

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

The Mayor
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MINUTES of the **F&GP Meeting** held on Tuesday 12th May 2020 at 7.00pm, remotely.

Present: Cllrs Winser, Simpson, Knight, Crane and Chicken (entered 7.05pm)
Also, RFO, Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk (left after item 4c). A member of Smarten Up Hungerford (SUH) attended briefly to give information and answer questions about their grant application.

1. **Apologies for absence** – Noted from Cllr Gaines.
(District Cllrs advised this meeting clashes with a WBC meeting so they are unable to join)
2. **Declarations of interest** – Cllr Knight – Triangle Field Management Committee, Cllr Crane – Marsh Lane Allotments
3. **Minutes – To approve and sign the minutes of the F & GP meeting on 10th March 2020** – *Cllr Simpson proposed the minutes as a true record, seconded by Cllr Winser, Cllrs Knight, Chicken, and Crane abstained, rest in favour.*
Since the last meeting, the Clerk has written to the Hub and requested return of the Master Keys.
Action: Cllr Knight is arranging for them to be returned.
The outcome of the early renewal offer given by Ellis Whittam (EW) was queried. Peninsula did not return a quotation in time, so the policy was renewed with EW but only for a further year.
Action: Add land adjacent to cemetery to next F&GP part 2.
4. **Finance: -**
 - a) **Propose acceptance of bank reconciliation** – *Cllr Winser proposed the acceptance of the bank reconciliation for 31/3/20 of £331,409.87, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour. Cllr Winser proposed the acceptance of the bank reconciliation for 30/4/20 of £465,841.54, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.*
 - b) **Approve transfer of £3k from general reserves to library earmarked reserves** – *After discussion Cllr Winser proposed transferring the full amount of underspent library budget of £4703 to earmarked reserves, seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.*
 - c) **Consider allocation of annual grants and propose total expenditure – Refer to spreadsheet attached for allocation** – A member of SUH spoke regarding their application. He advised permission from West Berks Council had been given for locating the proposed planter opposite the Co-op garage. He is fully qualified to carry out the works and would ensure PPE is in place and social distancing takes places whilst the planter is built. He can access all materials needed and will attempt to obtain discounts where possible. Cllr Simpson advised that due to the lockdown HTC had been unable to organise their usual flower display. The RFO confirmed a budget of £4500 is unspent because this project did not proceed.

Each application was considered individually and after discussion grants were allocated. Several were deferred as further information is required namely Theatre Co, Rugby Club, Youth and Community, Armadillo Residents Artists, as projects may have been postponed or cancelled due to COVID.

Cllr Winser proposed the total grant donations of £13,225, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.

Cllr Winser proposed purchasing materials costing £1600 plus vat (to be taken from the Hanging Basket budget) to enable Smarten Up Hungerford (SUH) to build a large planter opposite the Co-op garage. The planter will be the property of HTC and SUH will maintain it. Cllr Winser proposed donating £1000 to the Hungerford & Camburn Trust, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.

Cllr Simpson proposed payment of £5,000 to Hungerford Library and Community Trust from the £9,000 funds already held and approved for them, seconded by Cllr Winser, one abstention (Cllr Knight), rest in favour.

Cllr Crane proposed retrospectively the gifting of our ride on mower to the Rugby Club, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.

*Cllr Winser proposed using further funds from the hanging basket budget of £1650 to purchase additional items for SUH (flowerboxes, compost and flowers) for various locations detailed around the town, subject to any necessary approval being obtained for their placement, (**Action:** Clerk to check), seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.*

- d) Outcome of query into Special Expenses highlighted by the Internal Auditor and consideration of way forward – Refer to report attached for item e) – Cllr Simpson** proposed enlisting the help of the District Cllrs to give a breakdown of the special expenses; HTC prefer to be charged directly instead of the ratepayers, seconded by Cllr Winser, all in favour. It was queried why the rate has gone up by 60%.
Action: Contact District Cllrs and add to next Full Council agenda
- e) Upgrading of streetlights for adoption by WBC – Refer to report attached for details –** The report provides a good summary of the background, actual costs to upgrade and locations. Further information is required relating to item (d) above which relates to the charging of these costs. Ideally all lampposts would be upgraded and handed back to West Berks Council, but cost may be prohibitive. Lampposts in Cold Harbour Road and Parkway have been upgraded and ownership passed back. Atherton Road and Tarrant's Hill are next on the list.
- f) Consider allocation of CIL money - Deferred**
- g) Review the Annual Interim Internal Audit Report 2019/2020 and propose acceptance, and if available the Year End Final Report –** The RFO talked through comments raised by the auditor all of which have or are being acted upon. *Cllr Winser proposed acceptance of the audit reports for 2019/2020, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.* The RFO was commended for his work.
- h) Confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks (3-year agreement ends 2022) –** The Clerk advised only slight amendments to the sums insured had been made this year and the policy will continue with current insurers until the end of the long term agreement in June 2022. *Cllr Simpson proposed the renewal premium of £4893.17, seconded by Cllr Crane, all in favour.*

- 5. Consider adopting a Protocol for Remote Council Meetings – Refer to document on the website –** After discussion, *Cllr Knight proposed acceptance of the protocol, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.*
- 6. Update on TOIL Hours –** Hours are owed as follows: - Employee No. 2 (nil), Employee No. 4 (4), Employee No. 12 (4), Employee No.13 (1.75). Employee No.1 has had reduced hours due to lockdown but under new Government guidance will return to normal hours from Wed 13th May.
- 7. Corona Virus – Review new way of working and any concerns –** Whilst working from home access to the Z drive is not possible. Three companies have been approached for quotations to upgrade our IT system and to provide an on-going support contract.

Action: Clerk to chase confirmation of quotes for comparison.

A discussion took place to consider how staff would return to work. Social distancing is not possible in the small office so staff would need to work alone on separate days and cleaning would take place in between. The office would not be open to the public. Most business is now conducted via email and by mobile phones. Office answer machine messages are being monitored but are depleting. Cllr Chicken suggested a virtual secretary may be an option to consider.

PART 2

Confidential

The public and press may be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity might be prejudicial to the public interest as per the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

8. **Consider a 3-month rent deferral for two organisations on receipt of supporting information (Cllr Knight to report)** – *Cllr Winser proposed noting Triangle Field Management Committee’s decision to give a 3 month holiday (no rent required to be repaid) to the two organisations identified for April, May and June, to be reviewed on a monthly basis, seconded by Cllr Simpson, one abstention (Cllr Knight) rest in favour.*
9. **Review contract for employee no.1-** This item was discussed, and further review is required. No proposals were made.

Meeting closed 9.53pm

Hungerford Town Council

Report to: Finance & General Purposes Committee

Agenda Item No 4 D & E

Street Lighting – Special Expenses charged to Ratepayers Re Streetlights

Background to Special Expenses

It was again brought to our attention by the internal auditor that there are differences between the Precept requested by Hungerford Town Council (HTC) and the amount reported by West Berkshire Council as detailed below.

	HTC Request	WBC report to Central Government
2018/19	£273,596	£278,866
2019/20	£282,652	£290,622

Again, we have had confirmation that this relates to charges to ratepayers re streetlights owned by HTC. We however we have never been able to extract a breakdown of these charges from WBC. Ratepayers would see this charge on their rates bill as an additional charge of about £3-4, but I have no knowledge how this is apportioned (Band A-F). It may take a Freedom of Information request to get WBC to supply this information.

I am unaware whether WBC members have any oversight to these charges, as HTC does not although to Central Government they are recorded as though we have in effect spent these amounts.

I must stress that our internal auditor who covers many Town & Parish Councils has never seen this approach and considers it unusual but is not saying it is unlawful.

As the data regarding the Precept this time round was provided by the External Auditor, they may in due course have a different view when we submit our Annual return.

Background to Streetlight upgrades and transfer back to WBC

HTC owned 101 Streetlights in 2018 which were in effect managed by WBC on our behalf. In the past 3 years WBC had all the streetlights it owned upgraded to LED, however ours were not included, so are the old type that are of course due to age breaking down.

We have had since 2018 on our action plan to bring the 101 Streetlights up to WBC standard and have them adopted. Robin Mann Project Engineer at WBC has been extremely helpful in taking forward this issue as to date we have had / due to have the following upgraded

Number of Lights	Street	Year	Cost
7	Coldharbour Road	2018/19	£5,996.04
7	Park Way	2019/20	£7,231.52
4	Atherton Road (to be done 20/21)	2020/21	£3,492.11
3	Tarrant's Hill (to be done 20/21)	2020/21	£3,761.41

Approval of these upgrades have been on the basis that we had precepted funds to pay for these upgrades and we presently have £20,115 held in earmarked reserves awaiting the above costs to be passed to us.

In addition, we have agreed several repairs to odd streetlights which we again have not been charged and may form part of the above charges to ratepayers.

Options

CIL funds

As HTC has received in 2019/20 £11,993.66 and consideration could be given to using some or all these funds to progress the upgrades and adoption by WBC at a faster pace.

We are aware that the cost of future upgrades may rise as some of the placement of these lampposts may not be in accordance with current standards.

Recommendation

We may need some help from member on WBC to help us break through to find out the breakdown of the costs charged to ratepayers.

Members will have to decide if CIL funds should be used to support our Action Plan

Signed: Jeff Ford – Responsible Financial Officer 7th May 2020

Grant Applications May 2020 - 2021

Applicant	Granted 2019/20	Cost of Project	Suggested Amount 2020/21	The Good Exchange appl no
1st Hungerford Brownies	£0.00	£504.90	£75.00	17953
Armadillo Art Experience (Resident Artists)	£100.00	£5,100.00	£0.00	17941
Armadillo Art Experience (Draw Together)	£100.00	£5,684.00	£100.00	17735
Berkshire Vision	£0.00	£61,000.00	£100.00	17671
CHAIN	£1,000.00	£5,615.81	£1,000.00	17814
Citizens Advice West Berkshire	£1,100.00	£2,155.00	£1,100.00	18116
Community of Hungerford Theatre Group	£1,250.00		£0.00	
Great Western Hospital	£500.00	£78,922.00	£500.00	17372
Headway Thames Valley	£500.00	£68,689.00	£500.00	18006
Home-Start West Berkshire	£100.00	£85,711.00	£250.00	17186
Home-Start West Berkshire	£0.00	£16,696.00	£250.00	18043
Hungerford Allotment Holders Association	£0.00	£2,456.48	£1,000.00	17898
Hungerford Club	£400.00	£3,274.00	£500.00	17896
Hungerford Cricket Club	£500.00	£7,167.40	£500.00	17837
Hungerford Hares Running Club	£0.00	£1,194.00	£350.00	17942
Hungerford Rugby Football Club	£0.00	£7,452.00	£0.00	17982
Hungerford Town Band	£1,400.00	£9,977.21	£1,400.00	17991
Hungerford Y&CC - Running Costs	£1,229.69	£14,028.60	£0.00	17899
John O'Gaunt School PSA	£350.00	£5,125.08	£250.00	17977
Marie Curie South Region	£0.00	£50,00.00	£500.00	N/A
Parkinsons UK, Newbury	£100.00	£13,145.00	£100.00	17341
Recovery in Mind	£0.00	£33,800.00	£300.00	17897
Smarten Up Hungerford	£0.00	£2,000.00	£0.00	N/A
Sue Ryder Duchess of Kent hospice	£0.00	£4,536,489.00	£500.00	18077
Sue Ryder Berkshire	£0.00	£43,824.40	£500.00	17972
The Shoal of Friends (Nursery School)	£300.00	£4,681.58	£0.00	14806
Trustees of the Croft Hall	£0.00	£23,061.20	£2,500.00	17489
West Berks Foodbank	£500.00	£74,660.00	£250.00	17442
West Berks Foodbank	£0.00	£15,000.00	£500.00	18032
Young People & Children First	£200.00	£16,700.00	£200.00	17649

Retrospective Approval of Mower to Hungerford Rugby Club			£0.00	
			£13,225.00	

£16,000 Total

Hungerford & Camburn Education	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£1,000	
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£1000 Total

Hungerford Library & Community Trust	£2,290.00	£10,071.30	£5,000.00	18126
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£10,000 Total