorise the report in a more logical format for the next meeting.  
The Clerk reported that the telephone bill had been much higher as BT were charging a very high rate to have call diverts to the Clerk's mobile. This had been necessary due to the current emergency. The Clerk had found the divert call service very useful and perhaps there was a more economical way of keeping this option. The Committee agreed that the Clerk would investigate alternative call plans to get the best option.
- 7) Town Safety Fund: To consider a budget for any emergencies. It RESOLVED that £5k would be set aside for this purpose for this financial year and reviewed at the end of the year.
- 8) Payment for online purchases: To consider options to enable the Clerk to purchase equipment and materials for the emergency. The Clerk reported on a credit card available through Unity Trust Bank but there was a monthly fee involved and a set up cost. The Committee agreed that this was not ideal and it was RESOLVED that the clerk was given permission to look at alternative methods of online purchases and he would report back.
- 9) Relief Fund: The Clerk reported on the current position, he had issued £565 in vouchers for 17 households and £465 had since been spent in the local shops. There was always some disparity between the figures due to the delay between issuing the vouchers and the vouchers being collected, returned and recorded. For the parishes' scheme, £220 worth of vouchers had been issued and £150 spent. Cllr Allen requested that this was reported every week but the Clerk advised that under the current circumstances he could not guarantee he would have time to report this weekly.
- 10) Audit: To review the internal auditor's report. The Committee approved the report and there were no recommendations from the report to consider. Cllr Fleming proposed and it was RESOLVED that the Committee recognised the amount of work completed by the Clerk in order to successfully comply with all the requirements of the audit.
- 11) Correspondence: The Clerk referred to the safety signs designed by the Town Centre Group and Halesworth Tourism Group and asked for approval to order them. It was noted that the funding for these should be coming out of the 'Opening the High Street safely fund' but initially it would be paid for by the Town Council until the funding is received. The Committee was not necessarily in favour of the design or the wording but it was not a Council project and therefore it was RESOLVED that the Clerk could order the signs. Cllr Dutton abstained.

East Suffolk Council had requested that the Clerk asks the Council whether it wished to formally reopen the Skateboard Park. The Committee agreed that it should now be reopened although everyone was aware that it was currently being used from time to time. The Clerk also reported that there had been vandalism to one of the litter bins in the park and also reports were coming in of some disturbances at night. It was agreed that the Council would look at youth activities again at the next council meeting. Cllr Wollweber would ask Stuart Halsey of ESC in the meantime to discuss when it would be possible to resume the activities. Cllr Thomas also requested that the River Survey should also be considered at the next Council meeting.

12) News Items: To consider any items for the website/newsletters. It was suggested that the Council

13) Staff matters: Holidays and office cover. The Clerk gave advanced warning that he would be off on holiday on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July, and the 6<sup>th</sup> July to the 10<sup>th</sup> July so that the Committee could consider any necessary arrangements as it was more awkward to cover for holidays in this emergency period. Cllr Wollweber said that he thought sharing the phone and email duties would be possible but this would be reviewed nearer the time.

14) Accounts for Payment: To following list of accounts for payment was approved for payment:

<u>3714.</u>	Mustard Creative – Annual Website Hosting (LGA 1972 s142)	186.00 + vat
<u>3715.</u>	Micropress – A5 leaflets – follow up (Covid-19 fund)	225.21
<u>3716.</u>	EPS Transfers – Banners x 2 (Covid-19 fund)	184.00 + vat
<u>3717.</u>	Viking - HP Laptop (Chair's Allowance)	574.00+ vat
<u>3718.</u>	N J Rees – Paypal (Monthly subscription) Zoom Pro version	11.99 + vat
<u>3719.</u>	N J Rees – Acronis Cloud back up- Annual (N & P office computers)	58.32 + vat
<u>3720.</u>	HMRC Payroll Liabilities	2550.86

DD/Standing Orders:

<u>3721.</u>	Monthly salaries (LGA 1972 s112)	2623.39
<u>3722.</u>	BT Telephone & Broadband (LGA 1972 s111)	309.99 + vat
<u>3723.</u>	EDF Electricity – Market Place no 2 (Food Act 1984 s50)	31.00
<u>3724.</u>	EDF Electricity – Market Place no 3 (Food Act 1984 s50)	25.00
<u>3725.</u>	EDF Electricity – Market Place no 1 (Food Act 1984 s50)	9.00
<u>3726.</u>	LGPS Pension Scheme (LGA 1972 s112)	997.73

Bank & Cash Balances at 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2020

Current 728	£131,740.77
Unity Trust	£92,575.93
Community A/c	£5,293.92
Business Reserves 017	£92,659.92
Petty Cash	£114.49

The meeting was closed at 5.30pm