

Harrietsham Parish Council
Finance and General Purposes Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 21st September 2021 at 5:30pm

1. **Present:** Cllrs Dean (chairman), Foster, Roots, Sams, Stanley, and M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)

Apologies: None

Members of the public: None

2. **Disclosures:** Cllr Roots re Harrietsham In Bloom grant request,
Cllrs Foster and Stanley re Village Hall Trust grant request.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (21st January 2021) were approved with no amendments at the January Council meeting.

4. **Internal and external audits.** The RFO reported that the internal audit had been successfully concluded, with just one recommendation and no other comments. The recommendation was that the Fidelity Guarantee should be increased to be more in line with the cash reserves held by the council. (At the end of last year, we had cash reserves of £220,500, yet the guarantee stood at £250,000). Admittedly, reserves now stand at well over £300,000, but it is a declining balance. The RFO had enquired about increasing the limit, but the next level is £500,000 and needs lots of explanations! Having considered all the factors, it was generally agreed to retain the current level of insurance.

The external audit, by PK Littlejohn, had come back completely clean, with no comments. All necessary documentation had been posted on the noticeboards and website, so 2020/21 was now closed.

5. **Re-appointment of Internal Auditor:** The RFO reported that he had received the standard Terms of Engagement letter from the internal auditor – Auditing Solutions Ltd – and enquired if we wished to stay with them. It was generally agreed that we did, and the Chair signed the letter for the RFO to pass on.

6. **Review of Accounts.** The RFO started by going through all the current spreadsheets, highlighting various income and expenditure transactions, and answering questions as they arose. He noted that we had received two grant requests. Ordinarily, we would deal them in November, but one – the main one – was from the VHT for a defibrillator, which could save lives. It was therefore agreed to Recommend to Council that we should offer the Trust a grant of £1,500 (proposed Cllr Dean, seconded Cllr Sams) and Harrietsham in Bloom a £100 grant (proposed Cllr Foster, seconded Cllr Dean), both as requested, and both with those who could vote being in favour.

The chairman then selected an invoice from each month, and checked it against the spreadsheet for accuracy, initialling each one as it was verified. She then verified the balances shown on the bank statements against the figures on the bank reconciliation, and confirmed that all tallied.

Finally, it was agreed that all transactions should be agreed *en masse*, covering the period April to September (to date). It was therefore agreed to recommend the accounts, with the transactions to Council for approval. Proposed Cllr Roots, seconded Cllr Foster, all in favour.

7. **Environmental Committee.** The RFO reported that the previous day's committee meeting had resulted in little that F&GP needed to concern itself with. The main item was a recommendation to increase the allotment rent from £18 per year to £20 per year. Other items, such as the procurement of three memorial trees, the possibility of creating a playing field on the Saxon Place amenity land, or the procurement of allotment padlocks, were all either minor or long-term.

8. **Review of Control documents.** The RFO noted that little had happened over the past year, so the documents itemised were as relevant now as they were before. Committee concurred, agreeing to Recommend to Council that the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessments, Investment

Policy and Asset Register be re-adopted for another year. Proposed Cllr Sams, seconded Cllr Dean, all in favour.

Cllr Sams reported that, so far as the asset register is concerned, of the old Remix kit what could be sold had been, leaving a residual suitable only for giving away. It was proposed to offer it all to the Demelza House charity. Proposed Cllr Foster, seconded Cllr Roots, all in favour.

9. Church Road footpath. It was noted that the council had received the KCC report commissioned by us on the proposed footpath. Cllr Sams noted that it was disappointing because it left many questions unanswered. The RFO observed he had checked a couple of points mentioned, and had some doubts on the report's accuracy. All were agreed that this could turn into a very expensive project, and it was felt that all councillors should study the report in preparation for a proper discussion at full Council.

9. Date of next meeting – With the easing of COVID restrictions, it is envisaged that we shall return to the normal pattern of meetings. This being the case, the next meeting will be on Thursday 11th November at 7:30pm

Meeting closed at 6:30pm.