



# HALESWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

## FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

### FINANCE REPORT no 48

MONDAY JULY 27<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, A Dunning, P Dutton, A Fleming, R Lewis (Chair), J Reece, K Prime, D Thomas, M Took, D Wollweber,

In Attendance: N Rees (Town Clerk), one member of the public.

## REPORT

- 1) Apologies: None
- 2) Declarations of Interest: To receive declarations for pecuniary & non-pecuniary interests: Cllr Prime for any matters that may arise regarding the Thoroughfare and Cllr Wollweber for matters relating to the Museum as he was a trustee.
- 3) Minutes: The report of the Finance & Personnel Committee meeting held on Wednesday the 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 was accepted as a true record.
- 4) Matters arising from the minutes: The Clerk reported that since the last meeting he had contacted Unity Trust Bank regarding a credit card for online purchases but there was a monthly fee involved. The other option was to have a Pay Pal account on a direct debit agreement. It was noted that it might be possible to get a credit card from other sources which did not have a monthly charge or a requirement to have a current account and the Committee asked the Clerk to investigate this further..
- 5) Finances:
  - a. The Committee received and noted the monthly report of expenditure against the budget and the current list of reserves.
  - b. To review the budget/reserves for the website upgrades being considered by the Communications Committee. It was noted that the existing HTC website was due for an upgrade as some elements were not working properly; it was also an opportunity to consider any redesign at the same time. The Council had deferred the task to the Communications Committee at the last meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> July. It was RESOLVED that the Committee would allocate £2,000 to the Communications Committee for rebuilding the HTC website and that the Committee would have delegated powers to spend up to this amount.
- 6) Grants: To consider the following grant applications:-

Mr Brian Howard attended the meeting and explained the reasons for the grant which was to enable HACT to provide community transport safely and to encourage residents to use the bus. The grant was for COVID-19 related sanitizers, gloves, masks etc. and for steam cleaning the bus at regular intervals. The summary sheet provided with the application showed the annual cost.

1. Halesworth Community Transport Grant: It was noted that there were some anomalies regarding the quantity of materials on the summary sheet and whether VAT should have been included and a question also arose about the availability of grants from ESC for these purposes. However, the Committee agreed that it would support an application after these matters were clarified and after consultation with Mr Howard, it was RESOLVED that the Committee would consider a revised application in September.
  
- 7) To review the following: The Committee received and noted the Clerks' report that showed the comparison of the annual costs and profit margins on items a, b & c from April 2018.  
The Clerk advised that the Market rents were low in comparison to some other market towns in the area but despite this it had proved difficult for new stalls to succeed in Halesworth; this was possibly because of the location or the demographics. The Committee felt it was not necessary to raise the rent at this stage as the costs were fully covered by the rents.  
The Allotment rents had also not changed for several years but overall the rents more than covered the running costs. The Committee was mindful that since the Covid-19 emergency many residents would be struggling and so it was RESOLVED that the Market and Allotment rents would remain unchanged. Likewise, the Committee wished to ensure that the rents covered the Station building costs however as Greater Anglia had not confirmed the new rent this would be reviewed again later.
  - a. Market Rents: Unchanged for 2020 - 2021
  - b. Allotment rents: Unchanged for 2020 - 2021
  - c. Station Building rent: TBA
  
- 8) Relief Scheme: To review the current expenditure, whether shops require topping up and whether to extend the scheme. It was noted that one shop in particular had used up its allocation for the scheme. Cllr Dunning confirmed that the Community Larder was now also able to provide some fresh fruit and vegetables. The Clerk advised that the demand for the vouchers had dropped off significantly but if the scheme was to be extended then the Committee would need to agree further upfront payments. It was then RESOLVED that the Committee agreed to extend the scheme for a further three months and approved further payments to the shops as required.
  
- 9) Purchase of Union flag: To consider the options for the purchase of a Union Flag required for major civic events. The Clerk reported that he had contacted a supplier in Framlingham who had offered a 6' x 3' MOD approved Union Flag at £80 however the Clerk had found that there seemed to be very similar double stitched versions online which were 5 x 3 but only over £21. It was noted that the more expensive flag may be heavier and this had caused problems with the park flag pole in the past. It was then RESOLVED that the Committee approved purchase of the 5' x 3' flag. In the meantime the Clerk would check the dimensions of the existing NHS flag for comparison.
  
- 10) Town Park equipment:
  - a. To consider options for improving the play equipment in the Town Park. The Committee noted the quotations for converting the existing Basket Ball Court into an enclosed half court (MUGA – multi use games area) and an option for extending the existing court into an enclosed full court MUGA. The latter option would probably involve moving the Teen Shelter. Cllr Dunning then put forward an idea for an outdoor seating area for the park which could potentially replace the Teen Shelter. The Committee felt that this suggestion was worth investigating and it was RESOLVED that this suggestion should be combined with consideration for the options for the MUGA and water fountains and that it would be deferred to the ABP Committee to consider further.
  - b. To consider options for purchasing a water fountain in the Town Park. This was not considered but would also be deferred to the ABP Committee as noted above.

During consideration of item 10, Cllr Prime also raised the matter of outstanding maintenance required in the Town Park play area, namely a missing pedal and climbing peg which had originally been reported to Waveney Norse in October 2019. The Committee agreed that the Clerk should be given authority to find another company to undertake the repairs, provided it complied with the necessary safety regulations.

11) Road Closure: Exploring cost options on maintaining the current (or similar) road closure in the Thoroughfare after the initial period ends and for the future. It was noted that the Council needed to respond to the temporary road closure within 21 days. It would then have a further 21 days if agreed but thereafter the closure should then be considered for the next 18 months. As it was not practical to have a gatekeeper for that length of time it was necessary to consider other options in preparation. The Clerk had hoped he would have some alternative solutions for automatic barriers and bollards for the Committee to consider but unfortunately the suppliers had not as yet confirmed costs. It was RESOLVED that the Council would hold an extraordinary meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August at 6pm to consider the extension of the temporary road closure and in the meantime would gather feedback from residents, shoppers and businesses. Cllr Dunning, Cllr Reece and the Clerk would undertake this research before the meeting.

It was noted that the current road closure signage was very confusing, the Clerk and County Cllr Tony Goldson were aware of the issues and had reported it to SCC Highways and requested that signage is placed giving advanced warning and showing the route to the delivery bays in the Thoroughfare Car Park.

12) Audit: This item was not considered as the External auditors report had not been received.

13) Correspondence: Although not strictly a finance matter, the Clerk took the opportunity to ask whether any Cllrs would be attending the VJ commemoration at the Arboretum on 15<sup>th</sup> August at 11am organised by the Royal British Legion and Blyth Valley Team Ministry. Cllrs Dunning, Fleming and Thomas confirmed that they would be attending. The Clerk would write to the Lord Lieutenant's office and invite a representative.

14) News Items: To consider any items for the website/newsletters. The Clerk's office would re-advertise the voucher scheme and would update Facebook, Twitter etc. with other news as required.

15) Staff matters: It was agreed that the Personnel Working Group would need to discuss holiday cover for the Clerk's office.

16) Accounts for Payment: The following list of accounts was approved for payment.

<u>3714.</u>	Viking – Keyboard and mouse (LGA 1972 s111)	20.49 + vat
<u>3715.</u>	Mustard Creative – Troubleshooting/maintenance on website (LGA 1972 s111)	90.00 + vat
<u>3716.</u>	N J Rees – PayPal (Monthly subscription) Zoom Pro version (LGA 1972 s111) (August)	11.99 + vat

DD/Standing Orders:

<u>3717.</u>	Wave (NWG Business)– Saxon Allotment Water (6 months)	59.18
<u>3718.</u>	Wave (NWG Business)– Swan Lane Allotment Water (6 months)	0.00 ( in credit)
<u>3719.</u>	Wave (NWG Business)– Bedingfield Allotment Water (6 months)	58.13
<u>3720.</u>	Barclays Bank Charges (LGA 1972 s111)	7.05

Bank & Cash Balances at 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2020

Current 728                                      £131,401.40

Unity Trust	£83,713.30
Community A/c	£5,293.92
Business Reserves 017	£92,684.80
Petty Cash	£114.49