

# Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 7.30pm in the Booth Hall.

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and reported that Paul Milton had resigned from the Parish Council.

## Public Discussion

Community Warden Report: Martin Sherwood reported that he has received calls regarding driveway work that has been completed in Bearsted and wanted to raise the issue in case the contractors came to Harrietsham. He stated that their sales practices do not comply with Trading Standards, as resident are not being informed of their 7 day right to cancellation. Also, they have been pressurising homeowners, one in particular had been visited 4 times, two of which were in the local shop. He asked that he be informed, if anyone receives a visit in the village, so that he can attend and hopefully obtain registration numbers to pass onto Trading Standards. Martin also reported on Caller Line Identity (CLI) spoofing. This has been highlighted lately as a new issue where the scammers are able to change the caller identification details to look as though they are being contacted by a different company. A recent example was where the number used had actually been a Kent County Council telephone number. He asked that people be vigilant that the person calling may not be who they say they are. He stated that, if any resident has any concerns with a call, they should hang up and try contacting the Company from a different phone line as the scammers can keep the line open when a call is made.

Police Report: The Clerk informed all present that a report had not been received from the Police.

## 1 Present

Cllr K Kay, Cllr J Sams, Cllr T Sams, Cllr A Chinnery, Cllr C Przystupa, Cllr M Williams, Cllr G Trussler, Cllr G Dean, Cllr S Morris, Lenham Representative Cllr P Culver, RFO Mr M Cuerden, Community Warden M Sherwood and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst.  
20 Members of the Public

## 2 Apologies for absence

Cllr Allwood

## 3 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Chinnery; with all in favour.

## 4 Disclosures and confidential items

Changes to the Register of Interests

No changes to the Register of Interests were declared.

### Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

Cllr A Chinnery Agenda Item 5.3 (Planning - Recommendations from the Planning Committee) She will be using the dispensation granted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 to discuss and vote on this matter.

Cllr C Przystupa Agenda Item 5.3 (Planning - Recommendations from the Planning Committee) He will be using the dispensation granted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 to discuss and vote on this matter.

Cllr S Morris - Agenda Item 5.3 (Planning - Recommendations from the Planning Committee) He will be using the dispensation granted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 to discuss and vote on this matter.

Agenda Item 7.1 (Environmental - Recommendations from the Environmental Committee) as the Company, which he is a Director of, has submitted a quotation for the removal of a tree.

Agenda Item 8.1 (Finance - Recommendations from the F&GP Committee, Village Hall Trust Payments) as he is the Vice-Chair and a member of the Committee of the Village Hall Trust, but not the Parish Council representative.

Cllr J Sams - Agenda Item 10.2 (Playscheme) as she was contracted as the Manager and her daughter was employed as a member of staff.

Cllr T Sams - Agenda Item 10.2 (Playscheme) as his wife was contracted as the Manager and his daughter was employed as a member of staff.

Cllr G Dean - Agenda Item 7.1 (Environmental - Recommendations from the Environmental Committee) as she lives next to Woodlands Walk.

Cllr M Williams Agenda Item 5.3 (Planning - Recommendations from the Planning Committee) He will be using the dispensation granted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 to discuss and vote on this matter.

#### Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

## **5 Planning**

5.1 The current planning applications were noted.

5.2 The planning decisions were noted.

5.3 Recommendations from the Planning Committee

- Development of a new Neighbourhood Plan: A report had been circulated from the Planning Committee, which laid out three options for the Neighbourhood Plan, these had been considered by the Neighbourhood Planning Working Party, as the existing Plan is out of date and no longer aligned with the Maidstone draft Local Plan. The options were:

1. Do nothing and not have a Neighbourhood Plan
2. Attempt to edit the existing Neighbourhood Plan
3. Use some of the base material from the existing document and write a new Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Chinnery proposed that Option 3 be agreed, with a caveat that the Parish Council does not incur further substantial costs (£21.5k has already been spent on the old one); any funding/external support would need to be secured via grants. This was seconded by Cllr Przystupa, with all in favour.

- Production of a Village Design Policy: Cllr Chinnery reported that the Working Group had also looked into producing a Village Design Policy. It was felt that this is a priority as, once in place, even if the Neighbourhood Plan is not complete, the Parish Council can use the approved Design Policy with MBC when detailed designs are being developed for the Mayfield and Church Road sites. Cllr Trussler queried whether there would be any related cost in producing this policy and Cllr Chinnery confirmed that the 'My Community' Team and MBC officers would be contacted for input at no charge to the Parish Council. Cllr J Sams asked whether there would be any community involvement in the policy and Cllr Chinnery stated that the work would be completed by the Working Party. However, if a person has views that could assist with its creation they are welcome to help. Cllr Morris asked whether the Working Party had spoken to Staplehurst Parish Council as they have a Visual Design Statement which has been adopted to MBC standards, which gives the document more weight. Cllr Dean stated that they would contact them. It was noted that the sale of the Church Road site to a developer (with an outline application approved) is almost complete and the owners of the Mayfield Nursery site are in active discussions with developers, so the group needs to get the policy in place quickly. Cllr Chinnery thanked Rebecca Bell, Chris Rootes and Eddie Powell for their assistance within the Working Party and also thanked Jackie Moore for work she has been completing with regards to the CTRL site.

Cllr Chinnery proposed that a Village Design Policy be produced, this was seconded by Cllr Dean; with all in favour.

## **6 Communications Committee**

- 6.1 Update on Communications Strategy: Cllr Przystupa reported that the new website is now up and running. This has been advertised in Network and on the Facebook site. This site was created free of charge and will save the Parish Council at least £400 per annum. The web address is:

[www.harrietshampc.kentparishes.gov.uk](http://www.harrietshampc.kentparishes.gov.uk)

- 6.2 Cllr Przystupa thanked James Hailes for building the site and uploading the information.
- Recommendations from the Communications Committee: Whilst there were no recommendations to discuss, Cllr Przystupa stated he had a number of other items he wished to mention. The Communications Committee is looking into other ways of communicating with residents. These will include text alerts and webcasting meetings (for transparency). Cllr Kay stated that, at a recent Police Meeting he had attended, they had mentioned that Neighbourhood Watch schemes are a good way of distributing information in villages. Cllr Przystupa stated that the Committee will be completing a survey to find out how residents would like to receive information from the Parish

Council. Cllr T Sams stated that, in the circulated report, it stated that Network would be used until March 2016. He queried how the Parish Council will reach the members of the community who are not on the internet. Cllr Przystupa stated that this date had been mentioned as that was the end of this current financial year and the use of Network would then need to be reviewed. Cllr Przystupa reported that a meeting had taken place with Network representatives, Peter Brown and Michael Gear but it was apparent that there was no readership data to know whether the Parish Council article is valued. After discussion with them, it had been agreed that the Network would consider placing the Parish Council's copy on consecutive pages that are closer to the front of the magazine. Cllr T Sams stated that it was good to see that a meeting had been held to discuss issues with them. Cllr Dean added that the grant for Network had originally been given to the Fish Scheme, however, in more recent years, this had been given to Network to cover one month's printing. Peter Brown had confirmed that placing copy in Network was free to all village organisations. Cllr Morris stated that the Parish Council would usually use certain powers to avoid using s137, which has a cap on the amount a Council could spend.

## 7. Environmental

7.1 **Recommendations from the Environmental Committee:** A report from the Committee had been circulated before the meeting.

*Cllr Morris left the room*

- Removal of Apple Tree in Woodlands Walk: Cllr Dean reported that there had been a recommendation from the recent Environmental meeting to remove an Apple tree which is dangerous, with a limb hanging off. In the short term the branch had been removed and quotes had been obtained for the removal of the tree. However, a resident has now offered to fell the tree, at no cost to the Parish Council. This will be completed in the next few days but it was noted that the tree is full of crab apples. These will be removed and will be left in a convenient place for any jam makers in the village.

*Cllr Morris returned to the meeting*

7.2 **Other Environmental Issues:**

- Cllr Przystupa queried whether the new draft amenity contract was ready to be circulated. Cllr Kay reported that this would be ready for discussion at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Environmental Cttee**

- Glebe Field: Cllr Trussler queried the report circulated by the Environmental Committee relating to the Glebe Field. He asked whether the temporary bunds were now going to be a permanent solution. Cllr Kay confirmed that this would now be the case. The view was to hire a mini digger to level out the bunds so that they can be planted up to look more attractive. Cllr Morris queried whether it would be a self-drive hire as the relevant plant hire insurance would be required. Cllr Kay suggested that a group of 6 volunteers may be able to complete the work required without the need to hire machinery. Cllr T Sams stated that MBC would need to be consulted as they own part of the field and that a meeting should be held with residents to inform them of the proposal and to see if they would volunteer to assist with the necessary work. After further brief discussion, Cllr T Sams proposed that the Parish Council arrange a mini digger, with driver, to complete the work. This was seconded by Cllr Morris, with all in favour. Cllr T Sams offered to speak with a contact in Lenham, who may be able to assist.

**ACTION: Cllr T Sams**

## 8 Finance

8.1 The Income/expenditure finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr Trussler and seconded by Cllr Dean, with all in favour.

8.2 F&GP Minutes from the meeting held 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015: The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Trussler, seconded by Cllr Dean; with all in favour.

*Cllr Morris left the room*

8.3 Recommendation from the F&GP Meeting: A report had been circulated before the meeting. Cllr Trussler spoke on the following items:

- Village Hall Trust Outstanding Invoices: A meeting had taken place with representatives from the Village Hall Trust on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September. The invoices received for the Friday Coffee Morning, Big Lunch, Big Gig, Ground Rent and Playscheme had been discussed, which amounted to approximately £12,300. The Parish Council had asked for some concessions as there had been established agreements entered into by the previous Parish

Council. These had comprised of use of the Booth Hall for Parish Council meetings being included in the Parish Office rent, discounted hire of the Booth Hall for the Coffee Morning and reduced ground rental for the doctor's surgery. The discussion had also included whether these historical agreements could continue or that invoices for historic hirers could be at the discounted rates. These requests had subsequently been discussed at a Village Hall Trust meeting and they had proposed to continue the discounted rates until the 31st August 2015, but the past two years ground rent would be at the current rate. These concessions had given the Parish Council a discount of approximately £1,600. Going forward, Cllr Trussler explained that these amendments to the rates will result in additional costs for the Parish Council:

- Use of the Booth Hall from Parish Council meetings - increase of around £500 per annum.
- Increase in hire charge for the Coffee Morning - additional cost of around £230 per annum.
- With regards to the ground rent for the doctor's surgery, two contracts had been entered into in 2011. One between the Village Hall Trust and the Parish Council for the ground rent, which increased from £2,900 to £3,500 and the other between the Parish Council and the Doctors. However, NHS Property Services had not increased the rent to be paid, therefore the Parish Council had a £600 annual liability to the Village Hall Trust. For the first three years there had been an agreement between the Parish Council and the Village Hall Trust to keep the ground rent at £2,900, in line with the rental agreed with NHS Property Services. Cllr Trussler stated that the Village Hall Trust were now exercising their right to charge the agreement amount of £3,500.

Cllr Trussler reminded all present that this additional expenditure for the current financial year had not been budgeted for and so would need to be taken from the general reserves. Cllr Przystupa clarified that the increase in the rent could not currently be reclaimed in the surgery rent. He queried whether these liabilities, which go back nearly three years, had been carried forward in the budget each year and Cllr Trussler confirmed that they had not. It was noted that these additional bills would deplete the reserves by £3,700. Cllr Trussler then proposed that the outstanding invoices for the Friday Coffee Morning, Big Lunch, Big Gig, Ground Rent and Playscheme, at an expenditure of approximately £10,400 be paid. This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with all in favour.

Cllr Trussler then spoke about the outstanding Village Hall Trust invoices for Remix and the Film Club, which amount to £2,700, of which only £600 relates to this year. Cllr Chinnery raised concerns that there are no agreements in place for future payments and there are some payments that the Parish Council believes should not have been charged. She asked how rate increase will be negotiated in the future, adding that it appeared that the Village Hall Trust had just found every single penny that they could possibly bill for. Cllr Trussler stated, as historical agreements were not in writing, they could not continue. The office agreement relates to 'the premises' and is not defined, so it is unclear as to whether this rental should have included the use of the Booth Hall for Parish Council meetings. It was noted that a document has been produced with the current rental charges but Cllr Chinnery raised concerns that, mid-year, when the budget is fixed, there could be further increases. Cllr Przystupa added that the Parish Council should not be entering any long term agreements when there are still outstanding issues with the Village Hall Trust. Cllr Dean stated that the Parish Council is their best customer, yet no discount is being offered, this seems particularly unfair. With regards to the Coffee morning, Cllr Dean added that, for some elderly residents, this could be their one trip out each week, so increasing the cost of this was particularly mean and felt that the Parish Council is being taken advantage of. Cllr Kay offered to discuss this further with the Village Hall Trust, as the Parish Council representative.

**ACTION: Cllr Kay**

The Treasurer of the Village Hall Trust confirmed that, as the rates were increased in January 2015, there was no intention of increasing them further.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr J Sams that the outstanding invoices for Remix and the Film Club be paid. This was seconded by Cllr T Sams, with 4 in favour (JS, TS, GT & KK), 2 against (AC & CP) and 2 abstentions (GD, MW).

Cllr Trussler stated he would send an email querying how long the new rates will be in force for.

**ACTION: Cllr Trussler**

*Cllr Morris returned to the meeting*

- Reserve levels for the Parish Council: Cllr Trussler reported that the reserve levels for the Parish Council had been discussed at the F&GP meeting. In line with CIPFA (The

Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) recommendations, appropriate level of reserves would be between £22,000 and £44,000 in the General Fund. The Committee had agreed that the Parish Council should aim not to go below £33,000. It was noted that current predications would suggest that the reserves will be around £34,800 at the end of the financial year. Cllr Trussler stated he was not particularly happy with this, although there were a few items which money would now not be required for. These included a loan request from the Village Hall Trust of £5,000, as they have managed to raise the money themselves. He also reported that, following a s106 meeting, where expansion of the doctor's surgery had been discussed, the Parish Council will need to fund 1/3 of the work at a possible cost of £50,000. The Parish Council could borrow money for this, however, there is already money owed to the restricted Woodlands Walk fund. Therefore, he would like to see the reserves rise to £45,000 which would require the Parish Council to look at austerity measures and a gentle precept rise over forthcoming years.

- Valuation for Teers Meadow: Cllr Dean stated that, as the previous valuation was only 2 years old, this was not required.
- Change of broadband/telephone supplier: A report had been circulated by the RFO which highlighted that the Parish Council could save approximately 50% of the current annual cost. It was proposed by Cllr Kay that the Parish Council switch provider to Plus.net. This was seconded by Cllr Chinnery, with all in favour.

- 8.4 Requirements for Grant Applications: Cllr Przystupa asked that, before grants are considered, applicants need to have submitted the previous year's annual accounts. The only exception to this is the Village Hall Trust who should also submit their income and expenditure for this year as they are currently invoicing for items that go back three years. Cllr Przystupa also requested that applications indicate any previous grants that they have been awarded and asked that Councillors are provided with the Parish Council's budget projections for the next financial year. The RFO reported that the grant applications are usually discussed at the November F&GP meeting so that there is time to investigate any queries that arise. He added that annual accounts are currently submitted with applications. The grant recommendations would then be approved at the November full Parish Council meeting.

## 9 Highways

A report from the Committee had been circulated before the meeting.

- 9.1 Change of Councillor on the Highways Committee: The Clerk reported that Cllr Trussler had stood down from this Committee resulting in there now being two vacancies to fill. Cllr T Sams had offered to take one of the places and the Clerk suggested that the other should be offered to whoever is co-opted on to the Parish Council at the October meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Kay that Cllr T Sams join the Highways Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Morris, with all in favour.

## 10 Youth Provisions

- 10.1 Remix: A report from the Committee had been circulated before the meeting. It was noted that the Group wished to purchase sound equipment to the value of £3,000 from the Lottery Grant. Cllr J Sams stated that this was subject to reaching an agreement with the Village Hall Trust over the use/hire of the studio and also the revenue income arrangements being decided. It was proposed by Cllr J Sams to purchase the equipment, subject to the agreements being put in place. This was seconded by Cllr Dean, with all in favour.

- 10.2 Playscheme: A report from the Committee had been circulated before the meeting.

## 11 The Glebe Field

This had been discussed under agenda item 7.2.

## 12 Lenham Parish Council

Cllr Dean reported that she had updated Lenham Parish Council on the progress of Harrietsham's Neighbourhood Plan. She added that sheep had been offered to assist with maintaining the churchyard.

## 13 Representative for the Village Hall Trust

The Clerk asked for this to be deferred to the next meeting. This was agreed by all present.

## 14 Creation of a Register of Village Volunteers

Cllr Chinnery stated that there are lots of interesting people in Harrietsham with strengths that may be of assistance to the Parish Council. It was suggested that a register be created of volunteers willing to assist with

different tasks, as required. Cllr Morris added that the Parish Council should welcome volunteers and it was noted that this has now been advertised on the website.

**15 Invitation for the Mayor to attend the January Meeting**

The Clerk reported that the Mayor has been invited to attend the January meeting in past years and queried whether the new Parish Council wished to continue with this. It was proposed by Cllr Kay that he be invited to the January meeting and this was seconded by Cllr Trussler; with all in favour. The refreshments were discussed briefly and the Clerk was asked to arrange sandwiches and the Chairman would arrange the wine with his Chairman's allowance.

**16 Parish Council Meeting Venue**

Cllr Przystupa reported that, to promote better attendance at meetings, the Parish Council required a larger venue as there have been issues in the past with people having to stand in the hallway. The Communications Committee have been investigating alternatives, especially as the Parish Council is looking at its expenditure over the year. Cllr Morris stated that the school hall is offered for hire free of charge and Cllr Przystupa confirmed he had already spoken to the school. After brief discussion it was agreed that this should be discussed at the next meeting and the Clerk was asked to add this to the agenda. **ACTION: Clerk**

**17 Charity Committee Outstanding Work**

Cllr Morris reported that, at a recent meeting, it had been decided that Cllr Williams would be Chair, Cllr Chinnery would be Secretary and Cllr Morris would become Treasurer. Cllr Morris thanked Mr Hammick with his continued patience whilst the Parish Council had arranged a change to the correspondence details. He added that, hopefully, this issue had now been resolved. The group is producing annual accounts in order to try to arrange for the Charity Commission to reinstate the Culpepper Charity. The Stede Charity will not be able to be reregistered, as it does not have an investment fund. Cllr Morris added that they are now working on producing a distribution policy.

**18 Joint Parish Group Membership**

The Clerk reported that, until earlier this year, Harrietsham had been a member of the Joint Parish Group. Having received a call recently from the Clerk of the group, the Clerk queried whether Harrietsham would wish to re-join. There is a meeting in October where the group will be discussing the development at Junction 8 and also the Local Plan, which is going out to Regulation 18 consultation at the beginning of October. After brief discussion it was agreed that a representative would attend the meeting to understand the aims of the group better, before a decision is made. This was agreed by all present.

**19 Correspondence** - The Clerk reported that all correspondence had been circulated.

**20 Future Events**

Cllr Morris reported that the Village Hall Solar Panel Voting closes in 2 ¾ hrs. (841 votes currently registered)  
Beer Festival - 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
St John's Harvest Supper - 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
PTFA Meeting - 7<sup>th</sup> October (in the school)  
Harrietsham in Bloom AGM - 9<sup>th</sup> October  
Flu Jab Clinic at Lenham Surgery - 10<sup>th</sup> October  
Soup on Saturdays (run by The Friends of St Johns) - 10<sup>th</sup> October  
Remix Film Club - 16<sup>th</sup> October  
Village Hall Community Clean Up Day - 17<sup>th</sup> October  
War Memorial Rededication - 7<sup>th</sup> November  
Court Lodge Road Planning Appeal Hearing (in the Town Hall) - 18<sup>th</sup> November

**21 Items for Future Consideration**

Parish Council Meeting Venue - Cllr Przystupa

**22 Date of Next Meeting** - Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 at 7.30pm in the Booth Hall

*With no further items to discuss, the meeting was closed at 9.20pm*

**Public Discussion**

A resident queried whether volunteers assisting the Parish Council would be covered by insurance. The RFO confirmed that any volunteer completing work on behalf of the Parish Council would be covered by the insurance in place. However, it was noted that the Parish Council would need to produce Risk Assessments.

A resident queried whether there had been any progress with MBC with regards to Pilgrims Retreat. Cllr Chinnery confirmed that discussion had taken place and it had been confirmed that the Enforcement Team completed the necessary checks and have proof of resident's permanent addresses. Cllr Chinnery had queried how valid these addresses are and no response had been received so the question had been asked again; although no response has been received to date.

A resident stated that Yalding Parish Council has a disaster plan which lists volunteer details and they have confirmed in the past that they are happy to circulate this for other Parishes to look at.

A resident stated that she is a volunteer at CAB and they have been involved in the Energy Switch programme, which has been very successful.

A resident stated that, when the F&GP Committee look at the Grants, they need to be checked to see that the Groups meet the criteria, particularly the Network magazine, as it is run by the Fish Scheme who are financially sound. The RFO stated that they will be viewed by the F&GP Committee who will make sure they are legally correct. Cllr Przystupa added that the grants cannot be approved for running costs and it needs to be confirmed that the groups are sustainable as the grant should not end up being a subsidy.