



HALESWORTH TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY JANUARY 18TH, 2016 AT 6.30PM
HELD IN THE DAY CENTRE
LONDON ROAD, HALESWORTH

REPORT

Present: Cllrs; P Dutton, A Fleming, R Lewis (Chair), M Took, P Widdowson

In attendance: N. Rees (Clerk), Cllr D Wollweber, Brian Howard (Museum), Rev Jan Bundy (St Mary's Church)

- 1) **Apologies:** Cllrs; A Baldwin, D Thomas, S Leverett
- 2) **Declarations of Interest:** To receive declarations for pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests and to receive any requests for dispensation.
- 3) **Minutes:** The report of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 14th December 2015 was accepted as a true record.
- 4) **Matters arising from the minutes.** It was confirmed that Mustard Creative were still working on the website but that a prototype would be produced soon.
- 5) **Precept:** To recommend to Full Council the 2016 – 2017 Precept figure (pending the outcome of negotiations with WDC over the free parking). It was noted that the negotiations with WDC were still unresolved. The Clerk had obtained an extension until February 5th 2016 and the Council would need to meet before this date to agree the Precept figure. RESOLVED that the Committee recommended to increase the Precept so that householders pay the same Council Tax as last year unless decided otherwise at the Town Meeting. [Clerk's note] Meaning that as there were more householders in Halesworth paying Council Tax than last year, the Precept (a small percentage of the Council Tax) could be raised by up to £81,602.92 without actually increasing the cost to the householder from this year's figures. It was further noted that feedback could be taken at the Town Forum Meeting but the Precept could not be decided until it went to the Full Council.
- 6) **Audit:** Risk Assessment and Asset Register. The Committee received and noted the documents. RESOLVED that the Risk Assessment amended by the Clerk to reflect the changes to the Committee's scope of powers and the proposed amendment to the intervals for depositing cash (increased to monthly if the figure did not exceed £750) were approved. The Clerk had expanded the asset register to include more benches and additional play equipment at the Swan Lane site. RESOLVED that the Audit Register, as amended, was approved.
- 7) **Financial Position:** The Committee received and noted the summary of accounts and the document 'Detailed receipts and Payments' which showed the current position and the percentage of spend for each budget item.
- 8) **Media Screen:** To review the Lease figures and any additional costs for the Media Screen in the Library. The Clerk explained that Hughes had initially quoted £18 per Month and £25 per Month for the 42" & 48" screens respectively. However, there may be additional costs with regard to wiring and wall brackets. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to the Library to establish the terms of arrangement and would also confirm the final costs.
- 9) **HTC Badges:** To consider the costs of purchasing badges for identifying Councillors, staff and volunteers. The Committee reviewed the designs and costs for three alternative pin badge styles but it was agreed that the Clerk would investigate Lanyard name plates for an alternative, as this was preferred by some of the Committee members.

10) **Grant Applications:** To consider the following Grant Applications:-

- a. Halesworth & District Museum. Brian Howard explained that the Museum were applying for £2,000 for the general running costs of the building (total £3,500) which included insurance and rent for the building. It was noted that the Council invoices the Museum for rent and insurance (approx. £1,000) but it was explained that this was necessary for book keeping purposes. RESOLVED that the Committee approved the grant for £2,000.
- b. St Mary's Church. The Rev. Jan Bundy explained that the Insurance Company would not cover the Church if any lead from the roof was stolen, unless it had an approved security alarm system installed. The grant application was for a contribution of £2,000 towards the cost (total of £9,275) of installing the system. Rev. Jan Bundy explained that thieves had taken lead from Cratfield Church recently and it was therefore imperative that the Church take the necessary precautions to prevent this happening to St Mary's Church. The Committee was very impressed with the amount of information provided by St Mary's Church. It was the RESOLVED that the Committee approved the grant for £2,000.

11) **Office equipment and software:**

- a. To review the trial of professional PDF software. The Clerk confirmed that he had trialled the Nuance PDF Advanced software but the company did not offer a trial of its less expensive Standard version. Since it was not possible to know if the Standard version would suffice the Clerk had since found an open source program called PDF Architect 4 which appeared to provide everything that was required. The Council could then consider donating to this 'Open Source' Community run project if the program proved to be successful.

12) **Maintenance:**

- a. Graffiti: To consider the costs of removing the graffiti on two locations; Holton Rd and Quay Street as noted by Mr Alistair Macfarlane. The Committee appreciated the efforts that Mr Macfarlane had taken to try and resolve the problem. However, the Committee had several concerns. It was noted that as this was private property it should be the owner's responsibility to clean off the graffiti. If the Council instructed Waveney Norse to clean it off on their behalf it may be liable for any damage caused to the surface being cleaned and/or any secondary damage caused by the operatives in the process. RESOLVED that the Clerk writes to the owners of the houses, which have graffiti, asking them to remove it and that if they needed assistance, Waveney Norse would remove it but would charge them for it, approximately £85.
- b. Any other maintenance issues. There were no other maintenance issues to report.

13) **Accounts for Payment:** To consider the list of accounts for payment. RESOLVED that the list of accounts for payment were approved with the exception that the Clerk would query the figure from Pearce and Kemp [item 3756] for the fixing of the Festive lights as it was thought this should have been considerably less.

14) **Staff Matters:** Update on the CiLCA costs and benefits. The Clerk confirmed that the training costs were £299 and to register with NALC was £250. The Clerk agreed that he would undertake the work (estimated at 200+ hours) in his own time. The Clerk also confirmed that according to his Contract of Employment, his salary would increase by one point (reference National Joint Council for Local Government Services) if he successfully obtained the qualification. The next training sessions provided by SALC would be held in May/June 2016 but the course had to be completed within 12 months of registering. This was a concern to the Clerk but by starting now this would allow the Clerk time to prepare in advance before attending the training and registering and thereby would effectively give

an additional 5 - 6 months to complete the course if needed. The Committee considered that the qualification was of benefit to the Council and it was worth paying the training and registration fee. RESOLVED that the Committee agreed to pay for the CiLCA registration fee @ £250 and the training costs @ £299.

The meeting was closed at 8.02pm