

**Harrietsham Parish Council**  
**Finance and General Purposes Committee**  
**Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 9th November 2023 at 7:30pm**

- 1. Present:** Cllrs T Sams (chairman), Luck, Roots, Stanley and M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)  
Apologies: None  
Members of the public: None
- 2. Disclosures:** Cllr Roots – personal interest in grant requests for HIB and Candlelit Memories (will remain in meeting, but take no party in discussion)

**3. Minutes of the last meeting** (13th July 2023) were approved at the subsequent Council meeting. A further copy was signed at this meeting for F&GP records.

**4. Review of 2023/24 Accounts.** The RFO went through the income and expenditure spreadsheets column by column, answering questions as they arose. It was agreed that the year was progressing as expected, and no concerns or issues were raised. This included reviewing the bank reconciliation.

**5. Confirmation of Bank Balances:** Prior to the meeting, the RFO had passed over the latest bank statements to the Chairman so that he could check the balances, which were found to tally.

**6. Internal and External Audit:** The RFO summarised the roles of the two different auditors we use for the benefit of all councillors. He then reported that the interim Internal audit (covering April – September) had found no problems (save one small, inconsequential error in accounting for pensions), and that we had also received the final sign-off from the External audit for 2022/2023. We could therefore confidently state that the authority appeared to be well run.

**7. RFO Finance Report:** At a previous meeting, the RFO had expressed mild concern at the potential for expenditure causing us future financial problems. He had then offered a report on the subject to the October Council Meeting, which had referred the matter back to F&GP for consideration. He noted that the conclusion of the report had been that we were still well placed financially, “however, we need to be careful not to be seduced by the Bank Reconciliation’s headline figure of £318,700 – all is not as you might believe at first sight”.

He then talked through a new spreadsheet that he had created which was intended to provide an enhanced monitoring tool, covering the income and expenditure for the second six months of the year. Having done so, he then asked whether councillors felt that this was useful, or over complicated. After some discussion covering both the initial report and the spreadsheet, councillors stated that they were happy with the level of reporting that currently exists. It was felt that the comparison of actual vs budget on the main spreadsheets was sufficient (especially bearing in mind that they can always ask questions), and that the new report was somewhat over the top for their purposes. The RFO was thanked, both for the initial report and for at least checking whether more detailed reporting/monitoring was required.

**8. Grants and Donations:** The RFO had previously circulated a report detailing the request for funding received so far. Each was consider in turn, and it was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the following should be paid:

- Harrietsham In Bloom – requested £100; agreed
- Harrietsham Fish Scheme – requested “Upto £3,000”; agreed to recommend £1,000
- Harrietsham Lawn Tennis Club – requested £1,000; agreed to recommend £500, payable in April 2024  
thereby putting the cost into next year, and keeping this year in budget
- St John’s Parish Church – requested £944 for floodlighting and £360 for churchyard maintenance  
Agreed to recommend £1,304 (total of both)
- Friday Morning Coffee – requested hall hire fees through 2024/25; agreed to recommend

Councillors also considered a request for a grant towards a Candlelit Memories Event, noting the RFO's comments. The event lies outside of the relevant policy, although it is a relatively small sum, and considered to be a worthy initiative from one of our parishioners. It was therefore agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we offer to pay the hall hire for the event (£60), and to reimburse any expenses supported by receipts to the total value of £40.

The whole package was Proposed Cllr T Sams, Seconded Cllr Luck, All in Favour.

**9. Review of key documents:** The RFO summarised each of the documents in turn, and each were then approved –

Financial Regulation; the RFO noted that a new set of Regulations were currently being prepared by NALC, and we would need to consider adopting them when they are released. In the meantime, the existing set could continue unchanged, except for a modification to the Tendering Threshold, raising it from £25,000 to £30,000 (inc VAT).  
Prop Cllr Roots, Sec Cllr Luck, all in favour

Risk Assessments; All risks are substantially unchanged, although it was noted that (a) we had disposed of all the Remix equipment, so this could be deleted, and (b) the folder in the Post Office had long since disappeared, so this should be deleted.  
Prop Cllr Sams, Sec Cllr Luck, all in favour

Asset Register; The RFO explained that we had neither acquired or disposed of any items on the Register, and it could approved unamended  
Prop Cllr Sams, Sec Cllr Luck, all in favour

Investment Policy; This could also be approved unchanged, although it is becoming probable that we shall always have reserves at a level that will require another bank account to be opened in order to spread the risk. The RFO will have a look round.  
Prop Cllr Roots, Sec Cllr Sams, all in favour

**10. Village Hall update:** The RFO reported that, just for interest, the hall is currently trading profitably (although this excludes any assistance provided by the council). Income to date £34,368, with expenditure £25,152. There was then a brief discussion about other things that were probably going to be needed, and mention was made of the possible need for the occasional deep clean to supplement the current regular daily cleaning.

**8. Date of next meeting** – Thursday 11th January 2024 at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 9:15pm.