

Harrietsham Parish Council
Finance and General Purposes Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 19th November 2024 at 7:30pm

1. Present: Cllrs T Sams (Chair), Dean, Roots, Stanley and M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
Apologies: Cllr Luck, Members of the public: None

2. Disclosures: Cllr Roots declared an interest in the Grants as he is treasurer of Harretsham in Bloom (form supplied).

3. Minutes of the last meeting: (11th July 2024) were approved at the following Council meeting. Another set was signed for our records.

4. Review of year-to-date accounts. The bank accounts were compared to the bank reconciliation and found to tally. MC noted that the Nationwide BS pay interest at the end of March, whilst the Cambridge BS pay theirs at the end of December.

There was then a quick look at the transactions for the year to date, but there were no questions as councillors had seen most of the spreadsheets before. The RFO noted that whilst income was pretty much as expected, expenditure was adrift (up or down – but mostly up) from budget. He had circulated a working paper (copy attached) which indicated that the overall spend, however, was projected to be about right, so long as we take the New Burial Ground dig out of reserves and not revenue.

It was therefore agreed that the RFO should vire budgets around the expenditure headings to reflect the expected spend without the NBG dig costs (incurred or future), retaining the same total. The NBG costs would then be added back to Open Spaces (so that the spreadsheets would continue to reflect actual spend, with the resulting over-run being taken from reserves).

Cllr Roots enquired if that meant that we should formally budget next year to replace the money in reserves. The RFO replied by saying that in the past, we had tended to add any surplus of income over spend into the reserves, but we had never said that we should budget to spend more next year as a result. It was therefore agreed that we shouldn't worry too much about this.

5. Requests for Grants and Donations: The RFO had previously circulated a paper (attached) outlining the requests received so far. He noted that whereas we usually expect 3 or 4 per year, this time we had 10. Each was then considered in turn, and it was unanimously agreed to **Recommend to Council** the following grants for the current year, bearing in mind that the Friday Coffee Morning hall hires have already been agreed:

Harrietsham Fish Scheme	£ 750	Harrietsham PCC (church)	£ 984	
Harrietsham Gardening Soc	£ 150	Harrietsham Primary School	£1,000	
K, S and S Air Ambulance	£ 100	“We Are Beams” ASD support	£ 150	
	Total: £1,000		£2,134	£3,134

It was also agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we should offer the following grants for next year:

Harrietsham in Bloom	£100	Harrietsham Tennis Club	£500
Friday Coffee Morning – hall hire fees from the Village Hall Trust for the year, (estimated at £1400). (Cllr Roots abstained from voting on the HIB request, otherwise the decisions were unanimous)			

There was a request from the Pre-school to help with their proposed move from the church to the primary school. Councillors were minded to support the request, but felt that it was too early as they are still applying for planning permission. It was agreed that we should ask them to re-submit their request once they have this and a better idea of the costs involved, together with an idea as to where the bulk of the money is coming from. The pre-school should, nevertheless, be aware that any help from the council will probably be in the hundreds rather than the thousands.

6. Review of Risk Assessments and Investment Policy: The RFO had previously circulated both documents and now reported that, so far as he could see, nothing much had changed. In fact, the situation was now improved, as we had opened another bank account to spread the reserves so that they stayed within the FCS compensation limits. It was therefore agreed that we re-adopt both for another year - proposed Cllr Sams, seconded Cllr Stanley, all in favour.

7. Revised Financial Regulations: The RFO had previously circulated a copy of the proposed new Financial Regulations before the last meeting, but only the day before. This had left little time for their perusal by councillors, so this item had been deferred to this meeting. The RFO explained that these new ones were extensively based on the new NALC Financial Regulations recently released, which we don't have to follow, although it was good practice to do so, having suitably modified them for our specific circumstances. It was then agreed that we adopt this new set – proposed Cllr Roots, seconded Cllr Dean, with all in favour.

7. Date of next meeting – Thursday 9th January 2025 at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 8:50pm.

Harrietsham Parish Council
Working paper for F&GP – 14th November 2024

Accounts Year to Date:

	Budget	YTD Act	Forecast	
Admin:	4,168	4,689	6,740	£1828 insurance, so 7 mths = £2861 = £410pm, £2050 to go
P Office	4,695	1,418	2,420	£200pm, £1000 to go
Subs	1,475	1,507	1,510	None further expected
Legal	5,872	8,532	2,630	of £8532, CDS=£7005, so rest £1527 = £220pm, £1100 to go + CDS
Capital	0	755	755	None further expected
Grants	4,339	1,310	1,885	£500 to Tennis Club, £810 Coffee= £115pm, £575 to go
Village H	5,644	0	0	So far, so good.
Med C	3,870	4,155	4,155	£500 Rent + RACC survey, nothing further expected
Open Sp	42,658	34,912	49,875	CDS (£1148)+E Acc (£3544) = £4,682 NBG plus other suppliers: Brogdale (£1712)+HFF (£1000) leaves £27,518 over 7 months = £3,931pm ave = £19,656 to go
Lighting	1,509	1,865	2,435	EDF ave £570pq, one to go
Comms	1,791	0	0	None expected
Salaries	106,124	58,391	103,000	+ backpay £1,687 = £60,078 = £8,583pm average = £42,915 to go = £103,000pa
	182,144	117,534	175,405	
				+ CDS (£8,142) + EA (£3,544) = £11,687 NBG dig
				+ NI increase from budget (£2,000??)
				+ grants to be awarded.

Grants & Donations:

Already approved – the rest of the year’s hall hire for Friday Morning Coffee,	expected remaining cost	£ 575
Air Ambulance Charity, Kent, Surrey, Sussex:	Amount requested	£ 500
Harrietsham Fish Scheme: “To help towards the running cost of Helping Harrietsham Hands and Harrietsham Network which looks after the needs of the elderly and the Network which has important information for the village”	Amount requested	£1,000
Harrietsham Gardening Society: “The aim is to try and increase our membership base and to attract more of the villagers to join. As our membership has declined we are finding our resources are being eroded.”	Amount requested	£ 250
Harrietsham PCC: Floodlighting electricity £609, plus 50% of churchyard maintenance, £375	Amount requested	£ 984
Harrietsham Pre-school: Request to assist in move from church to school, “The building structure alone will cost approximately £100,000. Additional costs will be required through groundworks, access etc. We will be applying for grants as well as seeking a loan.”	No specified amount, general grant request	
Harrietsham Primary School: Grant request detailing various works they wish to do – 4 priorities, ranging in cost from £1,390 - £10,850 (plus VAT, which they can reclaim).	No specified amount, general grant request	
“We are Beams”, applying for Cygnets Parenting Programme: A support group for families of children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). They say that they support 8 families in our parish (quite correctly not saying who...)	Amount requested	£ 150

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Grants requested for next year (2025-26):

Harrietsham in Bloom	£ 100
Friday Coffee Morning	£1,400 approx (50 weeks pa, £28pw average, £116pm average)
Harrietsham Tennis Club	£ 600 “To build on the success achieved in our centenary year (2024) where we extended membership to a large number of local Families & children (60 free coaching places). To continue to offer tennis to the local community we need to provide further Coaching & fun events for children which requires funding for LTA approved coaches.”

Comments:

There are an unusual number of grant requests this year, and, also unusually, some are “out-of-area” and some are just a request for an unspecified amount of funding.

As noted on the analysis of expenditure year-to-date, we are broadly heading for the expected budget, so long as we take out the exceptional £11,700 for the New Burial Ground Dig. However, we shall have to accept that this, and any grants awarded this year, will have to come from reserves.

It seems reasonable to try and place these requests in some kind of order.

The Fish Scheme provide a useful service to the village, and we should also consider that the Council gets a direct benefit from it, as it provides a way to communicate our activities and advertise things as required, (The November issue saw our advert for the open spaces contracts, for example.) They have asked for £1,000, but we sometimes only give £600, which, given our finances, seems a more reasonable amount.

The PCC – the parish church – have a long-standing arrangement whereby they maintain the floodlight, but the Council pays for the electricity. This means that the parish benefits from having our most historic building floodlit. Similarly, the Council usually contributes 50% of the cost of maintaining the churchyard – this is not solely out of our natural generosity; the churchyard provides a well-used link for walkers, connecting our green spaces of Teers Meadow and the New Burial Ground with the Glebe Field. They have asked for £609 and £375 respectively (total £984), both of which are down from previous years.

The Gardening Society, like many other local clubs and societies, has been suffering from declining numbers for some time now, so it doesn't seem unreasonable to offer some support. They have asked for £250.

We then have two “home-grown” requests:

The Primary School have asked for funding towards fencing and other works that they wish to see around the school, making their site more secure, and more readily usable by the children. The cheapest of these four priorities has been quoted at £1,390. (Plus VAT, but they say they can reclaim that.) We could offer to fund some or all of this, in the expectation that they will wish to get on with it, so the cost will fall into this year. We could, alternatively, offer a similar amount for one of the later projects, saying the funds will be available from April next year, (delaying the hit to our finances into the new financial year).

The pre-school, meanwhile, have asked for assistance in their move from the church to the primary school. They don't offer a timescale, and just refer to a massive total cost. If we are minded to offer a grant, then it is suggested that we settle on an amount, and tell them that money will be available once they are ready to start the process of moving. This is likely to put the expenditure into our new financial year.

Finally for this year, we have the Air Ambulance Charity, which probably requires no explanation, and the “We are Beams” charity – both saying that they provide services to our residents.

We also have three requests for money in the new financial year. This is not something we would usually encourage, but where there is some pre-planning required, then we have traditionally accepted these requests. The Coffee Morning speaks for itself, and is usually well attended by the village's elderly, whilst HIB request for £100 is trivial. We only have the Tennis Club's word for its success, but with the widespread modern views on exercise and social inclusion, it doesn't seem unreasonable to offer at least some support, if not the whole £600 requested.