

HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL
 Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich, Essex CO12 3DS
 Tel: 01255 507211
 email: info@harwichtowncouncil.co.uk

MINUTES
of the Meeting of HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL
 held at
The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich
 on
Thursday 4th April 2024 at 7.17pm

Present:	Councillors Armstrong, Chable, Davidson, I Henderson, J Henderson, Morrison, Powell, Richardson, Saunders, Todd and Wade
In the Chair:	Councillor Fowler
Clerk:	Ms Lucy Ballard
Also present:	2 members of the public, 0 member of the press and Rev. Kirsty Emerson

161/23	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Cllrs Calver, Fay, McLeod and Smith
162/23	<u>DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS</u> None.
163/23	<u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u> <p>A resident of Dovercourt Bay ward asked when the rest of the Low Road housing development work would be completed. He referred to some roadworks in front of the entrances having been done but the trench which runs lengthways along the road hasn't been filled in yet and the road hasn't been cleaned properly. Cllr Fowler suggested that the planning authority (TDC) would probably be able to provide a detailed answer. Cllr Powell mentioned having seen a road sweeper by the site earlier in the day. Cllr J Henderson had taken this up with the planning officer at TDC previously and the site has been visited by the enforcement team. The developers are building a hardstanding for staff vehicles and some cleaning had taken place, however it's an ongoing battle since we've had more rain which then creates more mess. TDC has said they'll keep an eye on this to ensure the developers keep on top of their obligations. The road hump is for Highways to address.</p> <p>The same resident referenced the previous policy of TDC of no grass cutting in summer and there having been 9 occasions of fires along the promenade a couple of years back and 1 further one early last summer. He asked what policy was in place for this year. He also referred to the walkways along the bank being very uneven in places with tufts of grass growing, which has reportedly caused a resident to trip, causing a number of injuries. Cllr Chable agreed to take a look, as ward councillor, and take the matter up with TDC.</p>

	<p>Cllr I Henderson agreed to find out when the grassed slopes will be cut and mentioned that since last May, a priority is to cut the grass earlier this year and there's been investment in new machinery and some areas around the town have already been cut.</p> <p>A resident of Harwich & Kingsway ward has been asked by some residents of Church Street to raise the issue of the continuing scaffolding outside the former Hanover Inn following fire back in 2022. Cllr I Henderson said he's aware of possible insurance issues which could possibly be delaying matters but it's not within the council's powers to act and is a private construction and rebuild matter. There have been planning applications come through for works but there's little HTC can do as it's for the owners to address the issues which are delaying it.</p> <p>The same resident mentioned that a number of residents have queried the removal of the original oak front door on the former Barclays Bank building.</p> <p>Member established that the building wasn't listed and that the new door was more in-keeping than the previous white door, which had been fitted. Cllr I Henderson agreed to look into the issue.</p>
164/23	<p><u>MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS</u></p> <p>Members acknowledged recent engagements attended by the mayor since the previous meeting, which had been previously circulated.</p> <p>Cllr Morrison also attended several engagements including the Rugby Club for the reveal of their Buddy bench, World Day of Prayer, 200-year celebrations of the RNLI, Wrestling at Kingsway Hall and the production of Matilda at Spring Meadow Primary School.</p> <p>Cllr Fowler thanked Cllr Morrison for standing in for her at short notice during a period of ill health.</p>
165/23	<p><u>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</u></p> <p>An inaccuracy was pointed out that the month of the previous meeting was shown as January and not February.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That subject to the correction of the minutes, changing 'January' to 'February' the Minutes of the meeting of Harwich Town Council held on 20th February 2024 (circulated separately), were approved as a correct record.</p>
166/23	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIN 152/23 – The clerk reported that a response had been received from the MP following a letter about improvements to the A120. A response is still awaited from National Highways. Cllr I Henderson suggested that once a response is received, we should look to organise a meeting between the MP and Highways England to help move things forward. The clerk agreed to chase up a response from National Highways. • MIN 154/23 – It was confirmed the cost of facilitating a presentation evening for the former High Steward was £105, expended from the Hospitality budget.
167/23	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIN 091/23 – Members considered a budget for the commemorations for D-Day 80 to include the provision of framed prints of the Proclamation for each of the schools within the parish of Harwich and Dovercourt and RESOLVED: to expend up to £100.

	<p>• MIN 129/23 – Cllr Fowler provided an update on HTC’s decision to become lead member of the TDFC Harwich Sub-group following meeting on 14th February and members RESOLVED: to authorise up to £50 to cover the costs incurred in putting on an initial networking meeting for local stakeholders.</p>
168/23	<p><u>SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES</u> Members reviewed allowances for the forthcoming year, paying reference to a report from the clerk. Cllr Morrison suggested that all current provisions remain unchanged and since the IRP aren’t due to meet again until 2027, to retain these provisions until that time.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To retain the existing councillor allowance of £768 per annum, payable in two instalments (June and December) and retain the Mayoral allowance of £2400, payable in two instalments (in consultation with the mayor). The justification for the higher than recommended amount for the Chairman is due to the Mayoral position incurring many costs throughout the year to support engagements. Members agreed that should a member die in service or resign mid-term, then the allowance would not need to be repaid. Provisions will remain in force for the lifetime of this council. Also to accept the report recommendations in terms of mileage and subsistence allowances.</p>
169/23	<p><u>ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS</u> RESOLVED: To approve annual subscriptions which become payable during the 2024/25 financial year.</p>
170/23	<p><u>REGULAR PAYMENTS</u> RESOLVED: To authorise regular payments that will arise during the course of the 2024/25 year, including those made by variable direct debit, in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.6.</p>
171/23	<p><u>INTERNAL AUDITOR</u> Members reviewed the effectiveness of the arrangements for internal audit provision and the clerk confirmed the various criteria which was to be assessed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To accept the Scope of Internal Audit work and agree the provisions for the arrangements for internal audit are effective.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To appoint Heather Heelis of Heelis & Lodge as the Council’s Internal Auditor for the 2024/25 financial year at a cost of £420 to be expended from the audit budget.</p>
172/23	<p><u>TRAIN FERRY GANTRY</u> Cllr Todd asked members to consider requesting from Historic England that the former train ferry gantry be designated ‘At Risk’. The 2011 agreement said that HIP had to take care of maintenance but nothing has been done to date.</p> <p>He referred to the criteria needed for the structure to be added to the register, which would then mean they are regularly monitored.</p> <p>Cllr Chable thanked Cllr Todd for his perseverance.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To write to Historic England with the request to place the former Train Ferry Gantry on the ‘At Risk’ register.</p>
173/23	<p><u>HMS VENTURA</u> Cllr I Henderson asked members to consider the Essex County Council news release and welcome the Royal Navy Frigate to Harwich once it’s been fully constructed. Harwich’s naval history means it would be appropriate for the</p>

	<p>vessel to visit the town. He spoke further in support of this, reading from a Royal Navy press release which referred to Harwich's rich naval history.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To write to Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord, and request a visit, with date and details to be agreed in due course.</p>
174/23	<p><u>FRIENDS OF ESPLANADE HALL</u> Members considered an invite for a representative from Harwich Town Council, to join the 'Friends of Esplanade Hall' Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To nominate Cllr I Henderson to act as representative for the remainder of the 2023/24 Municipal year.</p>
175/23	<p><u>INVESTITURE OF THE HIGH STEWARD</u> Members considered the costs to be incurred in the Investiture of the High Steward on 25th April and RESOLVED: To authorise a maximum of £1000 to be expended from the Civic Expenditure budget.</p>
176/23	<p><u>RNLI 200th ANNIVERSARY</u> Cllr Morrison asked members to consider a request for a civic service on Tuesday 9th July to mark the 200th anniversary of the RNLI in Harwich.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To grant the request and hold a civic service at St Nicholas Church and invite a representative of the RNLI to be in the civic procession.</p>
177/23	<p><u>STAIRLIFT</u> Cllr Morrison asked members to consider options regarding future replacement of the Guildhall stairlift. She explained that there may be difficulties in obtaining parts for the current model and quotes have been already been obtained to establish the funds needed. There could be a short time when the Guildhall is unavailable if it fails suddenly. Members agreed to continue with the existing lift at present.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Not to proceed with replacement at this time.</p>
178/23	<p><u>PCSO</u> Members gave consideration to extending the agreement to part-fund 1x Harwich-based PCSO, which ceased at the end of March. Cllr I Henderson said that TDC Cabinet may ratify the decision for a 12-month period initially, since they're undergoing a spending review.</p> <p>RESOLVED: to continue with the current arrangement, commencing from 1st April 2024 for a period of up to 3 years, on condition that TDC Cabinet ratifies the decision to proceed on the same terms.</p>
179/23	<p><u>LEISURE FACILITIES</u> Cllr Morrison briefed members on a meeting had with Mike Carran and Jennie Wilkinson of TDC in relation to the future use of the council-managed putting greens and asked members to consider investigating transforming the site into a multipurpose sport and leisure facility for all ages that is mainly free to use and is available for use throughout the calendar year. There is no commitment at this stage but gives a route for further discussion and consideration going forward.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To authorise the Working Party to proceed with the necessary investigations.</p>
180/23	<p><u>TWO VILLAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL</u> Cllr Morrison asked members to consider whether to include the Lt. Oakley-based school in the Mayor Making arrangements and to what extent.</p>

	<p>She explained that Rev. Emerson had queried why this school wasn't included given that many of the pupils are parish residents. There are protocols around the mayor attending engagements outside of the parish. Members agreed it would be nice to invite them to attend the service and kitchel throwing.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To include Two Village school in the invites to the Mayor Making civic service and kitchel throwing.</p>
181/23	<p><u>BRIEF REPORTS BY MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES BY THE COUNCIL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Powell reported on the family day at Orwell place last weekend, and the large number of people who attended. They did the town proud. Cllr I Henderson added there was also an Easter egg hunt and shop front competition. He confirmed 3000 attendees in total. The High Street Accelerator Partnership, who put on the event, is next meeting on 15th April. The next part of the bid is from a fund worth £5m. • Cllr Morrison attended an Ark Centre meeting and reported that all is very positive at present. Funding is good and they're diversifying with their activities, with new clubs and acting as an immunisation hub. Everything is also fully funded. The sensory room is also being used by adults. • Cllr Richardson attended the Dovercourt Public Realm meeting, to consider accessibility options for those with additional accessibility needs. He also did a walk around with a PCSO, where they were promoting safe shops, which are establishments which pledge not to sell certain products to minors.
182/23	<p><u>COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES</u></p> <p>Members received the Minutes of the following meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allotments Committee – 6th March 2024 • Finance & General Purposes Committee – 21st March 2024 RESOLVED: To accept the recommendations of the committee in relation to grant funding for The Harwich Festival - £3500 • Environment & Community Committee – 28th March 2024.
183/23	<p><u>ACCOUNTS</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: To accept the financial report and to approve accounts for payment as per the schedule (circulated separately).</p>
184/23	<p><u>CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED IN THE POST OR RAISED BY MEMBERS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members noted receipt of latest report(s) issued by PCSO Sue Groves, <i>for information.</i> • Members noted receipt of latest report from The Harich Festival. Cllr Morrison said it was a good report as they've clearly been doing a lot of work. • Members noted receipt of a letter of thanks from the former High Steward, Chris Strachan following a retirement reception on 20th March. Members agreed it was a lovely letter.
185/23	<p><u>MATTERS TO BE REPORTED</u></p> <p>Members noted expenditure of £50 authorised under delegated authority for the catering deposit in relation to the Investiture of the High Steward.</p> <p>Members offered their thanks to the office team for arranging the refreshments for the Reception for the former High Steward.</p>

186/23	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></p> <p>The next meeting of Harwich Town Council will be held on a date to be confirmed in June at The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich, at 7.00pm, or at the rise of the Town Planning Committee, whichever is the later.</p> <p>The Annual Statutory and Mayor Making meeting will be held on Thursday 16 May 2024 at The Guildhall, Harwich, at 11am.</p>
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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.40pm

CHAIRMAN

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