

**Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee Meeting of the Town Council on
Monday 20th October 2025 at 6.30pm**

Present

St Michael's Ward

Cllr Fowles
Cllr Fotheringham
Cllr Atherton
Cllr R Sexton
Cllr Wakefield

St Paul's Ward

Cllr Craddock
Cllr Taylor

In attendance

Cllr R Collins (EDDC)
Heloise Marlow, Deputy Town Clerk

- 25/26/FP Apologies for absence**
Committee **RECEIVED** apologies from Cllr Pearsall.
- 25/27/FP Declarations of Interests**
Committee **RECEIVED** no declarations of interest.
- 25/28/FP Dispensations**
Committee **NOTED** no dispensations made by the Town Clerk in relation to the business of this meeting.
- 25/29/FP Public Question Time for items on the agenda**
None
- 25/30/FP Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting held on 1 September 2025**
Committee RESOLVED to approve for accuracy the minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting held on 1 September 2025.
Proposed by Cllr Fowles and seconded by Cllr Atherton
For 3, Against 0, Abstentions 4.
- 25/31/FP AGAR, Assertion 10**
Committee RESOLVED unanimously to approve the following actions to enable the Council to give a positive Assertion:
I. Prepare an audit of data held and risk assessment
II. HTC must have an IT Policy, approved by FC (HTC does not at present, so an IT Policy must be written and approved)
III. Prepare/approve a document retention policy
IV. Training needs to be put in place for staff and Councillors

- V. **Documents (e.g. Agendas and Minutes) must be designed to be Accessible**
- VI. **Review and if necessary, update the Data Protection Privacy Notice**

Proposed by Cllr R Sexton and seconded by Cllr Fotheringham

25/32/FP AGAR 24/25

Cllr Taylor advised that he was one of the members of the public who had raised the query with the External Auditor 18 months ago. That query was still ongoing
Committee **NOTED** the AGAR 24/25 External Auditor's report and certificate.

25/33/FP Committee Budgets 26/27

Committee discussed the implications of the proposed Devon Local Government Re-organisation (LGR), proposed projects, requirements for additional staff and HTC reserves on the budget and precept for 2026/27. Town Management, Green & Open Spaces and Strategy Committees had already put forward their initial proposals for the budget, and an HR Committee meeting was being arranged so that HR proposals could be considered at the next Finance & Policy committee meeting. Proposed projects would be discussed and considered at the Away Day on 10th November.

Members considered the following:

- Whether any assets would be transferred from EDDC during 26/27 budget.
- Would HTC enter into legal agreements with EDDC during 26/27 budget with asset transfer during 27/28?
- Budget implications for legal advice (£20k) and HR (£10K).
- Role of Town Clerk in LGR and consequential demands on other office staff.
- Budget implications of taking on additional staff.
- Whether Reserves should be increased by £115K to cover 6 months Precept.

Cllr Taylor advised that Reserves only needed to cover between 25% and 50% of statutory payments of the Council and not the Precept which included many non-statutory payments.

Cllr Fotheringham advised that NALC recommended reserves cover a % of the Precept or Council expenditure.

Cllr Fowles raised queries re TMC Budget line 4585 King Street toilets and 4680 Charter Day.

Cllr Taylor queried TMC Budget line 4515 and advised that the wall was an “orphan” wall and whether HTC had any responsibility for its maintenance.

Committee **NOTED** the item

25/34/FP Budgets 26/27

Committee discussed/queried the following budget lines:

- 4170 – need for funds to support the application for NALC Silver award.
- 4290 – further information was requested as to the service provided by Core Office IT.
- 4350 – did this cover the HTC website? Was there an overlap with budget lines allocated to HR and Strategy Committees?
- 4360 – was there a need for a budget line for 2026/27?
- 4405 – Beehive Low Carbon Working Group requires room hire.
- 4414 – New lease provides for a grant to HCC and allows for applications for emergency funding/assistance with overspend. Query which budget line would apply?

Committee RESOLVED recommended partial budgets 26/27:

Code	Title	Actual 25/26, £	Current Budget 25/26, £	Proposed Budget 26/27, £	Increase + or Decrease - , £	Comments
4100	Mayor's Allowance	0	1052	1052	0	
4110	Civic Fund	0	500	500	0	
4120	Macebearer's Allowance	35	368	368	0	
4130	Cllrs Expenses	136	200	200	0	
4140	Election Expenses	2920	10000	10000	0	
4150	Town Meeting Expenses	0	200	200	0	
4160	Members Allowance	0	9500	9500	0	
4170	Councillor Training	20	1000	tba	-	
4175	Volunteer Training	0	1000	tba	-	
4180	Subscriptions	2886	3200	3400	+200	
4200	Telephone/Broadband	1373	3200	3200	0	
4210	Postage	42	200	200	0	
4220	Stationary	357	1000	1000	0	
4230	Printing/Photocopy	263	1000	1000	0	
4240	Audit	1259	2500	2500	0	

4250	Insurance	6979	6800	6800	0	
4255	Bank Charges	132	200	200	0	
4260	Professional Fees	2741	3000	3000	0	
4270	Legal Fees	0	3000	3000	0	
4285	Contribution to Reserves	0	1000	1000	0	
4290	Computer Maintenance	9723	18000	18000	0	
4350	Public Engagement	0	2500	tba	-	
4360	Sports Pitches	0	15000	tba	-	
4405	Room Hire	2720	7000	tba	-	
4410	Service Charge/Underwriting	5500	11000	11000	0	
4414	Beehive Support	0	60000	0	0	
4430	Cleaning/Maintenance	-403	3000	3000	0	
4440	Office fittings	0	400	400	0	
4280	Loan Interest/Capital	29537	59075	59075	0	
4620	Emergency Planning/Events	690	1500	1500	0	
4660	Twinning Gift	0	1100	1100	0	
4700	Youth Support	15825	1500	15000	0	
4460	Beehive Underwriting Grant	28378	0	tba	-	
4750	Grants	20580	27000	27000	0	
4760	CAB	5000	5000	5000	0	
4785	Cost of Living	8582	10000	10000	0	

Proposed by Cllr Craddock and seconded by Cllr Wakefield
For 6; Against 1; Abstentions 0

25/35/FP Budget comparison

Committee noted/discussed the following:

- HTC was now third from last re Reserves
- HTC has the highest amount of borrowing by far.
- HTC had very little income apart from the precept
- Comparison table held little value as not like for like Councils.
- HTC how precept for number of residents.
- HTC to demonstrate value to residents of any increase in the precept.
- LGR likely to require an increase in the precept.

Members **NOTED** the comparison of budgets with other local Councils.

25/36/FP Budget Consultation

Committee discussed the following:

- Consultation to start mid-November for Committee to consider responses at F&P Committee meeting 15.12.25
- HTC's Outside Bodies to be consulted on proposed Budget.
- Consultation questionnaire to be available at Christmas Tree lights switch on event 15.11.25
- Consultation to be a questionnaire available on-line and in paper format.

Committee RESOLVED to delegate to the Town Clerk the arrangements, format, information and questions for a Council Budget Consultation November 25 for consideration by the Finance & Policy Committee on 15th December 2025 in consultation with Cllrs Fotheringham, Wakefield and R Sexton.

Proposed by Cllr Wakefield and seconded by Cllr R Sexton

For 6; Against 0; Abstentions 1

25/37/FP To close the meeting.

The meeting was closed at 8pm.