

HORLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held virtually on 30 March 2021, at 7.30 pm

Present	Cllrs	Jante Baird	Helen Kitajewski (Chairman)	Samantha Marshall
		Jordan Beech	Wayne Phillips*	Simon Marshall
		Mike George	David Powell*	Robert Marr
		Adrian Kitajewski		Martin Saunders

*** Absent**

Also Present	Joan Walsh (Town Clerk)
	Judy Morgan (RFO and Planning Officer)

F 4708 Virtual Meeting

RESOLVED: that in view of the COVID-19 lockdown period, the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee be held virtually.

F 4709 Apologies and Reasons for Absence

RESOLVED: that the apologies of Cllrs Phillips and Powell be accepted for reasons as specified in the Attendance Register.

F 4710 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non-Pecuniary Interests

RESOLVED: noted that no declarations were made.

F 4711 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 2 February 2021, be approved.

F 4712 Finance Updates

F 4705 SCC Community Projects ('Your Fund Surrey')

The Town Clerk updated Members after HTC had posted the proposed project for a new community centre including a community hub, radio station and other community facilities at Michael Crescent on the interactive SCC Commonplace Map. She explained that the next stage of the process had been met by submitting replies to the online questionnaire and this would be required for the formal application at a later stage. It was also a compulsory requirement by the SCC Fund Managers for the applicant to evidence funding acquired from other sources and this would be followed up accordingly. A further update would be provided at the next meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED: noted.

F 4713 Internal Audit Matters

Councillors' Audit Certificate for January and February 2021.

RESOLVED: that the Councillors' Audit Certificate for January and February 2021 and responses by the RFO, be noted. (Copies are appended).

F 4714 Annual accounts (Annual Governance & Accountability Return) 2020/2021

It was noted that the instructions for the Annual External Audit had been received from PFK Littlejohn. The timelines had returned to normal with a deadline of 2 July 2021 for submission of the AGAR Part 3 to the External Auditor and the common period for publication of the accounts falling between 14 June and 23 July 2021.

The Town Clerk told Members that the internal auditor would carry out the final internal audit on 13 May and the Internal Auditor's Report together with the unaudited accounts for 2020/21 and the completed AGAR Part 3 would be presented for consideration at the Full Council Meeting on 29 June. This tight timeframe was due to the necessity for Council to rearrange its meetings to take account of the latest Covid-19 rules. The papers would, however, be circulated to Members in good time to allow for thorough overview and scrutiny of the annual accounts.

RESOLVED: noted.

Financial Matters

F 4715 RESOLVED: that the following reports for January and February 2021, as appended to these minutes, be approved:

- i) January and February Bank Reconciliations**
- ii) January and February Receipts**
- iii) January and February Payments**
- iv) February Summary of Accounts**

F 4716 RESOLVED: that receipt of the RBBC Local Restrictions (COVID-19) support grants, in the total sum of £10,241, be noted.

F 4717 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Town Clerk summarised the CIL income for HTC as set out in the latest financial report, including potential income that were subject to certain exemptions under the amended 'Community Infrastructure Levy (Coronavirus) Regulations. Members took the view that residents should be consulted through a public survey for their ideas on how the fund should be spent for consideration for future projects to include in HTC's five-year Town Plan.

RESOLVED: that receipt of the quarterly report received from Reigate & Banstead Borough Council for the period 16/12/20 to 15/03/21 be noted and an online resident survey for suggested projects through the Horley Town Council's CIL Fund be arranged in due course.

F 4718 Communications Sub-Committee Meeting (30 March 2020)

The Town Clerk gave an overview of the topics covered at the meeting held earlier in the evening. A copy of the Sub-Committee Minutes is appended to these Minutes.

RESOLVED: noted.

Surrey Association of Local Councils (Surrey ALC) & National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

F 4719 Surrey ALC new service provision arrangements for Surrey members

F 4719) The Town Clerk updated Members with the latest information. The Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC) planned to continue providing all Surrey Member Councils with the current level of services including advisory, support, legal guidance and training courses through an alternative service provision package, from 1 April 2021. An introductory newsletter, previously circulated, had been received from the team, led by Cllr Steve Cosser (Chairman) and Anne Bott (CEO). HR and training services would be provided by Mulberry & Co and a new training programme would be published shortly. She added that Dr Richard Olliver, Vice-President of the Surrey Association of Local Councils and a former HTC Councillor, had offered to answer any further queries or concerns.

RESOLVED: noted.

F 4720 The Town Clerk additionally provided the following updates on related matters:

- Central Government had not extended emergency powers to permit remote meetings by local authorities to continue beyond 7 May 2021. This meant that in-person meetings would be reinstated after this date but would still require social distancing measures to be implemented in line with Government guidelines.
- The local Elections would go ahead on 6 May 2021. The Edmonds Hall had been fully risk assessed by RBBC to ensure safe access for voters and Democratic Services Officers and the venue had been identified as suitable for use as a polling station.
- MHCLG had issued a **Local Authority Remote Meetings - Call for Evidence** consultation (deadline: 17 June 2021). The call for evidence seeks to understand the experience of local authorities in the whole of the UK regarding remote meetings.

RESOLVED: noted.

F 4721 Covid-19 Response

The Town Clerk gave the following updates:

- HTC had maintained full compliance with the lockdown rules and were following the guidance in line with the Government roadmap out of lockdown. Officers would continue working from home but there would be a phased return to the office to provide sufficient cover as much as possible on a lone working basis (in line with workplace risk assessments). Members of the public could still make a prior appointment to visit the office for assistance.
- Hirers had been contacted with amended conditions of hire and details of revised arrangements to allow them to return to the Edmonds Hall from 17 May 2021.
- All Covid-19 information posters had been displayed on the Council's notice boards, entry doors, eNewsletter and website.
- All Officers remained contactable by email or on their work mobiles (numbers recently circulated) and regular updates for Members' information would continue to be sent.

In reply to a Member's question, the Town Clerk said that HTC had a lone working policy in place, detailing appropriate security measures. Additionally, in light of the disappointing news that no extension would be granted to the legislation to allow remote meetings to lawfully take place, a discussion ensued amongst Members and the following points were raised:

- The Edmonds Hall was of an insufficient size to allow for adequate social distancing for in-person meetings.
- Blended meetings might be considered with a quorum of Members present and the remainder joining remotely.
- Extra IT and AV infrastructure requirements for such meetings would need careful consideration along with the cost to achieve a relatively short-term solution.
- The Annual Meeting was currently scheduled for 17 May which was beyond the date when remote meetings could lawfully take place.

- F 4721)** ➤ There was considerable uncertainty about how to practically manage to hold public meetings beyond 7 May and until Covid-19 restrictions were fully lifted.

Councillor George proposed and Councillor Marr seconded that the Annual Meeting date be brought forward to 4 May 2021 to allow the meeting to be lawfully held remotely.

RESOLVED:

- i) that arrangements for the fully risk assessed reopening of the Edmonds Hall in accordance with the Government roadmap out of lockdown, be noted.***
- ii) that the Annual Meeting of Horley Town Council be rescheduled to take place remotely on Tuesday, 4 May 2021, at 7.30 pm.***

HTC Operational Matters

- F 4722 Council Offices and Innes Sports Pavilion - Water Monitoring Compliance**

RESOLVED: that the annual charges for both sites from Water Environment Treatment Ltd, in the total sum of £848 plus VAT be ratified.

- F 4723 Annual Review of Charges for Allotments, Football and Hall Hire**

RESOLVED: that the Council charges for the year 2021-22 for Allotments, Football and Hall Hire (appended to these Minutes) be agreed.

- F 4724 Utility Contracts**

The RFO gave an update on the utility contracts for Gas and Electricity for the Council Offices and Innes Pavilion. She said that the contracts had been renegotiated with the emphasis on green energy. The prices were not the lowest that could be achieved but the Electricity would become 100% Green Energy when the current contracts expired. The new supplier was Corona Energy which was well known and well regarded in the commercial market.

RESOLVED: noted.

- F 4725 Edmonds Fund**

RESOLVED: that the latest quarterly Statement of the Edmonds Fund, for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020, be noted.

- F4726 'Café in The Park' Project, Horley Recreation Ground**

The Town Clerk reported that she had several meetings with the Tenants and they remained very positive despite all the avoidable delays during the pandemic which had prevented them from opening for business until a later date. In preparation, however, they had put their staff contracts in place and were dealing with matters of compliance as well as health and safety. She had assisted them with their fire action plan and fire evacuation procedures together with workplace checks and Covid-19 risk assessments which were all in hand. A full inspection for insurance purposes had been carried out by the risk assessor appointed by HTC's insurance broker. This proved to be very beneficial and the assessor was fully satisfied that all requirements had been appropriately met. Since detailed policies and procedures were also now in place, it would be noted that HTC had exceeded expectations and the quotation for the insurance renewal of the Café was expected to be of best value. A full report of the insurance inspections (which included all HTC sites) would be produced shortly.

F4726) The Town Clerk added that the contractor continued to meet their obligations during the retention period and were responsive and helpful. Some snagging issues had been addressed by them, including a replacement clock being positioned on the exterior of the building.

It had further come to light that a more secure Wi-Fi hub was necessary for CCTV monitoring purposes and to provide separated guest Wi-Fi together with an access point inside the café.

Additionally, planning permission which the Tenants sought to install an outside container for holding their furniture and other storage remained outstanding and the Town Council was trying to assist with the Town Clerk actively following up the matter with RBBC Planning Officers.

RESOLVED: noted.

F 4727 Café Tenancy and anticipated Opening Date.

The Town Clerk explained that in line with the Government roadmap out of lockdown, the Tenants (The Farmyard Kitchen) (TFK) planned to have outside tables along with a takeaway service and one toilet usable from 12 April 2021. A full indoor and outdoor service would hopefully follow along with all toilets opened from 17 May 2021, unless Covid-19 guidelines changed. TFK were continuing to operate from their mobile unit in the meantime to build up their customer base and get to know residents and visitors at the park.

Members were advised that the revised effective date of the tenancy would be 1 June 2021 which was later than originally planned due to the pandemic situation. The lease terms allowed for the first six months' to be rent free; and the second six months to be charged at half rent. Full rent would therefore be charged from 1 June 2022.

RESOLVED: that the revised effective date of 'The Café In The Park' Tenancy of 1 June 2021 with the first six months' rent free; second six months at half rent and full rent chargeable from 1 June 2022, be approved.

F 4728 Official Opening of 'The Café In The Park' and refurbished Tennis Courts, Horley Recreation Ground

The arrangements for the official opening of 'The Café In The Park' and refurbished tennis courts (planned in late May) were discussed. Susy Radio had been invited to do an outdoor broadcast and would undoubtedly provide good publicity. Their only stipulation was that the timing of the opening could not be on the hour so as to allow for news bulletins. The LTA would be offering free tennis lessons on the refurbished tennis courts in the afternoon of opening day.

A discussion amongst Members ensued in light of the unexpected delay in lifting Covid restrictions as recently announced by Government. Cllr George proposed and Cllr Simon Marshall seconded that the official opening be deferred until after 21 June 2021 when Stage 4 of the roadmap out of lockdown was expected to be reached. All Members present were in agreement that the official opening should be delayed until Saturday, 26 June 2021, when limits to outdoor gatherings and social distancing had been lifted.

(Supplementary Note: As a result of the unexpected further delay to Stage 4 of the Government roadmap out of lockdown, the official opening of 'The Café In The Park' and refurbished tennis courts was deferred again (until after 19 July 2021) and, subject to Government guidelines, would be rearranged after this date once all restrictions for outdoor events were lifted).

F 4728) RESOLVED: noted.

F 4729 RBBC: Community Centres Consultation (Closing Date: 22 March 2021)

The Town Clerk advised that HTC's formal response to the above RBBC Community Centres consultation had been submitted prior to the closing date. Additionally, a briefing from the RBBC project managers had been arranged to take place prior to the next Planning Meeting on 20 April 2021 and all Members were welcome to attend.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council's response to the RBBC Community Centres consultation, be ratified.

F 4730 Letters Received.

- The Town Clerk referred to a recent letter (previously circulated to Members) which had been received from Claire Coutinho MP. Within the letter, she provided a general update and had marked the one-year anniversary of Covid-19 being declared a pandemic.

RESOLVED: noted.

F 4731 Items for Future Consideration

Electric Vehicle Charging Points.

RESOLVED: noted.

F 4732 Diary Dates

Virtual RBBC Community Centres Briefing – prior to Planning on 20 April 2021
Virtual Planning Committee meeting – 20 April 2021
Virtual Town Meeting – 30 April 2021
Virtual Annual Council – 4 May 2021

RESOLVED: noted.

Meeting closed at 21:00 pm

Date of Next Meeting – 13 July 2021