

Minutes of the Finance Committee remote meeting

held on 15th January 2021

Present: Cllr D Landymore (DL) Cllr T Stedman (TS)
Cllr F Howard (FH) Cllr R Golesworthy (RWG) Cllr J Prothero (JPR)
Cllr S Morris (SM) N Burdekin (NB)

Apologies: None

FIN474. Elect/confirmation of Chairperson

TS proposed DL remained as Chair, RWG seconded. DL had no objections. *Unanimously approved*

FIN475 Minutes of meeting dated 16th October 2020

FH proposed that the minutes of the meeting dated 16th October 2020 were a true and accurate record. TS seconded. *Unanimously approved*

FIN476. Matters Arising

FIN451 (Hay Cemetery) – FH asked if Mike Harris had responded in a timely manner. NB said that MH had sent all the legal documents through to Powys CC's Legal Team in December 2020. FH said that Finance had been held in October, and that MH's response to Powys CC was two months later.

FH proposed that HTC contact MH to say that HTC wants the cemetery sale to be completed by end of January 2021. DL seconded. *Unanimously approved*

TS proposed, FH seconded that after the cemetery sale is completed, HTC changes solicitors and does not use Williams Beales & Co. moving forwards. *Unanimously approved*

Action: NB to e-mail David Pritchard and Vickie Julien (Powys CC) and Mike Harris and copy in DL, TS and SM stating that HTC would like the sale of the cemetery to be completed by end of January 2021

DL confirmed that she had attended the Code of Conduct and Finance training.

FIN469. NB confirmed that he had booked Christine Watkins on the IICA course.

FIN477. Internal and External Audit Reports year ending March 2020

NB had circulated the internal and external audit reports to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Internal Audit Report – NB explained that the main recommendation from the Internal Auditor was to consider using a software package to maintain HTC's records. A quote from Scribe Accounts, which provides accounts software specifically tailored to Town and Community Councils, had previously been circulated, and NB had sent an amended quote before the meeting. The quote is for £468 p/annum plus a one-off set-up cost of £297 (total costs for year one = £765. £468 p/annum thereafter). TS and NB had previously taken part in a workshop on the system. NB said that an online workshop for Finance Councillors and any Town Councillor who are interested could be set up before a decision was made.

Action: NB to arrange an online workshop with Scribe Accounts.

External Audit Report – The External Auditor (Grant Thornton) had given HTC a qualified audit for 2019/2020 due to NB signing the annual return after the date of the meeting. TS had asked NB to challenge this because, due to Covid-19, the Finance meeting on 10th August 2020 was held remotely, so NB had only signed the annual return when he had been able to meet with TS on 18th August 2020. NB said he had challenged the findings on this basis, and that Grant Thornton had said prior to audits being completed that there would be some leeway because of Covid-19. However, NB added that Grant Thornton replied and did not accept the challenge. NB said that he would make sure that for next year's audit, he will sign the annual return on the date or prior to the date the return is considered by Councillors.

FH queried the issue raised regarding Trust Funds. HTC has for as long as known marked this box 'N/A'. Grant Thornton has said that this box should be marked 'Yes'. Councillors disagreed with this assertion and asked NB to raise this with Grant Thornton.

Action: NB to contact Grant Thornton to query the Trust Funds aspect

Action: NB to send a copy of the External Audit report to the Internal Auditor

FIN478. Appointment of Internal Auditor for year ending March 2021

TS said that Town Councils need to consider reviewing the appointment of an Internal Auditor on a regular basis. SM said that given Covid-19 and Hay Accountancy Services, as one possible company that could provide a quote, catching up workload after the death of its owner, that HTC continues with DM Jones for financial year ending March 2021. RWG seconded. *Unanimously approved*

FIN479. HTC income and expenditure 30th December 2020

No major issues were raised. However, RWG raised the issue of VAT claims. NB confirmed that currently HTC claims VAT annually. RWG proposed changing this to quarterly. DL seconded. *Unanimously approved*

FIN480. 2021/2022 Estimates/Precept – deadline 22 January 2021

Prior to the meeting, NB had circulated a template document of the precept for 2021/2022, together with a supporting document raising key issues to consider. Councillors went through the template and report.

Cleaner's Role. TS said given the proposed new roles for the cleaner/caretaker role of potentially watering all the planters, cleaning sports clubs' facilities (depending on what the sports clubs say) and carrying out statutory testing, the cleaning role will need to be more than the previous 6 hours a week. Initially, a 20-hour role was considered @ £10 per hour. However, once figures had been adjusted using the Precept template, this was reduced to a 16-hr role @ £10 per hour, annual salary = £8,320.00. NB added this figure to the precept.

Contract with Healthmatic. NB explained that this is currently £20,500 and raised the possibility of reducing the cleaning contract as HTC looks like losing around £5,000 in 2020/2021. RWG said that Covid-19 is a disease where cleanliness is vital and would rather precept to continue the same level of service. SM and FH agreed. Outcome: Arrange a meeting with Healthmatic to arrange a contact for 2021/2022 to the same funding level of 2020/2021 i.e. £20,500.

FH asked about raising funds through advertising on public conveniences for sponsorship, with Booths Bookshop having already raised this idea. After discussion, the following was agreed:

Inside toilets

A4 = £250.00

A3 = £350.00

Outdoor toilets – TS said that if businesses really are keen to help with the running costs of the public conveniences, perhaps a figure of £1,000 should be requested.

Action: FH to contact Booths with these figures

Council Offices – This to be deleted from Precept template as HTC has now left Council Offices, Broad Street.

Recreation Facilities – NB was asked to change this heading to “Council Offices and Recreation Facilities”

Council Offices and Recreation Facilities:

Under the terms of Hay Bowl’s Club sub lease, the Bowl’s Club is supposed to be installing its own meters in order to pay its bills separately to HTC and other clubs. Councillors also agreed that the existing brown portacabin needs to be removed from site.

Councillors queried the water bills, and the fact the Hay Bowls Club should be billed for the water as they are the only club using water.

Action: When the next Welsh Water bill comes in for the Recreation Facilities, NB to charge this to Hay Bowls Club.

Sports Clubs’ contributions from 2019/2020 – only one sports club has paid its contribution for last financial year (Hay Junior Football). Councillors said that they had previously agreed that sports clubs should make these contributions for 2019/2020, albeit in instalments.

Sports Clubs’ contributions from 2020/2021 – Councillors agreed, given Covid-19 and the fact that the sports clubs had been told previously that HTC hoped not to charge them for 2020/2021 and that running costs might be covered by the introduction of paid parking. Although paid parking has not happened yet, Councillors agreed not to charge sports clubs for 2020/2021. NB added that the Welsh Government Covid-19 losses grant covered the 1st quarter contributions from sports clubs.

Paid parking – Costs to set up. NB had circulated prior to the meeting quotes for two types of bollards. 1 that lies above ground and 1 that lies flush to the ground. The favoured bollard is the 1 that lies flush to the ground. The quote for 35 of these bollards, including supply and fit, is approximately £10,000. TS said that if a small wall was built as part of the scheme, this would reduce the number of bollards needed.

FH proposed a £5k contribution from HTC, with the remaining £5k projected to come from people purchasing parking spaces. TS seconded. *Unanimously approved*

Calendar of Events – TS suggested putting in £2,000. FH was also strongly in favour. NB to add £2k into precept.

Grants from General Fund and Recycling Grants – NB to amalgamate both into the heading, 'Grants'.

Bench Fund – keep at zero as some funds were carried forward for this budget heading.

Hay Public Library – prior to the meeting, NB had circulated a request from Hay Public Library requesting £5,000 per annum for 5 years from the precept. TS said that the library has already been informed that HTC can only consider the precept on an annual basis. RWG said he did not support precepting money for the running costs of the library. Before RWG left, he added that the All Wales Play Grant (covered under item FIN490 below) quote is significantly higher is because it includes new floor surfacing as well.

RWG left the meeting at approximately 12.00 pm

TS added that approximately two thirds of the library's users come from outside Hay. SM said that the library should also ask surrounding town, community and parish councils, as well as local bookshops etc. TS said that that HTC is also limited in its limit that it can give through grants by the S.137 limit. Giving Hay Library a grant for £5,000 would seriously reduce the leeway HTC had in giving grants to other causes.

TS proposed a one-off grant of £1,000.00, not to be part of the precept per se. FH seconded.
Unanimously approved

Action: TS to draft a letter to Hay Public Library explaining the decision.

Transforming Towns Budget – TS said that the TT grant's total was £40k, but this includes £8k VAT. The grant awarded by Powys CC was for £15k. If HTC puts in £7k (minimum needed £3k), that would leave a £10k shortfall from the overall bid. SM said he was conscious that this would be £4k more than HTC needs to commit and that there are many other issues in 2021/2022 facing HTC, including paid parking, the office move etc. This money will come out of 2020/2021 fund in any case. Any funding for 2021/22 to be determined and would come out of reserves.

During the meeting, NB inputted the various changes to the precept template. The final figures were:

Projected expenditure: £101899

Projected income: £25800

Shortfall: £76089

The precept for 2020/2021 was £52223. This represented a 19% rise from the previous year. Councillors agreed a 15% rise would be a smaller rise than last year. Monetarily, TS said that this would mean a Band D property's contribution would go up from £57.85 a year to £66.29. This would still leave a shortfall of £16,000. Councillors said that the figures are a worst-case scenario and don't include any possible income from rent, or future Welsh Government grants issued through loss of income because of Covid-19.

FIN480. Recommendation

(i) That HTC submits to Powys CC a 15% increase in the Precept for 2021/2022, which would give HTC a Precept of £60,056.00. FH proposed, DL seconded. *Unanimously approved*

Action: NB to arrange a Special Council meeting for Monday 18th January 2020, 6.00 pm.

FIN481. Healthmatic Contract for Public Conveniences 2021/2022

Covered under item FIN480 above.

FIN482. HTC – new position of cleaner/caretaker

Covered under item FIN480 above.

FIN483. Bank Reconciliations: October – December 2020

TS has been able to get through to Barclays and had the day before e-mailed NB electronic copies of the missing bank statements for the Main Account. Item deferred until next meeting to give NB time to complete the reconciliations.

FIN484. Online banking – process/update

TS had sent an e-mail to Councillors before the meeting explaining the online banking process. The e-mail explained what Councillors needed to do, and that NB will be sent the relevant mandate forms to enable him to access HTC banking electronically.

FIN485. Councillor Allowance Payments 2020/2021

Deferred.

FIN486. "Town of Books" reflective signs

SM said that the quote received was for £85 per 4ft x 2ft reflective sign to be installed on the large planters in Hay. TS suggested purchasing an initial 6 signs, 4 for the Clock Tower (to go on each side of both planters at the Clock Tower as this is a two-way road), and 2 for Castle Street (to go on traffic-facing side only as this is a one-way street). *Unanimously approved*

FIN487. Paid parking

(i) Update on responses/Harleysalmshouses

RWG asked how many people have requested a parking space so far. FH said 3 so far. TS said that the possibility of paying in instalments has been asked. DL said she agreed that this could be done, but only if the payments were made in advance. TS added that there have been e-mails from residents at Harleysalmshouses that have requested a possible reduced/concessionary rate. SM that further concessions should only be given if requested on a case-by-case basis. In terms of what the concession rate could be, DL suggested half-price for those at Harleysalmshouses, which would be £182.50 per annum, and £45.00 per quarter.

(ii) Bollards – additional quote

The quote circulated by NB prior to the meeting for the purchase and installation costs of 35 flush-to-the-ground bollards was £10k, including VAT. This figure was used when looking at the precept in item FIN480 above.

(iii) Agree next steps

FH and SM thought the £365 charge was not too high. TS said that more promotion of the parking scheme needs to be carried out. The following were suggested as a key part of the next promotion:

- Ensure people are aware that the designated parking will be achieved by bollards
- Parking will be provided separately for the sports clubs
- Be clearer about what the funds raised will be used for
- Open the offer up to businesses e.g. the Swan Hotel
- Put an article in Wye Local

The possibility of installing a barrier as an alternative was discussed. However, FH pointed out that someone could park on a Saturday and remain there without paying further, but causing the car park to become full. The idea was, therefore, dropped at this stage.

FIN488. Office move to Sports Pavilion

(i) Garage demolition – 3 quotes needed

One quote has already been received for £2,100. Jeff Morgan has asked Wye Valley for an additional quote and is also getting one from Talgarth Building Supplies.

(ii) Possible new portacabin for office – 3 quotes needed

One quote has been secured so far for £1,000. 2 more quotes needed. TS, FH and NB met with Hay Dial-a-Ride on 14th January 2021 who asked what rent HTC would be asking for in the new portacabin/office accommodation. SM added that if D-a-R were to move in, they would also be given 4 parking spaces. On the basis of D-a-R's current rental arrangements,

TS proposed setting the rent at £200 per month, not including utilities which would be paid by the tenant. SM seconded. *Unanimously approved.*

(iii) Quote(s) for new blinds

Councillors approved the purchase of Venetian blinds. **Action:** NB/CW to purchase

(iv) Quote for storage cabinet(s) for Saints Bar

Councillors approved the initial purchase of (x1) metal lockable cabinet from Viking Direct @ £169.00. **Action:** NB/CW to purchase

(v) Internal and external lighting

FH declared an interest as the quotes will be supplied by her son, Jamie Howard

NB has asked Jamie Howard for quotes and for Jamie to liaise with RWG to arrange site visit to the Sports Facilities to determine the most appropriate external lighting system.

FIN489. Transforming Towns Grant from Powys CC

Deferred.

FIN490. All Wales Play Grant – update/next steps

Before RWG had left the meeting, he explained that the reason the quote was more than the original was because it now included new surfacing. NB confirmed that the grant awarded by Powys CC was for £5,000. The new, amended quote following a site visit by David Gibbons from Eibe Sports was £9,521.29. Councillors asked NB to get a breakdown of the labour costs, given as £3,714.29. Councillors also asked NB to go back to the grant awarding body and ask if the grant of £5k could be increased in the light of the new, amended quote.

FIN491. Draft new Grant Guidelines (to replace Recycling Grant guidelines)

Deferred.

FIN492. Utility Aid Proposal for HTC's energy costs

Deferred.

FIN493. Outstanding payments from Sports Clubs 2019/2020

(i) £4,000 outstanding – no payments made to date – covered under item FIN480 above.

FIN494. Potential payments from Sports Clubs 2020/2021

Item covered under FIN480 above.

FIN495. Possible ways to raise funds e.g. toilet sponsorship, sports clubs' fundraising

Item covered under FIN480 above.

FIN496. Legionella Quote

Deferred.

FIN497. A.O.B.

None.

FIN. Time and date of next meeting – NB to arrange for February 2021