

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE LINCOLN HALL ON TUESDAY 05 DECEMBER 2023. THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 7.30pm.

Present

Cllr Amey – Vicechair (acting as Chair)

Cllr Barnard, Cllr Christien, Cllr Dunnett, Cllr Hardy, Cllr Overton and Cllr Roberts

Clerk - Alison Doe

There were 2 members of the public present including District Cllr Woolliscroft

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Eldridge, Cllr Sta Ana, Cllr Thompson and County Cllr Dewsbury.

Cllr Foord was absent without apologies.

2. Public participation session, (members of the public may make a statement or ask a question of not more than three minutes duration)

A member of the public advised that the pharmacy in Watton was going to permanently close and that some staff may be relocated to work in the Hingham Boots Pharmacy, concerns were raised that additional staff and potential additional customers would increase the demand for parking spaces within the already congested Market Place.

3. Declarations of interests with regard to items on the agenda and to consider requests for dispensations

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. To agree a Chairman to preside over any agenda items of this meeting, if both the Chairman and Vice Chair are unable to preside due to (agenda item 1) Apologies for absence and /or (agenda item 3) Declarations of interests

Cllr Amey agreed to act as Chair for all agenda items.

5. To agree the accuracy of the Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 07 November 2023

The minutes were circulated prior to the meeting and were agreed as correct and signed by the Chair.

6. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Town Council meeting 07 November 2023 and other updates contained in a written Clerks report circulated prior to the meeting (see Appendix A)

In addition to the written report the Clerk advised that the History Centre had notified that there is a little over £10,100 in History Centre funds which when the History Centre wind up, would be transferred to the Town Council.

7. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group report

A verbal report was given to advise that after considering the representations/comments made during the Regulation 14 consultation, the steering group had moved on to making relevant amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan and the plan was being prepared for submission to South Norfolk Council for examination. Cllr Amey advised that prior to the Plan being submitted to SNC, it would have to be signed off by the Town Council and

it was anticipated that this would be scheduled for the February Council meeting. The consultants had advised that the plan should be ready to forward to Cllrs before Christmas. Following submission and examination by SNC the plan would need to go for independent examination, then on to a referendum which may occur in late spring early summer.

It was queried if the referendum would be programmed in to take place with a general election (if there is one). The Clerk advised that South Norfolk Council are responsible for organising the referendum and would likely programme it in to coincide with another election taking place if that opportunity arises.

8. Working Party Reports

The Clerk advised that there had been no working party meetings, however it was hoped that the Highways, transport and environment working party would meet before Christmas and the Archives working party would meet mid January.

9. Reports from representatives on external bodies/ attendees of external meetings/training

Cllr Roberts reported that the Hingham Playing Field Association would be installing new signage at the entrance to the playing field (reporting that SNC had advised planning permission is not required). The new signage will include details of all clubs using the sports centre and those clubs will be asked to contribute toward the cost of the signage. The committee are continuing to organise events, the next one being a Christmas market.

10. General Correspondence (information/circulars etc)

- 10.1 Barclays Bank Closure of branch at East Dereham
- 10.2 South Norfolk Council - Help for our elderly and vulnerable
- 10.3 South Norfolk Council - Winter Pressures Grant
- 10.4 South Norfolk Council - Parish Council briefing event 13/12/2023: Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan - Alternative Sites & Focused Changes consultation

11. Correspondence (not for public inspection) as addressed directly to Hingham Town

Council (from residents etc. and may contain personal information)

- 11.1 Resident – Road Accident on the Fairland
The Clerk had responded to the resident prior to the meeting.
- 11.2 Resident - Thoughts on the Highways/Transport/Environment working party and Terms of Reference
The Clerk had responded to the resident prior to the meeting. The correspondence will be forwarded to the members of the Highways, transport and environment working party.

12. To discuss and agree any required responses/actions in relation to any item(s) of correspondence

No other actions required.

13. District Councillor's report

District Cllr Woolliscroft reported that the South Norfolk Council draft strategic plan 2024-28 is soon due to go before Cabinet.

It was advised that there has been delays in setting up the Nutrient Neutrality credit/bank system. Town Cllrs reminded Cllr Woolliscroft that the land designated for housing development in Hingham in the Greater Norwich Local Plan was within the area

affected by the Nutrient Neutrality directive and raised concerns that Hingham would be subject to greater housing numbers if housing was not deliverable in the higher risk areas for nutrient neutrality.

The Norfolk devolution deal is progressing with Norfolk County Council in favour of the deal. There will be a consultation on the changes to the Greater Norwich Local Plan village clusters to replace the sites that have been removed.

Concern was raised regarding the blocking of the highway to the rear/north of the Market Place where it is common for 4 vehicles to park across the width of the road. It was noted that Cllr Woolliscroft had been in communication with residents of St Andrews Close regarding parking congestion and the Town Council pointed out that the parking congestion affects many residents in the Market Place and Fairland. The Clerk advised of the frustration that none of the relevant authorities would take responsibility for resolving the issues, with NCC advising that it is a police and SNC enforcement matter, the police advising that they will not attend unless there is immediate danger to life and SNC will not attend as there are no parking restrictions to enforce.

14. County Councillor's report

County Councillor Dewsbury was unable to attend the meeting.

15. To Note the Planning Decisions (as decided by SNC)

- 15.1 2023/2995 - Replacement of front door and frame.
3 Hardingham Street Hingham Norfolk NR9 4JB - Approval with Conditions
- 15.2 2023/2965 - Replacement dwelling
Boundary House Hardingham Road Hingham Norfolk NR9 4LY Approval with Conditions
- 15.3 2023/2951 - Details of condition 3 and 6 of 2023/0493 (3) Boundary treatment to be agreed (6) New Access over verge
Skylark Barn Watton Road Hingham Norfolk NR9 4NW - Approval of details - Approved
- 15.4 2023/2859 - Variation of Condition 1 of 2023/0805 - Design changes to the proposed floor plans and elevations for plot 1
Agricultural Building At Lyngwhite Farm Hingham Road Hingham Norfolk
Approval with Conditions
- 15.5 2023/2864 - Update and replace the existing halide floodlights with LED light fittings
Tennis Courts At Recreation Ground Watton Road Hingham Norfolk Approval with Conditions
- 15.6 2023/2496 - Conversion of existing garage & rear extension to form new annexe for family member
31 Hall Lane Hingham Norfolk NR9 4JX - Approval with Conditions

16. Planning Applications (as notified by SNC for consultation)

(use SNC website to view applications)

<https://info.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/online-applications/>

- 16.1 2023/3546 - Proposed single storey extension and minor external alterations
Mandalay Bears Lane Hingham Norfolk NR9 4LL

The Council considered the details of this application and agreed that there were no objections.

17. Information regarding other planning applications where the Town Council is not a consultee, (for information only)

None.

18. Tree Preservation Order Consultation, South Norfolk Council has served a new Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect tree(s) at Ashdene 9 Mill Corner Hingham Norfolk NR9 4LG

The Town Council are being consulted and the response options are – Support; Object (must explain reasons), or No comment

The Council agreed to support this Tree Preservation Order.

19. With reference to the requirement that Public Authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Councillors are requested to read the information on the website link below and bring forward ideas to enable Town Council compliance with this duty.

Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Clerk had forwarded information regarding this duty to all Cllrs prior to the meeting and asked Councillors to put forward their suggestions for conserving and enhancing biodiversity in Hingham. It was suggested that more trees could be planted and areas be “rewilded”, additional wildlife habitat enhancements could be made such as bird nesting boxes, bat boxes and insect log piles. Several areas were noted as potential for enhancing biodiversity (cemetery, churchyard, old BMX track area at sports field). It was suggested that the school may have areas that could be utilised for biodiversity enhancement and was also suggested that Councillors should visit projects in other parishes such as the Millenium Green in Carbrooke.

It was noted that the Hingham Neighbourhood Plan will contain policy referring to biodiversity and these will be applied to planning applications if the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted and there is great potential for creating an area for wildlife on land south of the Hops and land allocated for development in the GNLP.

It was noted that a Biodiversity policy was required and would be on a future agenda.

20. To receive an update on the Pride in Place application for funding for a feasibility study for Ladies Meadow for potential car parking and community uses

The Clerk advised that she had met with SNC officer on 22nd November and had discussed the need in Hingham for off street parking and the allocation of Ladies Meadow identifying it as potential land for car parking and other community uses. The SNC Officer was keen to help with an application for funding for a feasibility study to see if the land and location would be suitable. The application period closes on 31 January 2024. The SNC officer suggested putting together a document scoping out what the Council want a feasibility study to include and has given details of 3 companies to approach for quotations. It was noted that the officer was very helpful and will help with the application process.

21. To receive a report following a meeting with the new Police Safer Neighbourhood Beat Manager, PC Helen Busfield

The Clerk advised that a meeting had been scheduled for 27th November but PC Busfield had not been able to attend, the Clerk will reschedule for another date.

22. To discuss and review the grass cutting arrangements for the Hingham Playing Field Association

The Clerk advised that the current arrangements are that the grass at the playing field and Welcomme play space are cut within the Town Council grass cutting contract. It was queried as to how much this cost and the Clerk advised of the annual cost for these two areas for 2024/25 is £3457.70 plus VAT and that the HPFA pay £100 rent to the Town Council for the playing field. It was also noted that the HPFA now had a stable hard working committee raising funds for the upkeep of the building. It was agreed to continue to cover the cost of the grass cutting within the Town Council grass cutting contract.

23. To consider renewing the grass cutting contract with the current contractor for a further year period (from April 2024) as per the amended fee proposal

The Clerk advised that the grass cutting contract was initially awarded for 1 year from April 2022, and could be extended by 2 years by mutual agreement. The contractor had provided a price for year 1, 2 and 3 with the initial quotation provided in January 2022, however for 2023/24 they had to provide a revised quote (for 1 year) due to rapid cost increases and the Town Council agreed that the contract could be continued for the 2 years if the new quotes were within 10% of the original one. The quotation for the 2023/24 quote was within the 10%. The quotation for 2024/25 is just over 10% increase from original quote (due to rounding up). The original quotation for year 3 (2024/25) was priced at £11,575.56 plus VAT the new quote for year 3 (2024/25) is £12,744.90 plus VAT. The Council agreed that the current contract should be extended for year 3 based on the new quotation. The Clerk advised that tenders will be sought for grass cutting to be undertaken from April 2025.

24. To receive and discuss the Tree Survey and agree any actions

A copy of the tree survey was forwarded to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. It was noted that the work identified was general maintenance work. It was agreed to obtain quotations for the work required.

25. To consider renewal of membership to SLCC for the Clerk

It was agreed to renew the Clerk's membership to SLCC .

FINANCE 26 - 29

26. To receive the draft minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee 21 November 2023. See Appendix B (discuss and agree any actions if required)

(note these minutes will be approved by the Finance Committee at their next meeting)
A copy of the draft minutes were forwarded to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. It was noted that points raised by the internal auditor had been resolved (unpaid cemetery fee and dormant bank account). No other points were raised.

27. Noting that the 2024/25 budget will be finalised at the meeting of 02 January 2024, consider the suggestions/recommendation made by the Finance Committee regarding the (draft) 2024/25 budget (as per the Finance Committee meeting)

The Clerk advised that the Finance Committee has scrutinised the draft budget line by line to try to ensure that the precept requirement was as accurate as possible. It was noted that the precept figure had been £77,000 for the past 4 financial years and in the last 2 years an increased tax base had resulted in the parish portion of Council tax being

reduced. It was noted that based on the draft budget, the precept requirement would need to be increased.

The Clerk advised that she would amend the budget figure for hire of the Lincoln Hall to allow for extra hire sessions to accommodate some working party meetings, and would reduce the figure for contingency so as not to increase the overall budget figure requirement.

The budget and precept will be agreed at the meeting scheduled for 02 January 2024.

28. Proposal to invite tenders for an internal auditor for (2023/24) financial year-end audit

Agreed.

29. To agree and approve the accounts for payment (as below)

The accounts for payment were approved and the cheques signed.

REF	PAYEE	DETAILS		AMOUNT	VAT
492	GREAT MELTON FARMS	CHRISTMAS TREE		£290.00	£48.33
493	STAFF	WAGES		£1,525.27	
494	STAFF	WAGES	£1,747.40		
		LAPTOP AND SOFTWARE	£498.99		£83.16
		TOTAL		£2,246.39	
D	NEST	PENSION		£128.54	
495	COZENS (UK) LIMITED	STREET LIGHT MAINTENANCE		£150.00	£25.00
D	SSE	STREET LIGHT ENERGY		£497.38	£23.65
496	ANGLIAN WATER BUSINESS	FAIRLAND STANDPIPE		£6.52	
497	LINCOLN SOCIAL CENTRE	HALL HIRE		£75.00	
498	SLCC	CLERK MEMBERSHIP		£188.00	
499	NOFOLK COPIERS	METERED PRINTING		£38.70	£6.45
500	S THOMPSON	PADLOCK FOR BUS SHELTER		£17.59	
501	RAVENCROFT TREE SERVICES	TREE SERVEY		£486.00	£81.00
502	COMPASS POINT	NP CONSULTANT FEES		£1,305.00	
		TOTAL FOR ALL PAYMENTS		£6,954.39	
		TOTAL VAT		£267.59	

30. To consider the Exclusion of the Press and Public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to discuss the following matters:'

The following agenda item requires discussion which will make reference to Town Council staff and is therefore considered confidential.

It was agreed that the public should leave the meeting, and were asked to do so, being thanked for their attendance.

31. To review staff hours

The Clerk advised that the current paid staffing levels are:

Gardener/handyman 16 hours per week

Cleaner (toilets) 7 hours per week

(total 23 hours per week)

Clerk 75 hours per month which averages to approximately 17.3 hours a week.

The Clerk advised that the workload (in particular, email numbers, policy requirements and additional meetings) had increased since the hours for the role of Clerk were last reviewed and increased (April 2018) and would increase further with the forming of new working parties. The Clerk suggested that the hours for the role should be increased to 100 per month from January (averaging just over 23 hours per week). This was agreed and it was also agreed to review after 3 months.

It was agreed that the hours for the roles of handyman/gardener and cleaner appeared to be at the correct level and no changes were proposed.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm

Signed..... Chairperson 02 January
2024

Appendix A - Clerks report for 05 DECEMBER 2023

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Town Council meeting 07 November 2023

- MIN 17 Proposed Tree Preservation order 7 Mill Corner Cllr Thompson reported to Cllrs via email, regarding the trees location and circumstances under which the TPO had been applied for, the Clerk advised South Norfolk Council that the Town Council did not object to the TPO
- MIN 19. Regarding the Hingham History Centre request for the Town Council to take over assets and funds the Clerk has made enquiries as to the amount of materials and funds that would be assed to the Town Council, if the History Centre ceases as an organisation.
- MIN 22. Regarding the proposal to investigate setting up a Community Emergency Response Plan, some information has been received from South Norfolk Council, the Council will need to make a decision regarding if an Community Emergency Response Plan should be implemented and if so agree responsibilities for its implementation and monitoring/reviewing, and the responsibilities regarding holding of any associated personal data.

Other Updates/Outstanding Issues

- Incident at the cemetery, car crashed into the rail fence and ashes are on the afternoon of 05 November 2023, some damage to a small number of ashes headstones and to a section of the fence. The driver's name and insurance details were obtained, this has been referred to the insurance company, and contact made with families of those ashes' plots affected (if possible). The site has been roped off and dislodged headstones laid on the appropriate ashes' plots.
- A site visit to be arranged regarding Methodist Church tree planting on The Market Place, During the tree survey it was recommended against a rowan tree but to find an alternative species due to soil conditions
- Norfolk County Council have been advised that the Town Council consent to a survey being undertaken to assess the suitability of the sports centre for an Electric Vehicle charging point, but that the actual installation of such a charging point has not been agreed – no further communication from NCC
- Moon Court facility, SNC have now confirmed they will investigate issues raised regarding Moon Court i.e if a change of use was required for the units to be let on the open rental market and issues with the secondary “emergency vehicles only” access track being used by residents/delivery vehicles for vehicular access. No further communication from SNC.
- Footway lighting on Norwich Road and Watton Road appointed contractor has been instructed to undertake the works, parts have been ordered, awaiting confirmation of start date.
- Awaiting Raddiramps report on defects at the skate park.
- Norfolk ALC to be contacted regarding suitable wording for the Accessibility Statement, with regard to how the template works awaiting reply
- Raised bank between The Hops and Bears Lane no resolve from Norfolk County Council to undertake any action to implement measures to prevent access to the bank.
- “Re-dedication” of the bus shelter to be organised.
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission have been invited to install signage at the cemetery
- The Clerk has asked Norfolk County Council if a grit bin for The Hops will be supported, no response.
- A suitable place for a new Town Council notice board to be established.
- Laptop to be purchased.

- The resident who has proposed to plant an Oak tree on the Market Place green has agreed to source an alternative species no further correspondence received.
- Letter to the Chief Constable and the Police Crime Commissioner regarding parking drafted photographs need to be added prior to sending.
- Fairland Oak Tree stumps, advice has been sought regarding hollowing the stumps out, a suggestion has been made that a stump grinder will be required (cost approximately £500-600 per stump).
- Applications for Assets of Community Value to be finalised, plans and ownership details are required.
- Notice boards for the toilets to be purchased.
- Street Lighting, the contractor has been asked to undertake the renumbering of the footway lights which has been started. A condition report is awaited on all of the Council's footway lighting, (priority can then be assessed depending on the condition/safety of the light columns, for obtaining quotations for changing lights to LED). With regards to possible solutions to replacing the Tally Alley light, the contractor suggested the use of illuminated bollards, ownership of the alleyway needs to be established.
- Communications Policy, including social media policy is being worked upon. Cllrs are reminded not to comment on public social media pages making reference to themselves as Councillors, in a way that could give inaccurate information or be misleading or misconstrued as the Council having discussed and agreed something, when this is not the case. Staff/Cllr communication/relationship protocol to be drafted.
- The Clerk has been working on an overall Cemetery Fees Policy containing all points relevant to the fee structure including frequency and method of fees reviews. This is to be finalised and brought back to a future Town Council meeting with a review of the cemetery fees and cemetery terms and conditions.
- Extension of Cemetery Driveway and turning circle, the Clerk has spent some time in the cemetery looking at the area that would be required to extend the driveway. The area is very extensive and the clerk is concerned about the application of such a large area of tarmac , (environmental and cost). There may be other more appropriate solutions, including a shorter tarmac extension followed by "matting" under the grass surface (and possibly a tarmac path for better pedestrian/disability access), and leaving the existing grass as a driveway over the old cemetery area. Advice is needed from a funeral director with regard to vehicles used. The use of the driveway (as in frequency) for funerals is minimal therefore the grass should not become too worn from being driven on, this requires a lot of further thought to ensure the Council have a cost effective but long term solution for the future use of the cemetery .
- 2 steel liners for the Market Place bins to be ordered (liners available at a reasonable price are a slightly different size to the existing ones (by mm's) liners of the same size have not yet been found.
- Commemorative Plaque for the Fairland Bus shelter and Market Place bus shelter, to be ordered

Report prepared 04 December 2023 does not include Matters Arising when the item is on the forthcoming meeting's agenda

Crime Figures – October 2023 <https://www.police.uk/pu/your-area/norfolk-constabulary/wymondham/?tab=CrimeMap> on or near:

Springfield Way - Criminal Damage and arson 1

Muir Drive – Antisocial behaviour 1 , Chapel Street - Antisocial behaviour 1

Fleeters Hill -, Criminal Damage and arson 2, Violence and sexual offences 1 Lincon Avenue - Violence and sexual offences 2

Appendix B

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD IN THE LINCOLN HALL ON TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023. THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 7.30PM.

Finance Committee Membership

Cllr Amey, Cllr Dunnett, Cllr Eldridge, Cllr Roberts and Cllr Thompson

Present

Cllr Roberts, Chair

Cllr Eldridge, Cllr Thompson

Alison Doe, Clerk

There were no members of the public present.

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Amey and Cllr Dunnett

2. Declarations of interests with regard to items on the agenda and to consider requests for dispensations.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public participation.

There were no members of the public present a no points raised.

4. Accuracy of the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of 18 July 2023.

The Minutes were agreed as correct with this amendment and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of 18 July 2023.

MIN 6 The Clerk confirmed that the Charity Bank account had been set up and the £85,000 funds deposited

MIN 10 With regard to the points raised and recommendation made by the internal auditor, the Clerk confirmed that she had received a cheque for the outstanding fee of £105, which was owed by a funeral director. The cheque has been paid into the Town Council bank account and funds cleared.

The Clerk confirmed that the dormant bank account had now been 'closed' and the funds transferred to the current account.

MIN 11 With regard to the Pride in Place grant fund, the Clerk advised that she had arranged to meet the relevant grant funding officer from South Norfolk Council on 22 November.

6. To review the investment strategy and agree any actions.

The Committee reviewed the investment strategy and agreed that no amendments were required.

7. To undertake the Budget Monitoring (April-September 2023).

The Clerk had prepared a spreadsheet showing amounts received and spent in £'s and also as a percentage of the allocated budget for each item (April to September, the current to date figure in £'s was also available). The Committee discussed the figures provided. With regards to income, it was noted that there was some cemetery income was from the interment of non-residents. It was also noted that the interest rates had increased, and that the income received so far is greater than the expected figure when setting the budget for 2023.24. It was noted that the Clerk will invoice Norfolk County Council in order to receive the agency grass cutting fee and will also invoice the Hingham Playing Field Association for the 2023.24 rent of the sports field. Receipt figures for ad hoc items not within the budget were also noted (for example CIL money which the Clerk advised cannot be included with the budget as expected income as amounts of CIL are not notified in advance of them being received).

With regards to expenditure, it was noted that the budget for the Hingham Town Council website (provided by NorfolkALC) is overspent by 100%, the clerk explained that this was due to NorfolkALC increasing their fees after the Council's 23/24 budget had been set, it was noted however that the £75.00 fee was likely to be less than if the website was provided via an alternative source. No other expenditure issues were flagged. Expenditure figures for items not within the budget were also presented by the Clerk

It was noted that the budget income (receipts received) for April to September 2023 was £80,735.16 (93.78% of the budget figure) with an additional £13,103.16 having been received from ad hoc payments not included in the budget, including:
 £2,647.47 CIL
 £5,525.00 Parish Partnership Grant (bus shelter renovations) £4,836.00 Neighbourhood Plan grant money.

The budget expenditure (payments) was noted as £36,123.22 (inc VAT) (41.92% of the budget figure), with additional payments (not included in the budget) being £80,763.83 including £8,918.52 Neighbourhood Plan and from reserves, £8,616.00 street light replacements/repairs, £32,704.00 Parish Partnership projects, £7,670.00 tree work, £3,294.00 clock repairs and £1,736.00 given in grants.

It was noted that the cash book end balances were (end of September 23)

Acc 1 - £63,007.01

Acc 2 - £75,204.03

Acc 3 - £39,084.27

Acc 4 - £85,000.00

Total - £230,832.26

8. To undertake the preliminary budget setting for 2024/25.

The Clerk had prepared a spreadsheet showing the budget figure for 2023/24, figures (and percentages) for money spent and received April to September 2023, and to date (November 2023), the figures for the totals spent and received for 2022/23, noting that the figures for the previous year 2021/22 were available (separately).

The Clerk had prepared recommendations for the 2024/25 budget. The proposed budget figures were produced taking into consideration the reserves held by the Council and the previous recommendation by the internal auditors that more consideration needs to be given to expenditure that can be quantified rather than estimated, and that the

reserves should not be added to unnecessary due to not spending estimated budgets accrued.

The Clerk had annotated the spread sheet against each budget item and suggested that, where there was no definite known need for ad hoc repairs and maintenance (such as for street lighting, cemetery memorials) the budget figure should be set at zero and any such expenditure required should be made out of the reserves and any ad hoc items needed could be paid from a modest contingency in the budget (noting that in 23/24 the contingency has been used for purchasing storage boxes for the archives and would be used to purchase a new laptop).

The Clerk advised that she had accounted for an increase in staff costs, using the pay award for 2023/24 which had recently been published (and amounted to an additional £1 per hour) and made an estimate for the pay award for 24/25 also at £1 per hour. The Clerk advised that she had included an increase in hours for the role of Clerk to 23 hours a week (currently it is an average of just over 17 hours per week), but had not included an incremental rise, noting that the non-clerk staff member was at the top spinal column point of the pay grade, and that further increases to the salary budget for the Clerk to include an increment may result in overbudgeting if the LGA pay award is less than £1.00 per hour. It was also noted that the budget for the staff pension must include the presumption that both members of staff may take up the pension scheme.

It was noted that the new contract for street lighting maintenance and new insurance policy are both less than in the previous budget and therefore the budget figure can be reduced.

It was noted that the reserves included ringfenced monies for CIL, public toilets and funds forwarded from the closed down Hingham Society. It was also noted that reserve money would be used for high-cost projects that were required, such as improvements to the cemetery turning circle, replacement street lighting, and that reserves would be needed if the purchase of land for a car park goes ahead. The draft budget figures were discussed line by line and amendments made where necessary. It was agreed to recommend the draft budget to the Council, noting the final budget setting would most likely take place in January when the precept requirement would also be agreed, and the tax base was known. It was noted that the Town Council had kept the precept requirement at £77000 for 4 years and for 2 years this had resulted in the parish portion of the "council tax" going down, due to an increase in the tax base.

9. To undertake the internal financial check (July to October 2023)

The minutes, paying in book, cheque book, invoices, bank statements and cash book were cross referenced, all receipts were checked and a random selection of payments were checked, no accounting errors were found.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm