



HALESWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING **MONDAY 19th DECEMBER, 2016 at 6.30pm**

FINANCE REPORT no. 9 (2016-17)

Present: Councillors;

A Fleming, T Gardner, R Lewis (Chair), M Took, P Widdowson, D Wollweber,

In Attendance: N Rees (Town Clerk), 1 member of the public.

Minutes

- 1) **Apologies:** Cllr S Leverett, Cllr M Took
- 2) **Declarations of Interest:** Non-pecuniary interests: Cllr D Wollweber for 6, 7a & 8, Cllr P Widdowson for 5, 8 & 9, Cllr D Thomas for 5, 6, 7a, 8 & 9, Cllr A Fleming for 5, 6, 8 & 9, Cllr Lewis for 5, 6, 7b & 8
- 3) **Minutes:** The report of the Finance & Personnel Committee meeting held on the 21st November, 2016 had been amended as agreed at the last monthly meeting and was then accepted as a true record.
- 4) **Matters arising from the minutes:** The Chair, Cllr Lewis asked if there had been any response from Mr Jarvis regarding the offer for the London Rd Building. The Clerk confirmed that there had been no response from Mr Jarvis.
- 5) **Precept:** To consider recommending the Precept for 2017/18 for Council approval on January 9th January, 2017: The Committee received and noted the budget which had been provisionally agreed at the last meeting. Cllr Thomas noted that there was no allowance against the Neighbourhood/Town plan. The Clerk explained that £3,000 had been set aside this year which had so far been unspent and this would be carried over to create a new Neighbourhood/Town reserve for 2017/2018. It was noted that if the Precept remained unchanged this would constitute a reduction of 1.36% for a Band D property. It was then RESOLVED that the Committee recommended the Precept for 2017/2018 remain the same as this year at £100,000 and this recommendation would be decided by the full Council at the next monthly meeting on the 9th January, 2017.
- 6) **London Rd Building:**
 - a. To consider any updates on the WDC offer. The Clerk confirmed that he had written to the WDC cabinet members as agreed at the last TDC meeting. There had been no official response so far but the email had only been sent recently. The Clerk was not expecting a response before Christmas.
 - b. To consider any updates on the Business Plan. The Clerk had contacted Hannah Reid to attempt to arrange another meeting and to ask if the business plan could be completed. This was necessary to ensure there was an alternative to WDC's offer which carried longer term liabilities. It was agreed that a meeting of the London Rd Business Plan Working group would be arranged for January and that all members of the Council would be invited to attend. Possible date could be January 16th but was dependent on getting a date agreed with Hannah Reid.
 - c. To review the information on Public Works Loans. The Committee received and noted the information but it was agreed that this would be taken to the meeting in January to review in more detail.

7) Grants & Donations:

- a. To consider the grant application from the Halesworth & District Museum. The Committee considered the grant request but was concerned that there was an insufficient explanation of the costs. The Committee would have preferred to see an application for a specific project and a breakdown of the costs. The Committee was mindful that the rules for grants had recently been expanded to include a grant monitoring process to ensure that public money was fully accounted for and applicants would need to show evidence of how the money was spent. It was then agreed that the Clerk would contact the Museum to ask for a revised application with a breakdown of the figures.
- b. To consider the cost of a Road Closure for the outdoor Pentecost service on the 4th June, 2017. It was confirmed that the road closure in the Market Place was for the benefit all the churches in the town. It was then RESOLVED to pay for the road closure at £50.

8) Parking:

- a. To review the contributions from the businesses and parish councils. The Clerk reported that he had received confirmed contributions from the businesses of £5,065 and the parish councils had confirmed £1,850. This currently left a balance of £8,085 for the Council to find for 2017/2018.
- b. To consider the contribution by Halesworth Town Council for the free parking for the period, April 2017 – March 2018. It was noted that the Council would have to pay the balance, whatever the amount ended up being on paper as these were commitments rather than funds in the bank. However the Committee was very pleased with the response and this meant that the free parking could be ensured for another year. It was RESOLVED that the Committee recommended that the Council pays the balance (currently £8,085).
- c. To consider acceptance of the offer of £17,000 payable to WDC to enable the free parking to be retained for April 2017 – March 2018. Whilst the Committee did not necessarily agree with the principle of having to pay for the free parking it RESOLVED to accept the offer of the free parking for April 1st 2017 to March 31st 2018 at £17,000. The Clerk would inform WDC.
- d. To consider how to formally recognise the contributors. Cllr Wollweber reported that at the Communications Working Party meeting earlier in the day, the group had discussed various ideas. Since the meeting Cllr Wollweber and Cllr Leverett had identified a location for the board (showing the names of contributors). This was in front (Thoroughfare side) of the planter in the entrance to the car park (adjacent to The White Hart). The Clerk suggested that the map (in the same location) was going to be replaced at some point and perhaps could be used temporarily. Another suggestion was on the wall adjacent to Durrants. It was agreed that the location of the board and all other means to advertise the contributors would be decided at a later stage.

9) Town Park:

- a. Gappa update. The Clerk confirmed that he had finally received the invoice for the play equipment. The total amount was £40,803 + vat and the GAPPA reserves available was £47,251. The vat would be reclaimed by HTC. This left GAPPA with £6,448, and there was one other donation pending (H&BVP) at £629. The Clerk would be arranging a meeting with the members of GAPPA in the New Year to see what ideas they had for the balance.
- b. Green Flag application: The Committee considered the email request from HIB (Halesworth in Bloom) to pay for the application next year. The Clerk explained that to retain the Green Flag an inspection fee was required every year. Next year the figures was £314. The Committee noted that HIB had received a grant in October and under the grant policy rules it was not able to contribute any further to the same organisation in the same year. The Clerk would contact HIB and suggest that this cost could be included in a grant application but not until after April 1st 2017.

- c. **Park Lighting:** The Clerk reported that on the 7th December he had met with the Chair, Anne Fleming, Winston Kemp (Pearce & Kemp) and Simon Walker of Waveney Norse to review the proposed lighting in the park. When walking past the sample runway light it was agreed that the light actually proved to be so bright it was temporarily blinding but at the same time it did not produce any notable illumination on the path. It was then suggested that two additional street lights could be added, one near the play park and one at the other end near the bench (where the existing runway lights ended). This additional lighting should give sufficient illumination to the path without the need for runway lights. Waveney Norse had offered to install these two lights at their cost and further that they would be wired on to a separate circuit which would enable the runway lights to be added at a later date if required. The separate circuit would ensure that failure of the lights would be localised. It was noted that if HTC wished to have the runway lights at a later date these would most likely be at HTC's cost. It was then RESOLVED to accept the offer from Waveney Norse to install the street lights as described above and to review the lighting once the work was completed.

10) **Maintenance:** There were no other maintenance costs to consider.

11) **News Items:** To consider any items for the website/Information screen/Mail Chimp:

1. It was agreed to thank SCC, the businesses and parish councils for their contributions to the free parking via Mail Chimp message and the information Screen.
2. A message to the effect that the Precept would remain the same as last year (TBC at the January monthly).
3. To advertise that Speedwatch Volunteers were needed but to make it clear that volunteers would be working in the villages and not the town because Halesworth was not currently involved in the Speedwatch programme.
4. It was decided not to advertise for Police specials at this stage as this should be responsibility of the Suffolk Police.

12) **Accounts for Payment:**

- a. RESOLVED that the list of accounts for payment as follows was approved for payment.

<u>3714.</u>	EPS Transfers (LGA 1972 s133)	54.00 + vat
<u>3715.</u>	Chairs Allowance – Flowers (LGA 1972 s15 (5) and Christmas Cards	45.00
<u>3716.</u>	HMRC PAYE liabilities (Oct '16 – Dec '16) (LGA1972 s112)	1815.44
<u>3717.</u>	SALC – Clerk's Network training day (LGA1972 s112)	16.00 + vat
<u>3718.</u>	N Rees – Mileage claim – Networking day (LGA1972 s112)	27.00
<u>3719.</u>	Anne Fleming - Mileage Claim Fund raising event (LGA 1972 s175)	29.60
<u>3720.</u>	D Wollweber – Mileage Claim Digital training event (LGA 1972 s175)	27.70

From Gappa Reserves

<u>3721.</u>	Waveney Norse – New Play equipment in the Town Park Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19	40,803.00 + vat
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Agreed at the meeting

<u>3922.</u>	SCC, Market Place road closure for Churches together For Pentecostal Service 4 th June, 2017 (Highways Act 1980, ss.47, 116)	50.00
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Bank & Cash Balances at 16th December, 2016

Current 728	£125,639.80
Community A/c	£5,269.42
Business Reserves 017	£92,231.11
Petty Cash	£61.18

b. To review the procedures for obtaining advice and services:

The Clerk reported that there had been questions raised about the procedures involved with the appointment of the structural and valuation surveys for the London Rd building from a member of the public and also from one of the Town Councillors.

In order to explain that the procedures complied with the Council's regulations on several accounts, the Clerk read out the relevant paragraphs from the Council's Standing Orders and from the Council's Financial Regulations with comments in *italics* by the Clerk.

Standing Orders

28) Accounts and Financial Statement

a) Except as provided in paragraph b) of this standing order or by statute, all accounts for payment and claims upon the Council shall be laid before the Council. *Item 3790 HTC monthly meeting September, 2016 and Item 3714 Finance Committee September 2016.*

b) Where it is necessary to make a payment before it has been authorised by the Council (*which it wasn't*), such payment shall be certified as to its correctness and urgency by the appropriate officer. *The reasons for the urgency were minuted under item 6 Finance Committee September 2016 and the Clerk certified the order.* Such payment shall be authorised by the committee (*as noted above*), if any, having charge of the business to which it relates, **or** (*so either in other words*) by the proper officer for payment with the approval of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Council (*Approval for the order was given by the Chair of the Council, Vice Chair of the Council, Chair of Finance and members of the London Rd Business Plan Working Group*).

Mr Morton conducted a survey at no cost to the Council in April 2016 for preliminary information, he also engaged specialist contractors to give advice on Electrics, heating and building works, which again was at no cost. It was therefore cost effective and morally correct to engage Mr Morton to undertake the survey.

Initially the idea was to try and get a valuation for the building free of charge, as you would with a residential property however as it is a commercial property and the building was very complicated there was a charge for this service which the Clerk negotiated for a reduced figure. The Clerk was not aware of any other companies in Halesworth that were able to conduct commercial valuations at that time but he was satisfied that, considering the time taken on site by Durrants, it represented good value and was vital to negotiations with WDC.

c) All payments ratified under sub paragraph b) of this standing order shall be separately included in the next schedule of payments before the Council. *Payment was not made until it was approved by the Council (or Finance Committee) at the next appropriate meeting as noted above.*

Financial Regulations

11.0 Contracts. *The following regulations determine that in the case of certain services the normal regulations in fact do not apply. These exceptions are unchanged in the latest 2016 Model Financial Regulations from NALC.*

11.1 Procedures as to contract are laid down as follows:

a) Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency (*in fact both surveys were urgently required to comply with the deadline, at that time, to complete the business plan but in any case surveys are excluded from the normal regulations as noted in the list below*), provided that these regulations shall **not** apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:

- i. for the supply of gas, electricity, sewerage and telephone services;
- ii. for specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants;
- iii. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which consist of repairs to or for existing machinery or equipment or plant;
- iv. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the Council;
- v. for additional audit work of the external Auditor up to an estimated value of £250 (in excess of this sum the Clerk and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council);
- vi. for goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and/or are only sold at a fixed price.

All of the preceding information shows that the Council and the Clerk complied with the Council's regulations notwithstanding the fact that in the case of surveys (11.1 b) there is actually no requirement to obtain three quotations nor is there a requirement to obtain prior approval.

b) Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding £5,000 in value, for the supply of goods or materials, or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a), the Clerk shall invite tenders from at least three firms to be taken from the appropriate approved list. *This final point makes it clear that it is only in the case of contracts of £5,000 or more, (disregarding the fact that in this case it is excluded from the normal regulations), there is no legal requirement to obtain three quotations.*

It was then RESOLVED that the Clerk writes to the member of public that raised the query with the facts, as detailed in these minutes, and giving the reasons that the decisions were made and then provides a copy for all members of the Council.

The meeting was closed at 7.30pm