

**Harrietsham Parish Council**  
**Finance and General Purposes Committee**  
**Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 11th July 2024 at 7:30pm**

**1. Present:** Cllrs Roots, Stanley and M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)

**Apologies:** Cllrs T Sams, Luck,

Members of the public: None

In the absence of the usual Chairman, Cllr Stanley nominated Cllr Roots as Chairman, who accepted.  
Meeting demed quorate at 50%

**2. Disclosures:** None

**3. Minutes of the last meeting:** (18th April 2024) were approved at the following Council meeting. Another set was signed for our records.

**4. Review of year-to-date accounts.** The RFO went through both income and expenditure spreadsheets in some detail, comparing actual vs budget, this being a good time for a detailed review as we now have a complete first quarter. He answered questions as they arose. The overall conclusion was that, at the moment, all looked ok, but we could see that as the year progresses, so some of the budgets could come under pressure. This led to a discussion on the likely level of reserves at the end of year if the current budgets are met, and agreement that, if necessary, there would probably be scope to take some out of reserves. This, in turn, had involved a discussion on the appropriate level of reserves that the council should hold – the RFO said that he believed that audit guidelines indicated that this was between 6 and 18 months worth of the annual precept (excluding Restricted Funds, such as Woodlands Walk).

The Chairman then compared the Cash Book bank reconciliation balances with the bank statements' actual amounts, and found all tallied.

**5. Appointment of our Internal Auditor:** The RFO outlined the discussions he had been having with the External Auditor, who had queried when we last appointed an internal auditor, something that should be done on a regular basis. On checking the records, it transpired that Auditing Solutions had been appointed in July 2002. The RFO had assured the External Auditor that we were about to discuss the matter, which appeared to satisfy them. In fact, we were going to do so anyway, because the current auditor is changing the way they work due to staff issues, and the possibility of retirement. Currently, the auditor bases himself in East Malling PC's offices for a week and does a number of councils in one go. He no longer wishes to do this, and is, instead, proposing doing a remote audit for a reduced number of councils, including us. This is likely to involve more work for the RFO because instead of just passing over the file of papers at the end of the year, he will, instead be having to do a lot more finding specific papers, scanning and emailing them, probably having to answer more questions in the process. We therefore have two choices. (a) We continue with the Internal Auditor currently in place, and see how well a remote audit works in practice, or (b) we look for a new internal auditor. After some discussion, Cllr Roots proposed that we stay with Auditing Solutions for a year, and then review the situation – Cllr Stanley agreed, it is therefore F&GP's **Recommendation to Council** that Auditing Solutions be re-appointed as our Internal Auditor to check the 2024/25 accounts.

**6. Revised Financial Regulations:** The RFO had previously circulated a copy of the proposed new Financial Regulations, but only the day before. This had left little time for their perusal by councillors, and with only two present anyway, it seemed better to defer the matter to November's F&GP.

**7. Date of next meeting** – Thursday 14th November 2024 at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 9:10pm.