

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: Committee Reports – F&GP

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** held on **Tuesday 02 August 2016** at Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux.

Present: Councillors: Mrs J. Angear, M. Bradshaw (Chairman), M. Goodsell, Mrs H. Kenward, S. Nash, and I. Stewart.

S. Goacher, RFO, took the Minutes,

Members of the Public: None.

FIN.01.08.16 **APOLOGIES:** None.

FIN.02.08.16 **DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:**

Councillor Mrs. Angear: Herstmonceux Village Hall, Herstmonceux Bowls Club, Angears Builders.

Councillor Bradshaw: Herstmonceux Business Association, Herstmonceux Village Hall.

Councillor Goodsell: Various small maintenance contracts.

Councillor Stewart: Herstmonceux Village Hall.

FIN.03.08.16 **DISPENSATION REQUESTS:** None received

FIN.04.08.16 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:** None.

FIN.05.08.16 **CURRENT YEAR EXPENDITURE:** None

FIN.06.08.16 **PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT:** Councillor Nash reported to the Committee on an appraisal he had had with Mrs Harrison, Parish Clerk, who was appointed on 18 April 2016 and is currently serving her probationary period.

Matters highlighted by Mrs Harrison and others arising from the appraisal have been actioned or are being monitored by the Personnel Sub-Committee, by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council.

A further appraisal will be arranged with Mrs Harrison on her completion of her probationary period, on 17 October 2016.

Meeting of the Sub-Committee would be required in October 2016 to complete any estimate provisions regarding staffing costs, and in November to confirm the appointment of the Clerk following an appraisal on completion of Mrs Harrison's probationary period.

FIN.07.08.16 **ANNUAL GRANT REPORT:** The RFO had circulated a report outlining the grant applications received and a historical report shown the grants awarded over the past eight years.

Councillors Mrs Angear, Bradshaw, and Stewart took no part in the discussions regarding the awarding of a grant to the Herstmonceux Village Hall. Councillor Mrs. Kenward took over the Chairmanship briefly for this grant.

Councillor Bradshaw took the meeting through each application, with the exception

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of the above, and the meeting awarded the following grants, in accordance with the Parish Council's policy.:

The Parish Council has agreed to review, at its August Meeting in each year, the Grants it is to make to both local and nationwide organisations that are '**deemed to be beneficial to the parish or to its residents**'.

Provision was made in the Parish Council's Original Estimates for the financial year 2016 / 2017, for the following Grants. These are compared with the actual paid during 2015 / 2016:

Actual Grants 2015-16	Organisation	Estimate Provision for 2016-17	Amount To be Granted
	Overall Grant Provision:	8,500.00	
500.00	Cuckmere Community Bus Ltd Grant required of £500 towards general operating costs	0.00	500.00
0.00	Herstmonceux Allotments Association Grant required of £540 for new lawn mower.	0.00	540.00
600.00	Herstmonceux Cricket Club Grant required of £700 for replacement Marquee.	0.00	600.00

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300.00	Herstmonceux Gardeners Club No longer in existence	0.00	0.00
500.00	Herstmonceux P.C.C. – Churchyard Grant, unspecified amount, for upkeep of Churchyard. The churchyard, is <u>not</u> a ‘Closed’ Churchyard	0.00	600.00
0.00	Herstmonceux Village Hall Grant required for new stage curtains (£2201) and bricking-up electrical store door room which is never used (£832), both VAT inclusive, – quotations enclosed.	0.00	3000.00
50.00	Victim Support (Sussex)	0.00	0.00
0.00	1st Wartling (St. Mary Magdalene) Brownies Grant, unspecified amount, required to assist cover the hall rent which has been recently increased to £10 per session	0.00	150.00

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£1,950.00	Total of Grants	£8,500.00	£5,390.00
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Proposed Finance & General Purposes Recommendation:

The Finance & General Purposes Committee have carried out its Annual Review of Grants and recommendations to Full Council payment of the Grants for 2016 / 2017, to those organisations listed above, amounting to **£5,390.00**.

In addition, the Finance & General Purposes Committee would recommend the following in respect of the following Grant Applications:

Cuckmere Community Bus: The bus route operated by the CCB is a lifeline for people within the parish and is very well used.

Herstmonceux Cricket Club: The Committee felt that the grant awarded should be towards the full cost of the marquee required, and that a small balance should be encouraged through the club's fundraising facilities.

Herstmonceux Parochial Church Council: The church is a visitor attraction to the area and that the PCC has other costs in maintaining the church in addition to keeping the churchyard looking well kept. The Committee felt that the Parish Council had given a constant level of grant for many years and that it should aim to increase the grant over the next few years and, therefore, has increased the grant to £600 in the current year.

Herstmonceux Village Hall: The cost of the proposed curtains was considered to be very reasonable and the bricking-up of the doorway in the electrical store a practical solution, both expenses were unable to be met by current levels of Village Hall funds. The meeting established that the proposed expenditure would be spent within one year of the 30 September 2016, thus meeting the requirements of the Parish Council's criteria.

1st Wartling (St Mary Magdalene) Brownies: The Brownie pack runs on a shoestring financially. The RFO had directed the leader towards Wartling Parish Council for possible grant funding, as well as encouraging an application to Herstmonceux Parish Council. The committee appreciated that some Brownies from the parish attended the Wartling Brownie Pack and, therefore, had no hesitation in awarding the Brownies a modest grant of £150.

Grant Applications: The Members of the Committee have taken a broad approach to the considering of Grants and felt that other recipients that had been considered in past years, as shown on the report, could not be considered for a Grant if a Herstmonceux Grant Application Form had not been received from them. It is noted that both Officers of the Council, when receiving a letter requesting financial assistance forward to that organisation a Herstmonceux Grant Application form for completion and submission by the required date of 31st July in each year.

A 'Grant Scheme' page has been added to the Herstmonceux Parish Council website and provides details of the awarding of Grants since the financial year 2013-14 and provides an overview of the Grant Scheme. The page also provides a link to a 'Word' and 'PDF' version of the Grant Application Form to be downloaded by any organisation / Charity wishing to apply.

That the recipient organisation can be asked to provide proof that the money awarded is in fact used for the purpose that it has been awarded, and that the Grant should be used for the purposes that it has been awarded within 12 months

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of the 30 September of the year awarded. Grants not used for the purpose awarded or used for the purpose outside of the 12-month period may be required to be repaid to the Parish Council.

FIN.08.08.16 THE OLD SURGERY: The RFO brought to the attention of the committee the recent events and emails surrounding the request from Mrs Gardiner for loft insulation to be installed in the loft area of The Old Surgery.

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Stewart, referred the matter of the apparent withdrawal of the offer by Mrs. Gardiner of APC Care Ltd, to provide loft insulation material if the Parish Council would arrange and pay for its installation.

Councillor Stewart continued by informing the meeting that as from 01 April 2018, commercial landlords would be required to ensure that their premises would need to meet better standards of EPC ratings. The Old Surgery currently was rated as "F" and would need to be uprated to "E" by 01 April 2018.

Councillor Goodsell was of the opinion that the PC had engaged a contractor to install the insulation, that the Parish Council should go ahead and have it installed as the cost would be minimal for the insulation material.

The RFO suggested that if the Parish Council went ahead and had the insulation installed all at its own cost, and taking into consideration that the previous EPC report was undertaken prior to the double glazed units were installed, a further EPC report would provide the "E" rating required.

The meeting discussed the matter and it is **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** that the installation should be purchased and installed at the cost of the Parish Council, and that a further EPC report commissioned afterwards. Proposed: Councillor Goodsell; Seconded: Councillor Stewart. All Councillors in favour.

Councillor Nash brought the matter of the garden area at The Old Surgery and how it required tidying up, and whether it should be landscaped in some way by the Parish Council. Councillor Goodsell informed the meeting that he had tidied it up once and had worked on clearing ivy etc., from the fencing.

Councillor Stewart would suggest that reference to the lease agreement should be made prior to any decision on the part of the Parish Council, regarding the garden area.

FIN.09.08.16 BANKING PROVISION: The RFO had circulated a further update report. Herstmonceux Parish Council has banked with Barclays Bank plc for many years, the actual number is not available.

The recent change in the legislation and in the Rules of Accountability and Governance for Local Councils, whereby a local council can now use up to date technology to adopt online banking facilities, and are no longer required to use cheques as a normal form of payment, has raised the opportunity to review the Parish Council's banking arrangements.

The Parish Council, as at the 31 March 2016, held combined balances in its bank accounts amounting to £179,624.00

During the financial year 2015-2016 the Parish Councils transactions were as follows:

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Transaction Type	Number
Cheques	177
Direct Debits	62
Sundry items	57
Bank Charge items	2
Direct Credits	8
Quarterly Standing Orders	4
VAT Direct Credits	4
Transfers between Accounts	15

The RFO has now approached all the major banks in Hailsham, Barclays Bank plc (current provider), HSBC, Lloyds Bank, and National Westminster Bank.

A visit by the RFO and Cllr Bradshaw was undertaken. A meeting was held at the Hailsham Branch of the HSBC Bank with the Accounts Manager asked of us both whether Internet Banking was something that the Parish Council really wanted to consider.

In his opinion there were restrictions to the authorisation methodology which may not meet the aspirations of the Council. For example, it was explained that ideally the Parish Council would like the RFO to administer the account, online, and to be able to transfer monies between (say) a savings account and the current account and visa-versa. The RFO would not, however, be permitted to authorise payments from the council's accounts. Authorisation would still be required for payments from the account to remain with Elected Councillors on the basis of any two from three or four.

The HSBC Accounts Manager was of the opinion that near, in respect of authorisation. It appears that there would be a primary authority and secondary authorities, if that was what the Parish Council required, but the primary authority would be able to undertake any transaction on his/her own.

In setting up a Community Account, for the Parish Council, there would be no charges as long as the turnover of the Council was of up to a maximum of £100,000 in a year. Once the limit of £100,000 had been breached for any reason that the account would become a 'Business' or 'Commercial' account and normal bank charges would apply.

It was also explained that Banks would require to see a copy of the signed Minutes showing that the Parish Council was appointing the Bank as its provider, and would require a copy of the Parish Council's constitution, and that every Elected Member and the RFO would be required to go through the Bank's identity checks, not just those Elected Councillors who were to act as signatories to the Council's accounts.

It appears that the ability to set up a list of payments to employees and suppliers each month for authorisation, may not necessarily be possible. Very much like personal internet banking, it appears that each payment from the account may need the authorisations to be applied to them, not to the overall number of payments being made that month.

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To achieve authorisation of a batch of payments it would appear that the Parish Council may need to buy into some third party software such as 'BACSTEL'.

There are several organisations which are recommended by BACS whereby the Parish Council could buy-in to Direct Credit software or online services, such as APT, Cashbook Ltd, Interbacs, and Unified Software.

The RFO will investigate other local councils in the area to see if and who they are using, such as Polegate who have a set up with Barclays Bank. The RFO will gather detail about how this works.

It is acknowledged that the Parish Council needs to move forward on this but it is highlighted by the RFO that various options need assessing to ensure the correct systems for Herstmonceux Parish Council are agreed, rather than the Council be put into a position as to having to do its banking in such a way just because that's how it has to be done.

Further reports will be submitted as more information is gathered, for discussion.

FIN.10.08.16 **REVISED ESTIMATE 2016-17 / ORIGINAL ESTIMATE 2017-18:** The RFO asked the meeting if he could follow the procedures of last year in providing Estimate working sheets to all Committees, working groups, and individual Councillors, so that these could be completed during the September cycle of meetings, in readiness for the October F&GP Committee meeting.

It is anticipated that the Estimate Working Sheets will be available towards the end of August.

The meeting agreed.

FIN.11.08.16 **STANDING COMMITTEE:** The RFO had circulated a proposal for the setting up of a Standing Committee consisting of the Chairman of the Council, The Vice Chairman of the Council, The Chairman of Finance & General Purposes Committee, and the Responsible Finance Officer to have a delegated power in an emergency situation to be able to authorise expenditure of up to £1,000 (excluding VAT). This had arisen out of an earlier F&GP Committee meeting whereby a requirement for expenditure on a handrail was needed urgently.

Councillor Nash put it to the meeting that this was just another Committee being formed and what was the objection for the Finance & General Purposes Committee not having such delegation to it as a whole.

Councillor Stewart reminded Councillor Nash that there would be a requirement of a three-day advertisement requirement for the F&GP Committee to meet, as all its meetings were open to public attendance. Councillor Nash felt that this was not a great problem, as long as the decision of a quorate F&GP Committee was able to go ahead and authorise the expenditure and not have to await Full Council.

Councillor Mrs Angear agreed with Councillor Nash and further stated that it can only be for emergencies, not general expenditure.

The meeting discussed with the RFO the matter further and it was agreed that the following be put forward:

PROPOSAL FOR RESOLUTION OF FULL COUNCIL

THAT Herstmonceux Parish Council give DELEGATED POWERS to the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE to authorise expenditure of up to and including £1,000 (ex VAT) in an emergency or in order to expedite matters, providing:

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1. A meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee is properly convened; the meeting having been advertised for the requisite three-day notice period.
2. That the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee is quorate.
3. That the meeting is attended by either the Responsible Finance Officer, and/or Parish Clerk.
4. That the matter requiring funding under DELGATED POWERS is agreed by the Chairman of the Parish Council or Vice Chairman as an emergency matter.
5. All decisions of the specially convened Finance & General Purposes Committee must be recorded in writing setting out the reasons for the decision, and presented to the next meeting of Full Council for ratification.

FIN.12.08.16 DATES FOR F&GP COMMITTEE: The RFO recommends that there are meetings of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 06 September 2016, 04 October 2016, 08 November 2016, and on Monday 11 January 2017.

FIN.13.08.16 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA:

1. F&GP Committee items to be included in the Estimates for 2016-17.
2. Tendering process for the Urban Grass-cutting contract for 2016-17.
3. Re-Appointment of Internal Auditor, and Policy for the Appointments of Internal Auditors in future.
4. Transparency – Financial Information on website.
5. Risk & Disaster items from F&GP Committee.

FIN.14.08.16 CLOSE OF MEETING: There being no other business, the Chairman, Councillor Bradshaw thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.15pm