

**Harrietsham Parish Council**  
**Finance and General Purposes Committee**  
**Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 10th November 2022 at 7:30pm**

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

Apologies: None Members of the public: None

2. **Disclosures:** Cllr Roots declared an interest in the agenda item on grants, as he is treasurer for both HIB and the Friends of St Johns.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (14th July 2022) were approved at the subsequent Council meeting. A further copy was signed at this meeting for F&GP records.

4. **Review of 2022/23 Accounts to date.** The RFO went through the income and expenditure spreadsheets column by column, answering questions as they arose, and highlighting some of the possible pressures expected in the rest of the year, including the Village Hall overtime, and we now have a confirmed NALC pay rise, consisting of a £1 an hour increase to all grades. He made special reference to the Local Planning Enquiry, currently underway, for which we have already allocated £10K for legal advice, and the request from Cllr Powell that F&GP consider allocating a further £10K in case the Enquiry moves to a Stage 2. It was agreed to **Recommend this to Council**, proposed Cllr Dean, seconded Cllr Sams, all in favour.

The committee also considered whether we will want to do Coronation Mugs – along the same lines as the Jubilee mugs earlier in the year. It was agreed to **Recommend this to Council**, proposed Cllr Roots, seconded Cllr Dean, all in favour, although it isn't yet clear whether this cost will fall in this year or next.

The committee also considered a referral from the Personnel Group concerning reimbursing the Clerk for a new set of prescription lenses following a recent eye-test. After some discussion, although everyone was agreed that there should be a council contribution, the committee was evenly split (2 vs 2) over whether it should be full or partial. It was therefore agreed to **Defer the matter to Council**.

5. **Confirmation of Bank Balances:** The chairman checked the Natwest bank statements against figures shown in the bank reconciliation, and confirmed that all figures tallied.

6. **Grant Requests:** The RFO noted that since the agenda had been produced we had received another request, which we would consider at the same time.

It was agreed to **Recommend to Council** the following:

Harrietsham In Bloom – requested £100, agreed, proposed Cllr Sams, seconded Cllr Dean,  
All in favour, Cllr Roots abstained.

Harrietsham Fish Scheme – requested £600, £500 agreed, proposed Cllr Dean, sec Cllr Roots, all in favour  
Harrietsham PCC – requested the usual churchyard and floodlighting grants (£726) plus £500 towards  
the new projector and screen, giving a total of £1,226. Proposed Cllr Sams,  
seconded Cllr Stanley, all in favour, Cllr Roots abstained.

New Harrietsham & Lenham Youth Group – requested either £820 or £1,640 for Harrietsham Hall hire. Following some discussion, it was agreed that the Committee would like to support the group in principle, but the application left many open questions. It was therefore further agreed that we should invite the lead Youth Worker to a council meeting to allow him the opportunity to put some flesh on the bones of the proposal, including such areas as how they would transport youths from Lenham to Harrietsham, what proportion of attendees could be expected from the two villages, had he secured funding from Lenham, or anywhere else, what sort of additional items might he be asking funding for in the future (as mentioned in his current application), etc.

**7. Village Hall update:** The RFO gave the committee an update on the current position at the hall. The Clerk and he felt the situation was coming under control, although considerable work was still expected for the foreseeable future. On finances, he noted that the October billing – the first he had done – took ages, but it was noticeable that the November round had felt easier, and (so far) had taken less time. Based on evidence so far, he thought that getting the hall to be profitable on day-to-day running may well be possible. He also noted that the drains had been thoroughly cleared out by a contractor, and it was hoped that this would put an end to the regular complaints – and the associated refunds. The next major hurdle is likely to be the electrical inspection scheduled for this coming weekend. At best, we expected a significant bill for remedial work – at worst, we might have to close.

**8. Budget 2023/24 – initial thoughts:** The RFO will bring a full budget to the January committee meeting. For this meeting, he was seeking general guidance. Following some discussion, councillors expressed a desire to maintain the precept at the current level, if possible. It was also suggested that provision next year be made for (a) a Village Hall contingency fund - £12K (b) Christmas lights - £6K (c) provision of further legal action on planning matters - £10K. It was also noted that MBC Landscapes wish to cease their commercial operations, so as of April 2023 we shall need to find another contractor – this will lead to additional, but as yet unquantified, cost.

Councillor Sams left the meeting at this point.

**9. Re-adoption of documents:** The committee considered the  
\* Finance Regulations \* Investment Policy \* Risk Assessments \* Asset Register  
and accepted that, as nothing much had changed, they could be re-adopted en-masse. Proposed Cllr Roots, seconded Cllr Dean, with all in favour. Councillor Roots noted that the bank balance at the Natwest was quite high, and we should probably consider opening another investment account – the RFO agreed, and it was agreed that this would be considered next January, when we knew what the end-of-year balances were likely to be.

**8. Date of next meeting** – Thursday 12th January 2023 at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 9:30pm.