

Harrietsham Parish Council
Finance and General Purposes Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 14th July 2016 at 7:30pm

1. **Present:** Cllrs Trussler (chairman), Dean, Stanley, and M Cuerden (RFO)

Apologies: Cllr Kay

Members of the public: None

2. **Disclosures:** None

3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (21st April 2016) would have been approved at April's Council meeting, but were deferred due to there being too few members able to vote at that meeting. These minutes were therefore approved for the first time at this meeting.

4. **Review of Accounts.** The RFO went through the figures year-to-date, showing that in all cases income and expenditure is broadly in line with what we would expect a third of the way through the year. The chairman compared the bank statements to the totals shown on the bank reconciliation, and agreed that all tallied.

5. **Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.** The RFO had previously circulated a set of revised documents for consideration. **Standing Orders** only had one minor change, and a further one (to change "newspaper" to "publication" when seeking companies to submit a tender) was proposed and approved. The **Financial Regulations** had also been revised to reflect new tendering thresholds and procedures. After some discussion, and one other minor amendment, it was agreed to **recommend to Council** that both the revised Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be adopted.

At April's F&GP meeting, the RFO had been asked to look into whether or not a company could offer a tender for the council's business if there was a close family connection (for example, a director of the company also being a councillor). Having taken advice, the RFO confirmed that there can be no objection to this arrangement, so long as the councillor concerned acts properly in all matters relating to the contract's tendering, awarding and subsequent operation, (specifically, declaring an interest at any meeting where the contracts are to be discussed, and being prepared, when necessary, to withdraw from the room for the duration of the discussion).

During the discussion, it was also noted that the Regulations required the Clerk to hold a register of land owned by the council. Unable to confirm whether or not such a register did exist, the RFO agreed to check with the clerk, and if necessary ask the clerk to contact the Land Registry to get whatever details are available on our land assets. It was acknowledged that there may be a small charge per land parcel enquired about.

6. **Staff Pensions.** The RFO had previously circulated a briefing paper on the options open to the council, and at this meeting added a further paper written following some discussions with KCC Pensions. He also emphasised that we do have a strict deadline to adhere to, and time is slipping by with much to do. The upshot of the discussion with KCC is that if the council wished to explore joining the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), then we would require an Actuary's Report, the cost of which had initially been quoted at £1,600 – this had now been negotiated down to £200.

Cllr Trussler expressed some concern at the additional costs incurred by opting for the more expensive defined benefits scheme offered by the LGPS, whilst Cllr Dean expressed a preference to adopt the scheme immediately. After some discussion, it was agreed to **recommend to council** that (a) the council should agree to commission the Actuary's Report in order to see what the LGPS entails and then (b) that following receipt of the report, there would be a confidential meeting (excluding staff) of a combined F&GP and Staffing Committees, with a view to making a final recommendation to September's Council.

7. **Grants.** Cllr Dean circulated a draft Grants Policy, together with a number of supporting documents, being examples of the practices to be found at other parish councils. There followed a detailed discussion on the draft policy, at the end of which it was agreed that Cllr Dean would produce another draft. This would be circulated to all councillors for comment, prior to submitting a final draft for approval at September's Council meeting.

Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting is Thursday 10th November 2016 at 7:30pm, Parish Office.

Meeting closed at 10:05pm