

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES of the **F&GP Meeting** held on Wednesday 10th November 2021 at 7.00pm in The Library, Hungerford.

Present: Cllrs Shatford, Simpson, Fyfe and Knight
Also, Clerk, RFO and 2 members of public.
Cllr Winsor joined the meeting virtually and abstained from voting.

FGP202100107 Apologies for absence - None

FGP202100108 Declarations of interest - None

FGP202100109 Minutes - To approve and sign the minutes of the F & GP meeting on 15th September 2021
Proposed: Cllr Simpson
Seconded: Cllr Shatford
Resolution: Minutes were agreed as a true record. 2 abstentions.

FGP202100110 Receive an update on actions – All actions are complete apart from Action 6.
ACTION 1: Office to contact the local estate agents and provide them with our welcome pack to pass on to new residents.

FGP202100111 Propose acceptance of bank reconciliation (circulated)
Proposed: Cllr Shatford
Seconded: Cllr Simpson
Resolution: Agree bank reconciliation of £623,340.25. 1 abstention.

FGP202100112 Agree audit recommendations including credit card policy (refer to report)
ACTION 2: Defer review of audit recommendations to December Full Council
Proposed: Cllr Shatford
Seconded: Cllr Knight
Resolution: Agree credit card policy. 1 abstention.

FGP202100113 Propose draft amendments to the Financial Regulations (refer to draft amendments)
Proposed: Cllr Simpson
Seconded: Cllr Shatford
Resolution: Agree amendments to Financial regulations (detail as attached)
ACTION 3: Update the Financial Regulations policy and display on website. 1 abstention.

FGP202100114 Propose approval of direct debits as listed. Propose approval of payment by BACS for those invoices which are not paid by any other method e.g., direct debit. (refer to report)
Proposed: Cllr Simpson
Seconded: Cllr Knight
Resolution: Approve the direct debit list (**attached**) and approve payment by BACS. 1 abstention.

FGP202100115 Propose agreed method for future payment runs (refer to reports)

Proposed: Cllr Shatford

Seconded: Cllr Simpson

Resolution: Agree option 1 as detailed in **the attached report** to issue 2 payment runs a month. 1 abstention.

ACTION 4: Put into practise the issuing of 2 payments runs

FGP202100116 Bridge St War Memorial – Receive update on acquiring freehold – A response is awaited from the Charity Commission.

FGP202100117 Grant Awarding Policy – Consider adoption (refer to draft)

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Shatford

ACTION 5: **Resolution:** Adopt policy and display on website. 1 abstention.

FGP202100118 Consider further grant applications (refer to report)

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Knight

ACTION 6: **Resolution:** To make the following grants and request Arts for Hungerford reapply in May:

Chamber of Commerce (Victorian Extravaganza) £1300

Arts for Hungerford £600

Newbury News (over 80s) £250

2 abstentions.

J Willmott advised Smarten Up Hungerford (SUH) had underspent on summer planting and was using the underspend to fund the winter spending. They will therefore not be looking for a further grant this year. **(refer to attached report)**. It was added that the 2 bins recently installed at Charnham Park have made a noticeable difference but there is still an issue.

ACTION 7: Consider installing a bin in the layby.

ACTION 8: Put in writing to JW explanation of how the Good Exchange works. They come under the umbrella of the Chamber of Commerce (COC) and do not have their own insurance or bank account. JW will ask COC if they can help with fundraising.

H&T are not committing to taking on any extra planters for the summer due to budget restraints. The Clerk and Mayor have a meeting with WBC about the Welcome back fund so will see if there is any funding available.

SUH asked for help to resolve the problem of trees overhanging the stream at Bridge St War memorial gardens. Trees from the same property also overhang the road and a fallen branch caused damage to a passing car. The landowner said he was dealing with that. The Clerk has asked for permission from WBC tree officer to trim back the road trees to assist with boosting the CCTV signal. Concern was voiced that some town centre buildings are looking dilapidated. There are some improvement works planned and HTC will continue to monitor.

FGP202100119 Consider F&GP budget for 2022-23 (refer to draft) and allocation of CIL monies;

Expenditure & income lines were considered individually; several amendments were agreed.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Knight

Resolution: Recommend changes giving a net F&GP budget balance of £208,685 for 2022-23, an increase of 5.359% (just over inflation). 2 abstentions.

ACTION 9: Update spreadsheet

Allocation of received CIL monies was considered.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Shatford

Resolution: To transfer £5,000 in 2021-22 CIL EMR, from 'skatepark' to 'asset transfer' and agree the other allocations as first draft. 1 abstention.

ACTION 10: Update spreadsheet

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.

**FGP202100120 Triangle Field Management – Progression report on new lease
The working party met to consider the draft lease.**

ACTION11: Clerk to request HTC’s solicitor makes a few small amendments to the lease before sending to HRFC. Clerk to request we are copied in on correspondence.

FGP202100121 Driving for work – business insurance

Proposed: Cllr Knight

Seconded: Cllr Shatford

ACTION 12: **Resolution:** Pay £88.86 for employee 2 and employee 13 to add business insurance to their motor policy as requested by Peninsula. Check employee 1 has cover. Employee 12 has cover. 2 abstentions.

FGP202100122 Receive staff TOIL hours and holidays –

TOIL hours were noted (as at end Oct) Employee 1 (6), 2 (3), 12 (1.5), 13 (1.75), 14 (25.75).
Holiday untaken was noted Employee 1 (61 hrs), 2 (8), 12 (5), 13 (0), 14 (7.5)

FGP202100123 Receive Clerk’s H2036 hours for agreement - Nil hours

FGP202100124 Propose increase in contracted hours for Employee 14 (refer to part 2 report)

Proposed: Cllr Shatford

Seconded: Cllr Knight

ACTION 13: **Resolution:** Increase Employee 14’s hours, to 12 hours a week from 1st Nov which will include scheduled F&GP meetings. Any agreed additional meetings will be paid (i.e. extra budget meeting on 25th Nov). Agreed to pay 2 extra hours a week for the past 7 weeks and to pay 2.25 hours for past F&GP meeting. Leaves 9.5hrs o/s toil. One abstention.

FGP202100125 Update on debtors

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Shatford

ACTION 14: **Resolution:** To write off bad debt of £1.88 and chase other outstanding debts.

FGP202100126 Succession planning (refer to part 2 report)

ACTION 15: Deferred. Add to Full Council Part 2 agenda

FGP202100127 Swimming Pool House – A new letting agent, Nye and Co has been appointed.

Meeting closed 9.10pm

Direct Debit and BACS Resolution

- **Introduction**

It is the responsibility of the Council according to our Financial Regulations 6.7 that *“The approval of the use of a variable direct debit shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.”*

It is the responsibility of the Council according to our Financial Regulations 6.9. *“payment for certain items may be made by BACS or CHAPS methods provided that the instructions for each payment are signed, or otherwise evidenced, by two authorised bank signatories, are retained and any payments are reported to council as made. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.”*

- **Current Direct Debit Payments**

Regular:

Contractor	Description	Approx. cost
Peninsula Business Services	HR support	£135
Peninsula Business Services	H&S support	£140

Variable:

Contractor	Description	Approx cost
IAP	IT support	£301
Veolia	Bin Lift - Croft Field	£24
Grundon	Skateboard park bin lifts	£90
Castle Water	Water usage - Croft Field,	
	Library	£53
Barclays	Account Fee	£37
BT	Telephone - office	£400
British Gas	Croft Field electricity	£60

- **Proposal Resolution**

The Full Council approves the payment by direct debit of the above businesses.

The Full Council approves the payment by BACS for those invoices which are not paid by any other method e.g. direct debit.

Payment Run Recommendations to F&GP

- **Introduction**

Due to the timing of meetings, some payments need to be made before they are presented to the Full Council for approval. This has caused some confusion as to why there is not just one payment run per month.

- **Audit Trail**

There needs to be an audit trail that can be easily traced, which is currently in place.

There is no fixed way of completing payment runs, however for Audit purposes there must be a clear strategy in the way that the financial regulations are followed. From our Financial Regulations, point 6.4 below is the vital element of any payment.

6.4. Cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule as presented to council or committee shall be signed by two members of council in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment. A member who is a bank signatory, having a connection by virtue of family or business relationships with the beneficiary of a payment, should not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to the payment in question.

We adhere to these rules by having 2 councillors authorise every BACS payment made online.

Currently, the Payment Run Spreadsheet that is produced monthly includes all payments proposed during that month. The starred entries show BACS payments already processed, whilst all other invoices are highlighted by method of payment.

- **Options**

Option 1:

At least two payment runs to be completed each month.

One payment run after the beginning of the month and a mid-month run including salaries, pensions, HMRC payments and any other invoices received which require payment. An option to have another payment run, if necessary, later in the month.

Before each payment run is made through the bank, a spreadsheet is to be produced and forwarded to all Councillors, with the instruction that at least 2 Councillors must agree this, within a deadline of 2-3 working days.

Continue producing the full Payment Run documentation for each Full Council meeting to be authorised.

Two Councillors approve the BACS payments.

Option 2, as now:

At least two payment runs to be completed each month.

One payment run at the beginning of the month after agreement at each Full Council Meeting

A mid-month run for salaries, pensions, HMRC payments and any late invoices received which require immediate payment.

Payment Run Spreadsheets and documentation to be produced for the Full Council meeting for Councillors to approval. Once two Councillors have agreed payments by email, the run is put through the bank and agreed, as now, by two Councillors who approve the BACS payments

All Payment Run documentation to be available for viewing at Full Council.

- **Recommendation**

Option 1. The Auditor is happy with payments made retrospectively, as long as all BACS payments are authorised by 2 Councillors. An extra layer of protection would be added with Councillors having sight of prospective payments and agreeing payments before they are made.

SMARTEN UP HUNGERFORD

10.11.21

Report to HTC Finance & General Purposes Committee

Introduction

SUH continues to grow and become increasingly active around the town. Whilst the overall number of volunteers on our list is high (circa 50) only about 15 actually do anything with the majority failing to help out even once a year!

The many services we provide within Hungerford are now listed below.

Finance

We appear to have been able to limit our annual planting budget to half of the original cost estimate meaning that this winter's planting can be purchased within the sum already approved by HTC ie no new funding is required until next year, when the summer planting will be required.

We remain a sub-group within the Chamber of Commerce who continue to be supportive and provide us with insurance cover and banking.

We are now having to prepare a Risk Assessment and Method Statement as requested by the insurers.

GWR have indicated that they may make a donation.

The Good Exchange

Discussions have been held between the Chamber, the Good Exchange and the Council and some progress has been made.

War Memorial

The state of the trees overhanging the river are a serious blight to be the view up the river and to the War Memorial area generally. We

hope that HTC will seek to address this as it is getting worse. If it is a question of finance, then we may be able to find volunteers to do it at Nil cost.

General

For now, SUH does not wish to expand its activities as we would rather continue to do what we do well, rather than becoming stretched.

Sadly, we are uncovering some serious “social issues” that affect our beautiful town as follows:

Roadside dumping of human waste by mainly HGV drivers
Stealing of plants from our planters.

The two new permanent oak planters are a welcome addition: one is at the War Memorial and one opposite the Co-op garage. We understand that these are both being maintained and replanted by AES Ltd.

List of activities

Following Covid, we have now been able to resume our monthly Sunday morning group meetings.

SUH helped with the Mindful Garden Opening at Hungerford Lower School

We now issue a regular newsletter to all of our volunteers. We also have some social media as well as an active Whatsapp group.

For insurance purposes we have had to prepare a risk assessment and a method statement.

Litterpicking and rubbish clearance has extended out beyond the High Street to the following areas:

Railway station and car parks
Bin area by station
War Memorial
Tragedy Gardens

Play Park
Skate Park
Football field by the Common
Cold Harbour Road
The Priors
School Alley
One Stop
Everleigh Road
Park Street
Churchyard
A4 lay-by near Dobbies

Our 23 planters continued to be planted, dead-headed and watered throughout the summer.

Strimming
Cleaning railings and some street furniture
Trimming hedges

We have cleared the fallen branches to the area opposite the Coop garage alongside the new planter and from the roundabout. The large quantity of branches has been loaded up behind the hedge and needs removing hopefully by the Council.

We came 2nd in the Hungerford in Bloom competition

Winter planting

Our group are meeting this Friday outside Farewise Travel at 1.30 to start the winter planting to replant the High Street oak tub planters. To be followed by the canal bridge planters and all timed to be completed in time for Remembrance Sunday.

Christmas Social Event

We are hoping to hold a social event for our volunteers date tba

Help needed

Fund-raising is non-existent, as we expand we need some support to raise further funding.

Some new advertising and stickers/signage would help advertise our cause. We continue to need litter pickers, sacks and high-viz gilets.

The railings on the canal bridge (and others in the town) and the blue bench on the River Kennet, all need redecorating, however WBC do not have this down to be done soon.

Conclusion

Our organisation achieves a great deal and which I feel sure helps our town look better than it might otherwise do. There are many other items that could be done by West Berks Council, but funding cuts appear to be delaying them being undertaken. If it would help HTC we could prepare a list of those items.

As we expand, so we will need to raise more funds. We have a small group of very dedicated volunteers who run the operational side of things.

John F Willmott
Smarten Up Hungerford