

Harrietsham Parish Council
Finance and General Purposes Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 21st January 2021 at 3:30pm

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

Apologies: Cllr T Sams

Members of the public: None

2. **Disclosures:** Cllr Dean re Woodlands Walk finance.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (8th October 2020) were approved with no amendments. Proposed Cllr Dean, seconded Cllr Foster, all in favour.

4. **Review of Accounts.** The RFO noted that due to Coronavirus restrictions, the usual process of individually authorising invoices had been suspended. He had previously visited the Chairman, who had selected some invoices at random for verification. All were found to be in order. The chairman also compared the December bank statements to the totals shown on the bank reconciliation, and agreed that all tallied.

The account spreadsheets had all been previously circulated for councillors' inspection. The transactions from April to September had been approved at the meeting of the 8th October, and given the Chairman's recent verification, it was agreed that all transactions should be **Recommended to Council** for approval. *Proposed Cllr Stanley, seconded Cllr Dean, all in favour.*

6. **Woodlands Walk finance.** The RFO explained his concern relating to the diminishing size of the "dowry" for the W/W and the need to preserve an adequate reserve for any possible problems. He had previously circulated a report outlining the position and the options. It was agreed that (a) the outstanding loan from the W/Walk fund to the General Fund should be repaid in full. *Proposed Cllr Dean proposed Cllr Roots, all in favour,* (b) that on-going maintenance should be funded from the General Fund from now on (to preserve the current balance). *Proposed Cllr Foster, seconded Cllr Roots, all in favour [Cllr Dean abstaining]* and (c) that we should add to the W/Walk fund from the General Fund at the rate of £5000 per year, starting now (to rebuild the reserve to the previous level of – eventually - £70000). *Proposed Cllr Stanley, seconded Cllr Roots [Cllr Dean abstaining].*

7. **Budget for 2021/22.** The RFO explained that the letter from MBC had indicated that the number of Band D properties in the parish had declined this year. This did not mean we had fewer houses, but that the economic impact of the pandemic had caused more households to fall back on to benefits, and so were not paying council tax. He outlined the impact that this had on the precept and the amount it would raise. After some discussion it was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the precept be kept at the same level as last year, (£95.47), which would raise the lower income of £126,258 – a reduction of £1,900. *Proposed Cllr Roots, seconded Cllr Foster, all in favour.*

8. **VHT Loan.** There was a brief discussion on the subject, during which Cllr Roots observed that the changes in repayment occur after the next election, so any discussion/decision ought to be made by the new council. The matter was therefore deferred until 2025/6.

9. **Date of next meeting** – To be arranged.

Meeting closed at 3:50pm.