

FINANCE & ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL**

MINUTES of the FINANCE & ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE MEETING held remotely via the online platform “Zoom” and in accordance with the Coronavirus Act, C 7, Part 1 Local Authority Meetings, Section 78. This Act allows members to be present and attend a meeting without being present in the Council Chamber or together in the same place.

Date of meeting: **Monday 15th March 2021** at 7.30pm

Present (remotely via Zoom)

Councillors: Asker, De Vries, Fairhurst, Hawke-Smith, Millward, Toy (Chairman)

Officers: Terry Frostick Operations Manager (Meeting Clerk)
David Broomfield, Responsible Financial Officer

Public: P Riding, J Portway & S Ellis

F & E 026-21	Apologies for absence Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Porch & Eke
F & E 027-21	To receive any Declarations of Interest Cllr Asker, Fairhurst and De Vries declared generic non-pecuniary interests as District Councillors for Uttlesford District Council Cllr Hawke-Smith non-pecuniary as member of Saffron Walden Initiative.
F & E 028-21	Public Speaking Time Peter Riding spoke on behalf of the grant application for Dance in the Square Sarah Ellis spoke in support of the The Shhh Experience (part of Hyperfusion Theatre Company) application.
F & E 029-21	Minutes of the Finance & Establishment Committee 15th February 2021 The minutes of the 15 th February 2021 Finance & Establishment Committee were accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting and were signed by the Chairman.
Financial Matters	
F & E 030-21	Expenditure – to be authorised (a) Payment of the accounts received since 15 th February 2021 were approved. (b) Payment of accounts for payments already made since 15 th February 2021 were approved.

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F & E 031-21	<p>Tourist Information Centre</p> <p>(a)The Committee noted the profit and loss account for February 2021</p> <p>(b)Committee noted the monthly report from TIC staff</p> <p>Committee wished to thank the TIC Team for their innovative work and taking risks in the expansion of the items sold and profit made. It also wish to acknowledge the work of Cllrs Fairhurst and De Vries on the work they have provided in assisting the TIC Team on the marketing plans.</p>
F & E 032-21	<p>Monthly Reports</p> <p>Committee received and noted the following monthly reports:</p> <p>(a) Bank reconciliation statement with supporting statements for February 2021</p> <p>(b) Cash Book – showing all income and expenditure for the previous month for February 2021</p> <p>(c) Income report broken down by budget code – year to date including comparison of income year to date against the previous year</p>
F & E 033-21	<p>Committee Hi-Light Reports</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the Hi-Lighted reports from the RFO There were no specific items to note or action to be taken in relation to documents 8(a) or 8(b)</p>
F & E 034-21	<p>Projected Income and Expenditure 2020/21 in light of Covid-19</p> <p>The RFO presented to the Committee a projection of current revised income and expenditure for 20/21; accounting for reduced income and expenditure as a result of Covid 19.</p> <p>The RFO explained the current proposed and projected carry forward figures in detail, stressing these are only at a snapshot in time and that before the year end had been finalised no firm figures could be given for any ring fencing, carried forwards or virements of monies.</p> <p>The Committee thanked the RFO for a detailed report and explanation and asked a similar report is presented at the April 2021 Meeting.</p> <p>The Committee also thanked Uttlesford District Council for the way it has managed and actioned grant payments to business at this difficult time.</p>

Other Matters	
F & E 035-21	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>Committee noted the current forward plan details as attached.</p> <p>Committee agreed that the medium-term financial strategy would be brought to the June meeting.</p>
F & E 036-21	<p>Grant Applications</p> <p>Committee considered and discussed at length the following grant applications as submitted.</p> <p>(a) Saffron Walden Initiative (SWI) £400.00 – hall hire scheme</p> <p>The Committee considered and Approved the awarding of a grant (£400) for free of charge hall hire for 2021 for the annual Dance in the Square event, as organised by the SWI. The proposed date is Saturday 28th August 2021 and will be subject to compliance with Covid-19 rules and regulations (as applicable)</p> <p>Cllr Hawke-Smith Abstained from the discussion and vote.</p> <p>(b) The Shhh Experience (part of Hyperfusion Theatre Company) £3,376.72 (ex VAT) or £4,052.07 (inc VAT) – hall hire scheme</p> <p>The Committee considered and discussed the awarding of a grant (£3376.72 exc vat) for free of charge hall hire for 15-19th December 2021 for a theatre production in the Town Hall. Any event would be subject to compliance with Covid-19 rules/regulations (as applicable) and sight of appropriate risk assessments from the theatre company. This application was carried forward from the December Committee meeting at which the applicant was requested to defer the request (due to unknown Covid rules and to seek additional and alternative forms of funding)</p> <p>The Committee Approved a grant of £1000 ex vat towards the project and suggested an alternative route for the applicant to seek towards the remainder amount as had previously been requested. Committee also wished to see evidence of the benefit of the grant in how it will help disadvantaged families in Saffron Walden to take part in the project.</p>
F & E 037-21	<p>Urgent Information Items</p> <p>The Chairman had received a letter from the Clerk to the Saffron Walden United Charities questioning the use of the Town Council's "Crisis Fund", specifically established to help and support residents during these difficult times. The original letter had been previously</p>

	<p>circulated to the Committee and the Chairman and Town Clerk had drafted an appropriate response which was also circulated to Committee members.</p> <p>Committee members across all parties thanked the Chairman and Town Clerk for such a considered response and Unanimously Supported the draft response letter, all were united in that Saffron Walden Town Council should continue with a crisis fund to help in times of need as and where it felt it was best served.</p> <p>It was also requested by Committee for future reference both letters be appended to the minutes. (these are appended as Appendices A and B as attached)</p>
F & E 038-21	<p>Date and time of Next Meeting</p> <p>Next meeting to be held remotely (via Zoom) on Monday 19th April 2021</p>

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:55pm

Appendix A – appended to the Minutes from the Finance & Establishment Committee meeting held on Monday 15th March 2021 – copy of email correspondence received from Mr Jim Ketteridge on behalf of Saffron Walden United Charities:

Dear Cllr Toy

I understand you are Chairman of the Town Councils Finance Committee. It has just been brought to our notice that you are discussing the Town Councils 'Crisis Fund' this evening.

We are somewhat perplexed as to why Council Tax Payers money is being used when Saffron Walden United Charities exists for that purpose.

The Uttlesford Citizens Advice are one of our biggest referral agencies as is the Salvation Army and a whole raft of other local welfare agencies.

The constitution of our very old charity is limited to the old Borough Council area of Saffron Walden which includes Little Walden and Swards End.

The Town Council is well aware of our existence as (prior to Covid 19) meetings of our trustees were held in what was the Council Chamber at the Town Hall. I have attached a leaflet for your information and would be happy to talk to you about the nature of our work.

We do not fundraise as we are funded from a substantial investment.

Yours sincerely

Jim Ketteridge

Clerk to Saffron Walden United Charities

01799 526122

Appendix B – appended to the Minutes from the Finance & Establishment Committee meeting held on Monday 15th March 2021 – copy of response as sent to Mr Jim Ketteridge (original letter sent on SWTC letter head paper)

Clerk to Saffron Walden United Charities

Dear Mr Ketteridge,

Re Saffron Walden United Charities and the Saffron Walden Town Council Crisis Fund

Firstly, can I thank you for your email and your time speaking to me on the telephone. It was great to hear of the work that Saffron Walden United Charities have been doing locally for so many years.

I particularly noted that the financial model of the charity, which you stated are “historic” monies in excess of £1.5m which, through its investments, provides a charitable income. You also stated that last year the Charity provided financial support in the region of £64,000. This is an increase of approximately £10,000 compared to the grants provided in 2019, as set out in your filed accounts.

You stated in your correspondence that you were “*somewhat perplexed as to why Council Tax Payers money is being used when Saffron Walden United Charities exists for that purpose.*” Speaking personally as someone who has worked in local government for over 25 years, and also on behalf of the Finance and Establishment Committee, I have to say we are not of the same mind on this point. Surely the fundamental purpose of local government, at upper or local tier authority level, or at Town and Parish level, is to deliver services and, critically, support vulnerable members of our community when they most need help. There are many local charities that exist, nationally, regionally and locally, who provide support. Yet despite the combined efforts, the lack of central government funding to the charitable sector means that many people, families and businesses still fall through the net.

I appreciate your comments when we spoke that you felt the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Salvation Army had not sought to draw on the Crisis Fund, due to the fact that Saffron Walden United Charities were already providing funding. On behalf of the Committee, we wish this were the case.

Sadly however, both these Charities and the Saffron Walden Foodbank are reporting more worrying trends with increasing demand. This situation is also borne out by reports from the ONS that unemployment rates will rise by 8% in 2021-22. At local government level we are also aware of other even more worrying trends, with increases in family breakdown, domestic abuse, alcohol consumption, attempted suicides particularly in young people under 30; and deterioration in wellbeing.

The full social, economic and wellbeing impact of Covid 19 has not yet been seen, but all of the indications are that this will be profound. The need for charitable organisations and local government to work together could not be more important.

As a result The Citizens Advice Bureau, Salvation Army and Saffron Walden Foodbank, have acknowledged the value of the Crisis Fund in 2020-21 and going forward into 2021-22. Whilst the former organisations have spent some proportion of the monies from this financial

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year, the Food Bank have requested further support. The Town Clerk spoke to all three organisations prior to the Finance and Establishment Committee meeting in February. All three wished for the funding to remain in place.

Finally, can I state that the resolution to establish the Crisis Fund was a unanimous decision by all members of the Finance and Establishment Committee and was endorsed by Full Council. The Committee has taken a collective decision to be a progressive group, to break from the previous “party line” approach, and adopt a less combative and more collaborative style. As Chair of the Committee, I am personally very proud that we have achieved this and the Crisis Fund reflects an example of this approach. The recommendation to set up the Fund was jointly proposed by members of both parties on the Committee, who have worked together actively to support it and its future value.

In the same spirit of collaboration we would be delighted to work alongside Saffron Walden United Charities. By working together we can ensure that this vital funding reaches those in our community who need it most. I note in your Annual Financial Statement that you allocate funding through an “Emergency Sub-Committee of Trustees”. It would be presumptuous of us to suggest that nominated Councillors become Trustees. However, I would suggest that a member of Finance and Establishment Committee and the Town Clerk are invited to join the Emergency Subcommittee. This would achieve our shared aims and ensure the finances available to us are maximised.

On behalf of the Committee can I thank you once again and very much look forward to working with you and the Trustees.

Yours sincerely

Jonathon Toy

Chair of Finance and Establishment Committee

Cc All Committee members, Town Clerk and SWTC Councillors