

**HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL****FINANCE COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held at Huntingdon Town Hall on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 6:30pm.

**MINUTES**

Present: Councillors M Baker; A Beevor; A Blackwell; C Doyle; S Gifford; M Kadewere; P Kadewere; P Kennington; D Landon Cole; B Luckham; A McAdam; S McAdam; T Sanderson; P Pearce; and K Webb.

Absent: None.

*Clerk's Note: The Chairman welcomed Muibat Babayemi who will be starting in her role as Responsible Finance Officer in January 2022.*

**29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor P Brown, S Sweek and J Cole. (Cllr Cole was unable to join virtually due to the Zoom link being inaccessible)

**30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors S McAdam, A McAdam, A Beevor, S Gifford, P Kadewere and K Webb declared an interest in item 37 as members of Huntingdon and Godmanchester Twinning Association (HGTA).

**31. PUBLIC ADDRESS**

There was none.

**32. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 (M2) were presented to Members. The Chairman asked Members if there were any comments, there were none. It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes, subject to the amendment above.

**33. MONTHLY EXPENDITURE**

The finance reports were not completed due to staff sickness, Members deferred this item.

**34. BANK RECONCILIATION**

The finance reports were not completed due to staff sickness, Members deferred this item.

**35. BUDGET VS ACTUALS**

The finance reports were not completed due to staff sickness, Members deferred this item.

**36. INVOICES OVER £1000**

The finance reports were not completed due to staff sickness, Members deferred this item.

**37. TWINNING ASSOCIATION SLA**

HTC make an annual payment of £5,000 to HGTA to support twinning activities, specifically the Youth Festival. Due to changes on the committee and the pandemic no twinning activities occurred in 2020-21. The last payment was made in 2020 and remains largely unspent. Members were asked to consider whether the payment from the previous financial year should be carried over and the next payment to be deferred until it was needed.

The Chairman asked Members for comments and questions.

A Member commented that HGTA was inactive and there were not aware of any events that were planned. It was confirmed that a virtual business meeting with Wertheim was taking place on 2<sup>nd</sup> December and a HGTA Christmas Party was planned.

A Member spoke in support of HGTA and queried whether Godmanchester had made their contribution. It was advised that the Town Clerk could not comment on Godmanchester's contribution. HTC provide the payment to support the Town Mayor in participating in twinning activities, which is arranged by HGTA, and the main contribution was in support of the Youth Festival which was cancelled.

It was advised that the Town Clerk would pay the SLA when needed. A Member queried whether this would need to be approved at a meeting before payment could be made. It was advised that the Town Clerk had delegated authority and would have consultation with relevant Members before authorising the payment, but a meeting would not be required.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to defer the payment of HGTA's SLA until the payment was needed.

**38. MEETING PA SYSTEM**

Members had a report in front of them regarding the purchase of a new meeting PA system. There were 3 options:

- Option one: 22 wired microphones
- Option two: 11 wireless microphones
- Option three: 11 wired microphones (with future wireless expansion capabilities)

The Chairman asked Members for comments and questions.

A Member commented that the price was high but was appropriate for the equipment quoted for. They spoke in support of option two, as wireless microphones were more convenient and there were no hazards with trailing wires. It would make the Town Hall more attractive to prospective hirers. A query was made about hearing loops and accessibility for people with hearing difficulties. Several Members who use hearing aids confirmed they had no difficulty hearing with the speakers.

A Member raised concerns as the proposed PA system was very expensive and they did not deem the purchase necessary. It was commented that normality was returning, and standard meeting processes would resume in the Council Chamber in the near future.

A Member commented that the future was uncertain, and a backup system was important for the Council to conduct its business. It was worth the spend, as the system was quality and would pay for itself in the long run, with more corporate hirers of the building.

It was advised that the purchase would come out of Capital Town Hall improvements.

It was proposed, seconded and a vote was taken:

For: 9 votes  
Against: 3 votes

It was

**RESOLVED** to approve the purchase of option two: 11 wireless microphones.

### **39. MEETING TABLETS**

Members had before them a report to upgrade meeting tablets as they were not fit for purpose, and several had expired. Members were requested to approve a spend of up to £4,000 for the purchase of new devices, charges, cases and licensing for use at Council meetings. The Chairman asked for comments and questions.

It was commented that technology for android devices were generally supported for 3 years. The Alba tablets lifespan was significantly shorter. As a cheaper alternative an Amazon Kindle was recommended, as they were able to display PDFs and had a very reliable battery life.

A Member commented that they disliked the use of tablets, and a significant number of the Council used their own devices at meetings. It was commented that £4,000 was too much money for this project. It was advised that Members were forced to use their own devices as the tablets were so unreliable. The Council should provide devices that were accessible to all.

The Town Clerk advised that the tablets were purchased partly for environmental reasons, but also to ensure that Members all had the same equipment to access the same information as best practice to control sharing information.

It was noted that the report highlighted a spend of up to £4,000 at the Town Clerk's discretion and it may not require the full amount.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to approve the meeting tablets report and all the recommendations therein.

**40. BUDGET & PRECEPT 2022/23**

Members had before them a copy of the draft budget for the financial year 2022/23. The Chairman described the process of budget setting for this year. It was advised that several meetings had taken place between the Town Clerk, the Chairman of Finance, and the Chairman of the Finance Sub Committee, before the budget was presented to the Finance Sub Committee for their scrutiny.

It was advised that due to the pandemic many budget lines were not spent and would carry over to the next financial year. The proposed precept for 2022/23 was a 3.8% increase, which relates to an increase of 13p per week on a Band D Property.

The Chairman asked for comments and questions. There were none.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations from the Finance Sub Committee and present the budget to Town Council for Precept sign-off.

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

The date of the next meeting was noted as Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at the Town Hall, Huntingdon, PE29 3PJ.

**Chairman**