

Harrietsham Parish Council
Finance and General Purposes Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 9th July 2015 at 7:30pm

1. **Present:** Cllrs Trussler (chairman), Dean, Kay, Przystupa, and M Cuerden (RFO)
Apologies: Cllr Allwood (away on business)

Members of the public: None

2. **Disclosures:** None

3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (28th May 2015) were approved without amendment, and a copy signed by the chairman.

4. **Review of Accounts year-to-date.**

The RFO circulated a copy of the income, expenditure and bank reconciliation spreadsheets to the end of June (first full quarter). These were reviewed, and several questions asked. Cllr Trussler stated that he would like a little further detail on how the May transfer to the Woodlands Walk from the General Fund sat in the payment profile being used – which, in turn, might require review.

It was agreed that so far, all seems to be progressing satisfactorily. The chairman then confirmed that the totals on the bank statements tallied with the totals used in the bank reconciliation.

5. **Proposed new format of accounts**

The RFO circulated a set of accounts laid out in a proposed new format, using the same figures as those just considered. Cllr Trussler outlined the benefits perceived in the new layout, namely that the information was laid out more clearly, and that the format provided for individual committees to have clear sight of income and expenditure that related to their areas of responsibility. It was intended that each should then take responsibility for their own areas of the finances, which would also entail providing quarterly reports to F&GP to facilitate the usual review of accounts, as well as providing budgetary information for the following year before the November meeting. It was anticipated that this would happen quickly, but it was acknowledged that the process might take a little while to settle down, (although, of course, November is the next scheduled F&GP meeting).

As part of this taking responsibility for their area, all invoices received by the council will go to the parish office, where the clerk will separate them into folders, one for each spending committee. These will then be approved by – preferably – the chairman of that committee, or, if unavailable, any member of that committee. The approved invoices will then be passed to the RFO for payment. As part of this discussion, dis-satisfaction was mentioned regarding one of the service providers, so the RFO was asked to hold any invoices received from them until they have been approved by the Environmental Committee.

In the discussion on the subject, with some of the threads of the previous agenda item also being picked up, a number of minor points arose: (a) it was agreed to move the £600 usually given to the Fish Scheme as a grant from Grants & Donations into the Communications Committee budget, as it will be they that consider whether the council wishes to continue using Network. (b) it was also agreed to move £500 budget from Legal & Professional Fees, also to Communications. (c) It became apparent that in a few areas, F&GP councillors were unclear as to the exact mechanics by which income and expenditure is incurred and monitored. It was agreed that individual committee members would approach their counterparts in the other committees to seek clarification.

It was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the new format be used in future (proposed Cllr Dean, seconded Cllr Przystupa, all in favour). It was also agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the natural consequences for invoice control and reporting to F&GP, as outlined above, be adopted.

6. **Un-spent Grant**

Cllr Trussler explained that the previous council had been successful in obtaining a grant for the development of an SEA for the neighbourhood plan. However, that wasn't done, and now that the Plan had been withdrawn, it was unlikely to be used in anything like an acceptable timescale. It was therefore agreed to **Recommend to Council** that Cllr Trussler be authorised to approach the Community Development Fund with a view to agreeing a revised timescale, an alternative use of the money, or, if necessary, a return of the £4,500 grant, (proposed Cllr Trussler, seconded Cllr Przystupa, all in favour).

7. **Charity Trustees and bank signatories**

This had been referred to F&GP by council. The RFO explained the background to the charity, and emphasised that it not the council's responsibility. It is an entirely separate village body, but it just so happens that, under the charity's constitution, the trustees are drawn from the rector and two (or possibly three) parish councillors – our responsibility is solely to provide the appropriate number of bodies.

However, he is aware of an on-going issue, and is also aware that a meeting of the trustees has been scheduled, which should resolve the problem.

8. **Village Hall Trust – request for grant**

Cllr Trussler set the background around this request by explaining the the current contractual position between the Trust, the council and the Medical Practice. It was clear that there is currently considerable confusion over this, and it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to consider a grant request until this is resolved. It was agreed that the Trust be asked to re-submit their request, this time using our standard grant request form, in time for November's F&GP meeting, where it can be considered in the context of any other requests received, in the usual way, (by which time, hopefully, the contractual situation will have clarified).

9. **HIB – principle of continued funding**

As this is a substantial part of our programme of grants and donations, and as councillors felt that they were still getting fully acquainted with the finances and mechanics of running the council, they didn't really wish to consider this request out of the usual context of all other grants and donations in the November meeting. It was agreed to inform HIB that the council were certainly happy to consider a repeat request for a grant, including the watering of the planters, and we would suggest that HIB submit a grant request form for consideration in the usual way – although, unlike previous years, it would be wise to include the watering of the planters as well.

Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting is Thursday 12th November 2015 at 7:30pm, Parish Office.

Meeting closed at 9:30pm