

HORLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Horley Town Council held on Tuesday 12 December 2023 at 7.30 pm



Present

Cllrs	Hannah Avery	Lynne Burnham	Cecilia Hughes
	Jante Baird	Victoria Chester	Robert Marr
	James Baker*	Lynnette Easterbrook	Samantha Marshall
	Keith Barlow	Emma Fagan	Martin Saunders (Chairman)
	Jordan Beech	Mike George	Tom Turner (Vice Chairman)
	Michael Blacker	Jerry Hudson	Steve Wotton

* Absent

In Attendance

J Walsh (Town Clerk)
J Morgan (Responsible Financial Officer) (RFO)
S Adeniji (Assistant Clerk and RFO elect)

C 5694

Apologies and Reasons for Absence

RESOLVED: that apologies received from Cllr Baker be accepted.

C 5695

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non-Pecuniary Interests

No Declarations of Interest were raised.

Minutes

C 5696

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held [31st October 2023](#) including all confidential items, be agreed.

RESOLVED: noted.

Full Council Updates

C 5672 Electrical works at Innes Sports Pavilion

C 5697

The Town Clerk reported that a decision on expenditure for essential electrical works at the Innes Sports Pavilion was deferred at the last meeting to acquire more comparable quotations which had since been sought. The cost of the works was estimated at approximately £1,800 and this would be covered from the compliance budget.

RESOLVED: noted.

Committee Reports

C 5698

RESOLVED: that the Draft Minutes of the meeting of the Leisure and Amenities Committee held on 17 October 2023 be received.

C 5699

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Development Committee held on 24 October 2023 be received.

C 5700 Council Chairman's Report

The Chairman's Report, previously circulated to Members, for information was received.

RESOLVED: noted.

Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC) and National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

SALC BOARD:

C 5701 Cllr Mike George gave an update as the HTC representative on the SALC Board. He advised that SALC had an away day during which they explored various topics including communications and training. They also looked at the feedback from the breakout groups at the last AGM. The association's CCO would be gathering information on suitable training providers for member councils and would be contacting the Town Clerk for referrals on training courses arranged by HTC from external sources. The Town Clerk added that the next SALC online forum for Councillors was due to be held on 18 January 2024 and was open to all members.

RESOLVED: noted.

NALC Model Financial Regulations Consultation:

C 5702 The Town Council's response to the NALC consultation on the model Financial Regulations, previously circulated to Councillors, was summarised by the RFO. She advised that the council's response was based on how the financial regulations were working for the council and to ensure best practice in financial management and use of public money at all times.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council's response to the NALC Model Financial Regulations consultation, be ratified.

Statement on Devolution:

C 5703 The Town Clerk summarised the information received from SALC regarding the government announcement that Surrey County Council is engaging in discussions on a Level 2 County Deal. She advised that the County Deal concerns the devolution of powers from central government to local areas and that the 'Level 2' option does not require any structural reform. It was further thought there were no plans to develop a unitary authority and more information would be provided by SALC in the new year, as relevant to town and parish councils.

RESOLVED: noted

C 5704 The Town Clerk reported that NALC had circulated the agreed LGS Pay Agreement for 2023/24 along with the updated pay scales. The latest bulletins from NALC's CEO had also been circulated.

RESOLVED: noted.

Borough, County Council and Other Updates

C 5705

SCC/RBBC/HTC Joint Council Meetings 2023/24

The Town Clerk gave a summary of the meeting held virtually on 04 December 2023 where general updates were received from the three tier councils, including budget settings for 2024/25. She advised that amongst other topics discussed were Post-16 Education

provision for Horley residents; outstanding public facilities and infrastructure at Westvale Park; the Horley Sewage Treatment Works (HSTW) causing outflows from the facility discharged into Horley's watercourses; and nominating an Asset of Community Value (ACV). Cllr Biggs had suggested a presentation for HTC by the RBBC Head of Planning on ACV guidance and conservation areas.

C 5705

The Town Clerk extended a note of thanks to Cllr Keith Barlow for keeping the council so well informed on measures taken on the matter of the HSTW in his capacity as Westvale Park RA Chair, along with other local interested parties, to hold Thames Water to account and seek enforcement action by the Environment Agency.

Cllr Avery added that RBBC Parking Services were in discussion with Surrey Police forensic officers on the provision of 2 car parking spaces at the High Street car park, Consort Way, to assist with their mobile operation in Horley town centre.

The next SC/RBBC/HTC joint meeting would be held remotely on 22 January 2024. (A copy of the meeting notes is appended to the signed copy of the minutes).

RESOLVED: noted.

RBBC/HTC Liaison Meetings 2023/24

The Town Clerk gave a summary of the hybrid meeting held on 9 November 2023 at Reigate Town Hall. She advised that RBBC had a roll-out programme to upgrade play areas as part of an ongoing investment plan in the borough's facilities, based on need (ie. age, deterioration) to be funded from base budget capital funds. Specific works may be funded from S.106 or CIL funding where a demonstrable case had been made. A forward plan would be shared by RBBC in due course.

C 5706

The meeting further covered the proposal for the delivery of infrastructure facilities at Westvale Park, on which it was noted that steady progress with the Developer Consortium had been made on the provision of public facilities and other formal steps would be taken to remedy the breach of the S.106 Agreement, if required. Additionally, flooding issues at Horley Subway was discussed along with drainage works to be undertaken by Network Rail. The next meeting would be held on 8 February 2024 and draft minutes of the last meeting had been circulated by RBBC to the participants.

RESOLVED: noted.

Internal Audit Matters

C 5707

The RFO provided feedback from the first internal audit for 2023/24 by Mulberry & Co which was very positive and noted a strong commitment by the Town Council to financial management overall and on governance procedures. The report made a recommendation on website navigation for transparency, and this would be followed up accordingly.

RESOLVED: noted.

Horley Town Council Precept for the Financial year 2024/25

C5708

The Finance Lead Member, Cllr Jordan introduced the item to Council. He reflected that the budgets had been carefully scrutinised at both the Leisure and Amenities Committee meeting held on and at the previous Council meeting held on 31 October 2023. The Finance Working Group had also met to scrutinise the Annual Budget and consider the

Council's funding commitments in relation to the four successful SIP CIL (2) bids as well as planning for some future projects identified in the Town Plan.

Cllr Jordan presented three possible scenarios for the budget and precept 2024/25 for Members consideration. His recommendation was scenario B, which he considered to be a realistic scenario given the Council's needs and commitments. This would result in an annual increase in parish council tax of £6.24 per Band D household or 12p per week.

C 5708)

Cllr Jordan further outlined detailed proposals to allow the Council to invest for the future including: -

- Adding £20K to the Parks and Playgrounds Earmarked Fund with £20K to bring it back up to £40K as Yr1 of a longer term 3-year programme to support the Town Plan commitment to replenish the playground at Horley Recreation Ground.
- Adding 10K to the Election Contingency Earmarked Fund to allow for one by-election; and
- Adding £80K to the Office Expansion Contingency Fund to bring this up to £100K to allow for rising building costs and contingency to ensure that this major capital project which included remodelling ageing infrastructure and sustainability measures would be realistically funded.

He added that one of the benefits of investing in replacing ageing infrastructure and becoming more energy efficient would be long term savings in running costs. Members agreed that this would be beneficial.

There was some debate about the need to earmark funds for election contingency, there was some feeling that this was not needed at all, and the Council could take the risk of having to spend General Reserve if the need arose, others felt that there was a case for a middle way by earmarking some funds for election contingency and building this up slowly over a few years. It was generally agreed that if the funds were not to be in the earmarked fund, then they should still be retained in the General Reserve.

Cllr Marr proposed and Cllr Blacker seconded that the Elections Contingency Earmarked Fund should be reduced to £2,500 for 24/25 and an additional £7,500 be identified as General Reserve.

C 5708)

RESOLVED: That the Elections Contingency Earmarked Fund be reduced from £10,000 to £2,500 and the sum of £7,500 be added to General Reserve.

Cllr Jordan proposed, and Cllr Avery seconded that the precept be set at £604,096. He said that in his opinion scenario B was the most sensible way forward, allowing the Council to capitalise on the CIL SIP (2) funding which Council had received, fund underlying running costs and future plans whilst maintaining prudent financial management. Members agreed unanimously.

C 5709

RESOLVED: that a Precept of £ 604,096 be set for the Financial Year 2024/25, representing £54 per Band D household, an annual increase of £6.24 (+ 13.1% increase) and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council to be informed accordingly as the Council Tax Authority.

Budget Statement 2024/25

C 5710

Cllr Beech read out the draft Budget Statement (attached). Cllr George commented that whilst supporting the draft budget statement, he felt it should emphasise the long-term future savings to be gained from current proposed investment.

C 5710 ***RESOLVED: that the draft Budget Statement 2024/25 be approved (subject to minor amendment to be agreed by the Finance Lead Member) and published.***

Operational Matters

C 5711 ***RESOLVED: That expenditure in the total sum of of £21,523.43 for May 23 Election Costs be approved and £20K covered the Election Costs Earmarked fund and the remainder taken from General Reserves.***

C 5712 ***RESOLVED: That the annual subscription charge to Gatwick Greenspace Partnership (GGP) for 2023/24, in the total sum of £2,350, be ratified.***

Outside Bodies

Royal British Legion

C 5714 Cllr Marshall reported that she had attended the Annual General Meeting of the Royal British Legion. She advised that Cllr James Baker was voted in as President of the Horley Branch and David Powell as Vice-President. The Royal British Legion expressed a note of thanks to Horley Town Council for helping to organise the Remembrance Sunday Parade & Service. The Town Clerk added she had received letter from the programme organiser, stating that the *“Horley Town is very lucky in having such a considerate Council which assists and supports organisations in their efforts to hold any events”*.

RESOLVED: noted.

Environment Working Group

C 5715 The Environment Working Group Chair, Cllr Avery advised that the notes from the last meeting, held on 14 November 2023, had been circulated to Members. She added that the Council had been in discussion with the RBBC Lead Member for Environment, Cllr Nadean Moses on attending a future working group meeting.

RESOLVED: noted.

Climate & Ecology Bill

C 5716 The RFO (Elect) explained that Zero Hour is the campaign for the Climate and Ecology Bill which is currently going through Parliament and that the bill proposes a new plan for the UK to tackle climate emergency, global warming and biodiversity loss. Cllr Wotton recommended that Members of HTC support the bill as it helps ensure that the UK cuts its emissions fairly and is designed to reverse climate and ecological breakdown and this was agreed.

RESOLVED: that the recommendation by Town Council to support the Climate & ecology Bill through the Zero Hour campaign, be approved.

C 5717 **Communications Received**

Following receipt of recent correspondence from Susy Radio, Cllr Avery reported that RBBC had aimed to assist the community radio station in finding new premises.

RESOLVED: noted.

C 5718

Diary Dates

19 December 2023: Planning Committee (Interim)

16 January 2024: Planning Committee (Full)

23 January 2024: Leisure Committee

RESOLVED: noted.

C 5719

Items for Future Consideration

The Town Clerk advised of the following items for future consideration:

- CIL SIP (2) project updates
- Introduction of Procurement Policy for adoption.

RESOLVED: noted.

C 5720

Press Release

That the following Press Releases by the Town Council be agreed.

- HTC Budget Statement 2024/25
- HTC support of Climate and Ecology Bill by Zero Hour.

RESOLVED: noted.

Meeting closed at 8.57 pm. Date of next meeting – 30 January 2024



Press Release:

Horley Town Council Budget Statement 2024/25

December 2023

The Annual Budget of Horley Town Council has been confirmed and the Precept for 2024/25 has been set at a total net figure of **£604,096**. This means that the Town element of Council Tax will be an average annual amount of **£ 54** per household, representing an increase of **£6.24** per Band D property **(+ 13.1 %)**. **This figure is well below the National Average figure for Town and Parish Councils which last year (2023/24) was £79.35.**

The Precept increase is due to a rise of inflation and higher costs to cover council services, and this required careful decisions to be made in this regard. We equally understand that rising household bills creates significant financial pressures for many residents, and we must maintain a pragmatic approach to financial management and use of public money. Consistent progress with our five year Town Plan objectives reinforces our steadfast approach to deliver local community projects through innovation and commitment along with other meaningful ways to support the local community and to promote well-being and social cohesion.

After taking full opportunity for various grant funding possibilities, we made four successful bids to the Reigate & Banstead Strategic CIL Infrastructure Programme and some of these projects are now underway. These include resurfacing areas at the allotment sites; replacement of the perimeter railings at Horley Recreation Ground with CCTV and led lighting enhancements; a playground upgrade at Michael Crescent Centenary Park; and expansion of the Town Council offices with a key focus on sustainability as part of our pledge to embed sustainable climate action through council activities. The Town Council has also been instrumental in getting trees planted in variety of local areas through collaborative working with Surrey County Council and support with after care by many helpful community volunteers.

To improve community safety at our parks, we have secured extra funding to install new railings around the play areas at Horley Recreation Ground and Court Lodge Fields. We are most grateful to receive this financial support from County Councillors which has also enabled us to again make provision for the superb floral displays around the town. We are also taking forward more environmental activities with a roll out of wildflower planting and have increased outdoor furniture at many of our parks and open spaces. We would also welcome support from community groups and businesses through sponsorship.

The Town Council will continue to support St Bartholomew's Church and has made provision for a grant towards its grounds' maintenance budget, subject to approval of an application from the Church. In addition, we can offer grant funding opportunities to community groups (subject to

eligibility) through the [Council Grants Scheme](#) and applications can also be made to the [Horley Edmonds Fund](#).

Additionally, the Town Council will continue to seek funding from appropriate bodies and will have earmarked funds for ongoing maintenance and infrastructure upgrades. This important work will continue as part of our strategic Town Plan objectives and overall vision. We are fortunate to have strong communication links with our principal authorities and through important collaborative working, are able to provide important input as well as influence important decision-making, to help support the economic growth of Horley as a prosperous and vibrant town, both now and in the future.

The Horley Town Council website is frequently updated with news items and other important communications as well as Council Agenda and Minutes, plus a variety of community and business information. We continually make website enhancements to keep it informative and contemporary whilst ensuring that it meets our legal obligations on transparency to be fully accessible by everyone under the website accessibility regulations.

Horley Town Council remains committed to delivering and enhancing its facilities as well as setting out our key objectives, based upon what really matters to Horley residents in these modern times. Detailed information on the budget will be made available on our website or from the Town Council offices.

On a final note, on behalf of our Members, I would like to invite all Horley residents to sign up to our free monthly Newsletter from the home page of our [website](#) or follow us on Twitter or Facebook to be kept regularly informed about Horley Town Council's business and other activities. Thank you.

**Cllr Jordan Beech, Chairman Finance & General Purposes Committee
12 December 2023**

ENDS