

HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held at Huntingdon Town Hall on Thursday 29th September 2022 at 7:00pm.

MINUTES

Present: Councillors A Blackwell; K Brockett; J Cole; D Cole; C Doyle; M Kadewere; P Kadewere; A McAdam; S McAdam; A Norton; P Pearce (Chairman); G Sheils; T Sanderson and K Webb.

Absent: None.

In Attendance: 3 members of the public

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors: M Baker, S Gifford, P Kennington, B Luckham and S Sweek

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

21. PUBLIC ADDRESS

The Chairman explained that although the topic didn't relate to financial matters, members of the public wished to speak about a topic of current and growing concern. It was therefore proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting.

The owner of Sanctum Beauty, located at 70b High Street addressed the meeting to raise huge concern regarding ongoing antisocial, violent, illegal behaviour and street drinking outside her premises. It was raised that the group in question congregated outside number 70b High Street as there was a bench located on the pavement outside the entrance to the premises. The owner of Sanctum Beauty advised that she had investigated the ownership of the bench and it was believed to be owned by Huntingdon Town Council. Members were told that employees of Sanctum Beauty were starting to feel unsafe at work, and the shop was having to keep its doors locked for security purposes, which was detrimental to business. It was further raised with Members that the closest CCTV camera to the area was overshadowed by trees from St John Churchyard, and a request was made to clear the overhanging branches to improve visibility for the camera. Members were told that contact had been made frequently with Cambridgeshire Constabulary to report ongoing incidents, and with Huntingdonshire District Council regarding action they could take.

A neighbouring resident to 70b also spoke and played audio footage of activity that was taking place regularly during anti-social hours of the night and early morning.

Members discussed the ongoing issue with antisocial behaviour in the town centre and apologised to the business owner and resident that they were having to experience violent, aggressive, and criminal activity outside their business and home. It was noted that this was a multi-agency issue, and that the Town Council had been chasing Huntingdonshire District Council for action to be taken to re-instate the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), which would make drinking in public a criminal offence. Members at the meeting who were also District Councillors identified themselves and explained that they too had passed these incidences onto Officers for action to be taken.

It was agreed that in the short term, the Assistant Town Clerk and Head Groundsman would visit the site on 4th October to confirm that the bench was owned by HTC. If it was under HTC's ownership, the bench would be removed that same week to try and combat the specifically raised incidences. It was noted however that this wasn't a long-term solution to the problem and that pressure was needed on HDC to take urgent action with getting the PSPO for the town centre enforced. It was also agreed that the CCTV camera and overhanging branches in St John Closed Churchyard would be investigated.

The Members of the public gave thanks to Members for their time and left the meeting.

It was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to reconvene.

Clerk's Note: The bench in question was confirmed as HTC's and was removed after the site visit on 4th October 2022.

22. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 16th June 2022 (M1) were presented to Members. The Chairman asked Members if there were any comments and with no questions raised, it was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

Members were also presented with minutes of the Staffing Sub Committee meeting that took place on 14th July 2022 (M1). The Chairman asked Members if they had any comments and with no questions raised, it was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

23. **MONTHLY EXPENDITURE**

Members had before them a copy of the monthly expenditure of Huntingdon Town Council for June, July and August 2022.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions, and a Member asked about expenditure relating to Kanazawa Security for the hire of fencing. The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk explained that to save on costs, Heras fencing had been hired via Kanazawa Security who owned a supply of fencing for the 1940's camp at Ramsey. The fencing was used to secure the site of the new RHS Community Garden at

Coneygear Park whilst it was under construction. It was noted that had HTC hired the fencing in from a commercial company, the costs would have been considerably higher.

The Chairman thanked the Member for their question and reminded the meeting that if any Members had questions relating to the reports within the agenda pack, these should be issued to the Responsible Finance Officer in advance of the meeting to allow for investigation and comprehensive answers to be given. With no further comments or questions, it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the monthly expenditure for June 2022, July 2022 and August 2022.

24. **BANK RECONCILIATION**

Members received a copy of the bank reconciliation for months ending 30th June 2022, 31st July 2022 and 31st August 2022.

The Chairman asked Members whether there were any questions. There were none.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliation for month ending 30th June 2022, 31st July 2022 and 31st August 2022.

25. **INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

Members had before them

- i. The income and expenditure report from April – August 2022
- ii. The Balance Sheet summary

The Chairman asked if there were any comments and explained that the report detailed what the Council had spent to date and what was left to be spent for the rest of the financial year. The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that the Council was on track with their spending in line with the set budget lines and explained the expenditure figures related to the first five months of the Financial Year.

One Member asked if the budget for utilities had been set in line with the projected increases and was informed that this hadn't been budgeted for as the increases weren't known about when the budget was set in December 2021. It was noted that currently, the utility lines were within budget so there was no immediate cause for concern.

Another Member questioned the variance of the Cemetery and Crematorium budget line and the Chairman advised that the income for this line was forecast to be lower than anticipated with expenditure being higher. Members were told that the Council was looking to reduce expenditure and manage budget lines to try and make savings where possible.

One Member questioned whether the loan for the Crematorium and Depot was included within the budget and Members were told that VAT was currently being claimed back for the project through external professionals but that dealing with HMRC was proving to be difficult.

Finally, it was noted from the balance sheet summary that the 2nd part of the precept had just been received.

Members noted the reports and gave thanks to the Responsible Financial Officer.

26. **EXTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT**

Members had before them the External Auditor's Report. The Chairman highlighted that the report was a demonstration of how well the accounts had been managed and commended the Responsible Financial Officer for her work with the Council's finances.

The Town Clerk referred Members to page 5 of the report to note that the £3m difference in the balance brought forward was from paying for the Crematorium and Depot projects.

With no further comments or questions, it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the External Auditors Report.

27. **MEETINGS CALENDAR**

Members had before them a draft meetings calendar for Council meetings taking place between the end of September 2022 – January 2023. The Town Clerk explained that although this was not a finance item, the Council needed to catch up on meetings that had been postponed because of the Queen's National Mourning Period and to allow sufficient time for budget meetings to take place. It was also noted that the start times of the meetings had been pushed back to start at 7.00pm as previously discussed and agreed.

Members debated some of the meetings taking place at Sapley Lodge rather than the Town Hall and the Town Clerk explained that this was due to the Town Hall possibly closing for part of the week to save on increased energy bills. It was agreed that this arrangement wouldn't come into effect until the end of October when the clocks went back, so therefore the meeting scheduled to take place on 18th October could move to the Town Hall. Members agreed that travelling to Sapley Lodge for Members on foot or mobility scooters was not the safest venue, particularly after dark. One Member asked whether the Coneygear Centre could be used, but it was noted that the building was already in use by external hirers. The Town Clerk advised that if the Town Hall was able to secure more hirers, this would mean the Council could afford to keep the building running. With no further comments or questions, it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to accept the meetings calendar, subject to the Finance Sub Committee meeting on 18th October taking place at the Town Hall, with a review of the further two Finance Sub Committee meetings scheduled to take place at Sapley Lodge in November and December 2022.

28. **HARTFORD MAIN STREET UNCONTROLLED CROSSING LHI**

The Chairman invited Councillor Sanderson to give a verbal update on the LHI at Main Street, Hartford. Councillor Sanderson referred to an email previously circulated to all Members, which outlined that the project was projected to be £6k over budget. Councillor Sanderson recommended that the Council should approve this overspend in principle, referring it to the Finance Sub Committee for budget setting. Members

were told that Cambridgeshire County Council needed confirmation to proceed with the works and that the route in question was heavily used by pedestrians and bus users. Members agreed that the road needed a crossing to make the route safe, particularly for children walking to Houghton school. Members commented on the level of detail in the email, and it was noted that in line with LHI projects, the Town Council would only be paying a percentage of the total project cost, not the full £6,000 projected to be overspent.

Finally, Members debated requesting a change of speed limit from 40mph to 30mph, but it was noted that a reduction in speed would allow cars to park on the highway, which would create additional safety issues on that road.

With no further comments or questions, it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the project with CCC.

29. **DATE & AGENDA OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as Thursday 17th November 2022

Chairman

ITEM NO.	ACTION	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	UPDATE
21.	Site visit to bench outside 70b to confirm ownership. Bench to be removed if owned by HTC. Visit to St John Closed Churchyard to view CCTV camera and overhanging branches	Assistant Town Clerk Head Groundsman	04.10.22	Bench confirmed as HTC's. Bench removed w/c 3 rd October 2022
28.	Send confirmation to proceed to CCC regarding the LHI for Main Street, Hartford	Town Clerk	ASAP	Email sent to CCC on 3 rd October to confirm project to proceed