



HALESWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

FINANCE REPORT no 49

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 21ST 2020 AT 6.30PM 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;

A Dunning, P Dutton, A Fleming, R Lewis (Chair), J Reece, D Thomas, M Took, D Wollweber.

In Attendance: N Rees (Town Clerk), one member of the public. Catherine Draper representing, Friends of Halesworth County Library, joined the meeting for item 6a only.

REPORT

- 1) Apologies: Cllr T Allen, Cllr K Prime
- 2) Declarations of Interest: To receive non-pecuniary interests; Cllr Dunning, Cllr Fleming and Cllr Thomas for item 6a
- 3) Minutes: The report of the Finance & Personnel Committee meeting held on Wednesday the 27th July, 2020 was accepted as a true record.
- 4) Matters arising from the minutes. The Clerk gave an update from the previous meeting. The Clerk reported on further options for a credit card from Unity Trust Bank, prepaid cards or Pay Pal for business, the Committee agreed that the Unity Bank Card would be preferable but Cllr Dutton queried that it stated 2.5% on transactions and it was not clear if this was for cash withdrawals or purchases. The Clerk would investigate and report back at the next meeting
- 5) Finances:
 - a. The Committee received and noted the monthly report of expenditure against the budget.
 - b. The Committee received and noted the list of reserves
- 6) Grants: To consider any grant applications:-
 - a. Friends of Halesworth County Library: Catherine Draper explained that the project, in memory of Ali Hopkins, was to revitalise courtyard garden. The Friends had raised £10,500 towards the project so far and they had been overwhelmed by the generosity of Library supporters. The Friends were also applying to other sources for further funding. Cllr Dutton asked about the previous grant for furniture, it was noted that this information had been sent to the Council and the Clerk would circulate the completed grant reporting form to the members. It was then RESOLVED that the Committee approved a grant of £3,000.

Catherine Draper thanked the Committee and left the meeting.

It was noted that at a previous meeting the members had discussed the notion of excluding the representative attending on behalf of an organisation that had

applied for a grant, on the grounds that sometimes this could be uncomfortable for the members to discuss the application in front of them. However, the Clerk advised that this was not practical or legal since the meetings were held in public and whilst the Committee could ask the representative to leave, they could not enforce it. The only exception was when an item was held 'in camera' which excluded all the members of the public but this could not normally be applied to grant applications. Initially there was a proposal to accept this explanation formally but Cllr Thomas asked this to be retracted since it was not necessary as the current legislation, explained by the Clerk, was the default position.

- b. Halesworth Area Community Transport (HACT): This application had been deferred by the Committee from the last meeting as the figures provided did not correlate with the amount requested and there was also a question regarding VAT. The Clerk had requested and received an updated sheet containing the revised figures. It was noted that at the meeting in July, the question had been raised as to whether HACT had applied for grants from East Suffolk Council which were available specifically for this Covid-19 related purpose and for community transport in general. This question was raised again at this meeting and unfortunately there were also still some anomalies with the revised figures provided. It was not clear to the Committee whether HACT had applied for or received funds already for this purpose. As there was not a HACT representative present at the meeting these questions could not be answered. The Clerk had informed HACT about these queries after the last meeting and that the application was to be deferred to the September meeting but had not thought it necessary to send another invitation. It was then RESOLVED that the Clerk would again contact HACT to explain that the Committee was not able to approve the grant until these questions were answered satisfactorily and the application would therefore be deferred again to the next Finance Committee meeting on October 19th. Cllr Fleming suggested that Cllr Dunning could contact HACT to explain the grants available from ESC.

The Clerk informed the Committee that HTC had received a grant from East Suffolk Council which he understood had been awarded by the Community Partnership but asked if it was for a specific purpose. Cllrs Dunning explained that the funding available for Halesworth, Beccles and Bungay had been divided up between the towns and that this sum received was most likely intended for match funding towards the plans for additional seating areas under the heading of combating isolation.

The Clerk confirmed that he had also received a grant for the former Mencap area of the Station Building, this was because HTC were still technically the tenants and therefore were eligible as a rate payer. HTC had not applied for the grant but it was provided automatically by ESC.

These grants would be ring-fenced and then discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

- 7) Relief Scheme: To review the current expenditure. The Clerk had provided a report of the expenditure so far and confirmed that there were still only a very small number of applicants per week and these tended to be the same families. It was noted that the Community Larder and Foodbank was providing a similar service. It was also reported that one of the shops in the scheme had hardly been used at all by the applicants. After some discussion the Committee agreed to continue the scheme and review it again next month and in the meantime asked the Clerk to write to the shop in question and ask for the remaining balance to be returned.
- 8) Allotments: To consider the replacement of the raised beds on Saxon Allotment and refunding the cost of repairs undertaken so far. The Clerk reported that a few allotment holders and volunteers had undertaken the work of building six new raised beds to

replace the existing raised beds that had rotten timbers and they were asking the Council for repayment of the materials costs. It was noted that they had not informed the Council that they were going to start the work themselves as the Clerk's office was still in the process of obtaining quotations. However the Clerk advised that the quotations would have been much higher if a contractor had been used. It was RESOLVED that the Committee agreed to pay the material costs of £456.03 but asked the Clerk to write to the Allotment holders to inform them that the Council would not in future repay any work undertaken without prior notification and agreement.

9) Town Park security: The Clerk had provided a quotation for three bollards at the Park entrance for the purpose of preventing any further access by unauthorised vehicles. East Suffolk Council who owned the land had replaced the single bollard but it was clear that this would not prevent access. ESC had confirmed permission for HTC to undertake the work but had not offered any financial assistance; however, they had offered to obtain an alternative quotation via Waveney Norse. The Clerk reported that the external contractor may not be able to install the new bollards for up to 3 weeks. It was RESOLVED that the Committee agreed that the order for the bollards should be placed, pending a better price or quicker delivery by Norse and that in the meantime the Clerk would try and find some way of blocking the entrance temporarily.

10) Maintenance: The Clerk reported that the boiler in the London Rd Building had broken down. It was on Norse's work schedule to repair it but a local heating engineer had looked at the boiler and advised that it needed replacing at a cost of around £2,500. The Committee asked the Clerk to write to East Suffolk and ask for the old boiler to be replaced with a new one.

11) Correspondence: None

12) News Items: To consider any items for the website/newsletters: The Clerk's office would report on the park entrance bollards and the grant awarded to the Friends of Haleworth County Library.

13) Staff matters: None

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

<u>3714.</u>	Viking - Paper, stamps, office supplies (LGA 1972 s111)	99.00 + vat
<u>3715.</u>	EPS Transfers - cyclist dismount signs (Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 s72)	48.00 + vat
<u>3716.</u>	Citrus Shredding - Data destruction (LGA 1972 s111)	42.00 + vat
<u>3717.</u>	HMRC Payroll Liabilities	2550.86

DD/Standing Orders:

<u>3718.</u>	LGPS Pension Scheme (LGA 1972 s112)	997.73
<u>3719.</u>	Barclays Bank Charges (LGA 1972 s111)	7.40

Bank & Cash Balances at 18th September, 2020

Current 728	£130,788.28
Unity Trust	£88,971.52
Community A/c	£5,293.92
Business Reserves 017	£92,684.80
Petty Cash	£107.09

The meeting was closed at 7.30pm