

HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held at Huntingdon Town Hall on Thursday 17th November 2022 at 7:00pm.

MINUTES

Present: Councillors A Blackwell; K Brockett; J Cole; D Cole; S Gifford; M Kadewere; P Kadewere; P Kennington; B Luckham; A Norton; P Pearce (Chairman); and T Sanderson.

Absent: C Doyle; G Sheils and S Sweek

In Attendance: 1 member of the public

The chairman opened the meeting by welcoming the member of the public

30. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors: M Baker; A McAdam; S McAdam and K Webb

31. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr K Brockett declared that he sits on the committee for Huntingdon Carnival, to be discussed in item 35.

32. **PUBLIC ADDRESS**

There were none.

33. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 29th September 2022 (M2) 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.

34. **RECOMMENDATION OF SUB COMMITTEES**

Members had before them the minutes of:

- i. Lettings Sub Committee, held on 27th October 2022 (M1) (P&C)

It was noted that Cllrs M Kadeware, P Kadeware and P Kennington were listed as absent on the minutes but were not members of the committee.

It was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to receive, approve and adopt the recommendations contained herein.

- ii. Grants Sub Committee, held on 27th October 2022 (M1) (attached)

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to receive and approve the minutes of the meeting with the recommendations to be discussed in item 39.

- iii. Twinning Sub Committee, held on 13th October 2022 (M1) (attached)

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to receive and approve the minutes of the meeting with the recommendations to be discussed in item 42.

- iv. Finance Sub Committee, held on 29th September 2022 (M1) (P&C)

The Chairman of the Finance Sub Committee spoke to explain that the council budget faced some extraordinary challenges and that following the sub committee meeting on 29th September, the Chairman and Vice Chairman had met with the Chairman of the Finance Committee separately and a further sub committee will be held on 22nd November.

It was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to receive, approve, and adopt the recommendations contained herein.

35. **HUNTINGDON CARNIVAL**

The committee received a verbal presentation from the Chairman of Huntingdon Carnival regarding future funding.

The Chairman of Huntingdon Carnival stated that it had been running for 5 years but was currently operating with a projected £2½K deficit. Previous financial support had been given by Huntingdon Freemans Trust, but they were no longer able to continue this. The chairman confirmed that in previous years the event has attracted on average 3,000 people, and that there is a parade, a fun fair, a dog show and there have also been a spitfire flyby.

The expenditure for the 2022 carnival was £9,399.86, however the total

income was £6,873.76, leading to a deficit of £2,526.10. All expenditures are necessary for the safe running of the event. The cost of hire for stalls is £30 for community stalls and £80 for commercial stalls, this hire is for both days. Other income comes from sponsorship.

The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival would like to request an annual grant of £3,000 from Huntingdon Town Council, to cover running costs for the carnival. Members were invited to ask questions.

A member asked about the costs for barriers and tables, and for security. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that these had previously been provided by the vendor providing the bar, but these were no longer provided. There had also been a contribution towards security costs which was no longer covered.

A member stated that the carnival is important to residents' mental health and that carnivals taking place in other cities are supported by local councils.

A member asked when the Freemans trust were last asked for a contribution. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that they initially asked for a grant 5 years ago and were refused this year as the Freeman's trust didn't want to make a regular grant.

A member commented that there had been concerns raised with licensing and safety for the 2022 carnival and what would happen if the carnival were cancelled. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that the money would be returned.

A member questioned the rates for the stalls and stated that it was very good value. They asked about income from the burger vans and the bar. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that there had been a price freeze on the stalls for 2 years. The burger vans were provided by the funfair who made a £1500 donation to operate the funfair and burger vans, they then kept their own income. The bar made a £900 donation on the same basis.

A member asked about the costs for entertainment and whether there would be a reduction if it was held on one day, rather than two. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that the bands performed for free. He confirmed that set up fees would remain the same, and therefore there would not be any reduction in costs.

A member asked about the costs for the radio advert and insurance. The Chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that the advert was with HCR 104fm. In previous years the insurance for the event was also covered by HCR, however this was now only 50% covered.

A member questioned the cost of the field clearance. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that this was the charge from Huntingdonshire District Council to remove rubbish, despite the carnival also clearing the site themselves. A member suggested speaking to HDC to arrange sponsorship in kind.

A member stated that current running costs did not make the event seem very affordable. However fun should be encouraged and the local residents really enjoy the carnival.

A member questioned the extra costs for running on Sunday and questioned the small amounts collected in the bucket collection. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival stated that all stall hire and donations from vendors were given on the expectation it would be a two day event, but the carnival committee were committed to keeping the event free to enter. He acknowledged that bucket collections were low but that times were tight.

The Mayor commented that the carnival support the Mayor's charities with a community stall, and it was a fun event but acknowledged that money is tight for everyone. He suggested there may be other ways the town council could support the carnival. He commented that HDC have plans to link the Town centre more with the riverside as part of the Huntingdon Master Plan and that the carnival was a great event to do this.

A member asked why there was a hire charge for the toilets when there are public toilets on Riverside Park. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival stated that the public toilets had been closed for 2 years, and that more would be needed regardless, due to ratios for facilities at events. The chairman of the committee confirmed that access to the public toilets is a matter for HDC and not HTC.

The Town Clerk advised that it is within capacity of committee to give grants but raised concern about potential liabilities incurred. He noted that the staff at Town Hall had received calls from HDC prior to the 2022 carnival about the event and suggested that councillors request a copy of the Event Management Plan and await an outcome from the SAG panel before making a decision on funding. He suggested that the council may want to give a specific grant rather than to support running costs and suggested the hire of the PA and stage equipment, which cost £3000, subject to appropriate insurance cover.

A member asked whether this would be appropriate within S137 provisions.

The Town Clerk confirmed that this would be within S137 provisions. There was money set aside for the King's coronation next year which may be redistributed. The Town Clerk advised that the town council did not make a long term funding commitment at this stage, but trial the arrangement for 1 year.

The chairman of the committee asked what other fundraising efforts had been made to raise the shortfall. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that fundraising events such as a quiz night and race night had been organised, but these only raised between £400-500 which was not sufficient.

The chairman of the committee asked when a decision was needed and

would they have enough time to prepare Event Management Plan and SAG Panel by then. The chairman of Huntingdon Carnival confirmed that they would need a decision by end of January or early February, and they would be prepared by then. The chairman of the committee thanked the chairman of Huntingdon Carnival for the presentation.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to add a motion to the agenda of the next finance meeting on the 12th January. There was one abstention.

36. **MONTHLY EXPENDITURE**

Members had before them a copy of the monthly expenditure of Huntingdon Town Council for September and October 2022

The Chairman asked if there were any questions.

Cllr Blackwell had emailed in advance of the meeting concerning some entries, with an email response given by the Finance Officer.

Expenditure	Further Details
Payment to TC Harrison Ford	Van Repairs following failed MOT
Jenny Jose Damage Refund	Damage deposit refunded following hire of Coneygear Centre
Michael James Car park damage	Repairs to sporting ground car park
Telegram message T Gilman	Paid at mayor's request
Carriages electronic payment	Payment for Coneygear Seniors Day trip to local coach company
Tesco electronic payment	Payment for weekly shopping for Coneygear Seniors
NuBlue electronic payment	Payment for Council Weddings webpage renewal
TRF for TE	Internal transfer of funds following staff collection

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.

37. **BANK RECONCILIATION**

Members received a copy of the bank reconciliation for months ending 30th September and 31st October 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 months ending 30th September and 31st October 2022

38. **INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

Members had before them

- i. The income and expenditure report from September – October 2022
- ii. The Balance Sheet summary

The Chairman asked if there were any comments.

A member stated that it was understandable that there was an overspend, but that it was important to recognise the significance of the current economic climate

The Chairman stated that there is currently a forecasted overspend of £479,174 but that due to actions taken during previous years, there was resilience in the accounts to withstand this. The biggest challenge will be in setting the precept for 2023/2024.

A member noted that it was not just the precept and that there is likely to be a shortfall next year as well, so it will be an issue for several years.

The Chairman accepted the point but clarified that mitigations were in place and thanked the staff for their hard work in preparing the accounts.

The Town Clerk confirmed the expected balance in total reserves is £1,442,222.

A member asked whether it was required that the council maintain 6 months of operational costs in reserves. The Town Clerk clarified that it is recommended that councils keep 3 months working capital in general reserves, although 6 months is preferred.

It was noted that there are reserves for capital projects and S106 money, but these can only be used for these projects.

The Town Clerk noted that general reserves are listed in report separately.

The Responsible Financial Officer stated that the current forecast is likely to change by the end of the financial year.

The chairman asked what mitigations are in place to reduce any further expenditure for the remainder of the year.

The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that managers are meeting to discuss expenditure on a monthly basis to identify any savings to be made. This may be quite limited though as the largest increases expenditure is utility bills.

The Town Clerk noted that most Town Council Income is due in autumn months and there are still some income outstanding.

A member asked if there were any plans to increase income at the Town hall and crematorium.

The Town Clerk noted that this has been discussed at the Lettings Sub Committee and hire rates had been reviewed for both the Town hall and the crematorium. The crematorium has increased its activity from 3 cremations a day initially, to 8 per day. This is due to an increase in direct cremations which are not reliant on the availability of hearses from funeral directors.

A member asked if this increase had been accounted for in the forecasts and the Responsible Financial Officer confirmed it had.

A member asked if it would be possible to increase hires at Sapley Lodge, but the Town Clerk noted that there are restrictions on its use due to planning permissions. The Town Clerk noted that they were in conversation with local orchestras about potential hire of the chapel for rehearsal space at weekends.

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

39. **GRANTS**

Members were asked to receive a report from the democratic officer regarding further information on grant applications. Three organisations had been asked to provide more supporting information to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

i. Sports Connections Foundation

Further information was requested regarding whether they were a profit-making business and whether it would benefit residents of Huntingdon. They confirmed they are a registered charity with a charity number. The grant application will fund a programme due to start in the new year, based at St Peter's School in Huntingdon.

ii. Thrive Youth Work Huntingdon

No further information had been received prior to the meeting.

iii. Kanazawa Judo

Further information was requested regarding how it would benefit residents of Huntingdon. The original grant application of £1000 was now amended to £500, and detailed that the grant would support local children from Huntingdon to access the classes based at the Coneygear Centre.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to decline the grant for Thrive Youth Work Huntingdon, as they had not submitted any additional information, but they would be invited to apply again in the next grant round. There was one abstention.

It was

RESOLVED to recommend that the following applications be granted in the amounts shown, subject to the usual conditions and made under the provisions of Section 137, 142, 144 and 145 of the Local Government Act 1972, it being in this Council's opinion that such grants are made in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and that levels of grant are commensurate with levels of benefit derived therefrom:

1. Sports Connections Foundation– awarded £500.00
2. Kanazawa Judo – awarded £500.00

The amount awarded at the meeting totalled £1000 under Section 137(1) of the Local Government Act 1972: Class 5 – Ceremonial and Entertainment and Class 9 – Social Welfare.

40. **STUKELEY'S MEADOWS GYM EQUIPMENT**

Members had before them a quote for the installation of outdoor gym equipment at Stukeley Meadows.

A member asked whether residents had been consulted on the installation of the outdoor gym equipment.

A member stated that consultation was needed with local residents, no point in consulting if finance committee don't approve the quote first.

A member asked if the climbing wall was included.

The Town Clerk confirmed that climbing wall was not included in the Gym equipment. It was noted that the papers before members were just an extract of the full quote.

A member requested that the consultation needed to be wider than just residents living adjacent to the space, as it was a lot of money to spend in just one ward.

A member stated it would be a sensible idea to agree the quote to take to residents as part of a consultation.

The Town Clerk advised that a discussion with Huntingdonshire District Council was needed as they owned the land the new gym equipment was due to be installed on. Following this a consultation document could be drafted for residents to review.

A member advised that the original trim trail was initially installed using s106 funding along with other projects across the town. The trim trail needs to be removed and this quote would be a replacement.

The chairman stated that permission from Huntingdonshire District Council needed to be sought and that it might be possible to defer for a future discussion of cost.

A member proposed that quote was agreed subject to further discussions with Huntingdonshire District Council and a consultation with residents.

It was proposed, seconded and a vote taken

For - 8
Against – 3

It was

RESOLVED to approve the quote.

41. **LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS**

The Town Clerk advised that members were to shortlist 3 projects to approve for a local highway improvement bid (LHI) for 2022/23.

The list included:

1. Speed reduction measures in American Lane
2. Footpath installation on the corner of Coneygear Road and Sapley Road
3. Speed bumps between Pennington Road and Sapley Road
4. Pedestrian crossing between Sallowbush Road and Redwongs Way
5. Bollards to prevent vehicles turning at Wertheim Way
6. Speed bumps at Lake Way
7. Improvement between Spring Common and St Peters Road, to include traffic calming on St Peter's Road (this was an additional project added at the meeting.)

A member stated that the projects needed more discussion. The town council can submit 3 projects, but a local community group may be able to support a separate bid. It may also be possible to combine some of these projects into larger bids. It was suggested that projects 1 & 2 may be combined, and projects 5&6 may be combined, due to the closeness in their locations. Project 4 (pedestrian crossing between Sallowbush road and Redwongs road) may not be successful due to lack of traffic usage.

A member asked if any projects had received specific comments or arisen out of a particular incident. It was noted that feedback had been received regarding projects 1 and 7.

The Town Clerk noted that successful bid must 'score' highly, and that unless there is a fatality a speed bump on it's own will not score high. He noted that the application was due to be made in January and that town council staff can undertake more work to produce a report for members with more details.

A member noted that a neighbourhood watch group may be able to support an application.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to defer the decision until after a report had been received.

42. **TWINNING FUNDING**

The Town Clerk stated that Huntingdon Town Council's current service level agreement with Huntingdon and Godmanchester Twinning Association has now expired (2018-2022), but that there are outstanding payments to be made.

The SLA agrees that HTC will make a £5,000 financial contribution each year, to cover the Mayoral expenses that may occur on any twinned trips and to cover the expenses of any visiting Mayor as well. Payments had been deferred for two years, as there had not been any activity due to covid. There was now £9,864 due to pay (two years of financial contributions minus a £136 payment already made).

A member noted that although it is important to support twinning, there are also other organisations that need money.

A member commented that it was a large amount of money to pay, however it was already agreed in the SLA so HTC were required to pay the money. It was noted that there is a new committee at HGTA who were keen to engage more with the community. The funding also provides for activity within Huntingdon such as the mural at the rear of the commemoration hall. The member reminded the committee that twinning is a civic function that would still need to be paid for somehow and that HGTA is effectively subcontracted to provide this function.

The chairman of the Finance Committee stated that the SLA is a contract and therefore needs to be paid. The chairman expressed concern at the disproportionate payment compared to Godmanchester Town Council (GTC) and that discussion of this would need to be considered in the next SLA.

The chairman of the Twinning Committee noted that twinning is well established but noted that there were improvements to be made to include more of Huntingdon. There are meetings due to take place with GTC to discuss future contributions.

The chairman of the Finance Committee stated that it was a civic responsibility for the town, and that twinning did increase footfall in the town centre. It was

also noted that there have been arts displays and other activity is being planned. It was noted that the Twinning Committee must ensure that the next SLA reflects and equal share of contribution with GTC.

A member asked if there will be any other ongoing costs.

The Town Clerk stated that the SLA expires this year and any other costs would need to be discussed as part of the SLA discussions with GTC and HGTA.

The chairman of the Finance Committee reminded members that the SLA is a legal contract and that members were obligated to pay. £136 had already been paid, and there was still £9,864 remaining.

A member proposed that Huntingdon Town Council approve the payment to the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Twinning Association, in line with the terms of the 2018-2022 Service Level Agreement, but that no further payment to be paid until this has been reviewed.

It was proposed, seconded and a vote taken

For - 7

Against – 2

2 members abstained.

It was

RESOLVED to approve the payment.

43. **DATE AND AGENDA OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as Thursday 12th January 2023.