

## **HARBERTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**DRAFT MINUTES** of the meeting of the Finance Committee of Harberton Parish Council at 7.30pm on Tuesday 2nd July 2024 at Harbertonford Village Hall Committee Room

In attendance: Cllrs Beamish, Camp, Davies, Morris (Chair),  
Apologies: Cllr Paine, Williams  
Clerk: Ms Radford

### **Agenda**

1. **Apologies** were received as above and sanctioned.
2. **Minutes** of the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 were approved as an accurate record.
3. **Receive and review end of quarter 1 reports**
  - 3.1. 2024/25 end of quarter 1 financial year budget report Cllrs reviewed the end of quarter budget report and had the opportunity to ask questions and check figures. Members of the Finance Committee went through each line, looking at variances with the budget, noting that the second half of the precept will likely be received in September.
  - 3.2. 2024/25 end of quarter 1 bank reconciliation Cllrs reviewed the end of quarter 1 bank reconciliation, checking figures that figures on the bank statement and the budget report agreed. All figures were initialled. **It was RESOLVED** to sign the reconciliation and bank statements (signed by Cllr Morris).

### **4. Reserves**

- 4.1. Review of reserves At the last meeting of the Finance Committee it had been noted that the Council's general reserve of £3951.12 was lower than desired as the Reserves Policy states that The Parish Council seeks to build up its General Reserves so that the amount held is six months of predicted expenditure. This would be a figure of approximately £10,000 - £11,000.

It was noted that the internal auditor's report had also commented that the general reserve represents 20% of the precept and below the minimum level recommended in the NALC Practitioner's Guide. His recommendation is that for a smaller council like Harberton, he would anticipate a general reserve no lower than 50% of the precept. The Council currently has minimum funds to meet unexpected costs.

After discussion **it was AGREED** to recommend to the Parish Council to remove £4000 from the Parish Lengthsman earmarked reserve in order to increase the Parish Council's general reserve to £7951.12.

**It was AGREED** to recommend to the Parish Council that by 2026/7 the Parish Council should:

- have general reserves equating to half the precept and
- to rebuild the Parish Lengthsman reserve

It was noted that to do this over two years, the Finance Committee should aim to have built up the general reserve to at least £8,500 in the 2025/6 budget.

- 4.2. Review of the Harberton Parish Council Reserves Policy  
**It was AGREED** to recommend to the Parish Council that the Reserves Policy is amended to include the following wording under point 2.1:

*On the 2nd July 2024 the Finance Committee agreed to recommend to the Parish Council to maintain a general reserve at a value of half (50%) of the precept.*

### **5. Review applications to the Community Benefit Fund and consider grant recommendations (if any)**

- 5.1. Harberton Parish Hall: Improving surface of Harberton Parish Hall car park by spreading gravel An application was made for a grant of £542.40 to cover the full cost of purchasing a load of gravel for volunteers to spread to improve the muddy condition of the car park and vehicle slope. The grant to cover the cost of the gravel is being requested as despite an increase in hiring fees, the Hall is running at a deficit and the committee is monitoring finances very carefully. As this project benefits the whole community, the committee feels justified in asking for help. **It was AGREED** to recommend that the grant be awarded.

- 5.2. Harbertonford Repair of Benches An application was made for a grant of £1000 to cover labour and materials costs for two benches on the 'village green' in Harbertonford that have fallen into a state of disrepair. If remedial work is not undertaken the benches will soon become unusable which would be a great loss to the village. The benches are used throughout the year by villagers and passers by as a place to relax, take in nature and enjoy the wildlife on the river. A quotation had been supplied along with the application. **It was AGREED** to recommend that the grant be awarded.
- 5.3. Harbertonford Football Club: Replacement of clubhouse fire exit door An application was made for up to £1000 towards the cost of replacing the existing wooden door with a uPVC fire exit door. The existing door, now 20 years old, needs replacing due to its propensity to swell and stick, or is difficult to close. Two quotes were provided showing cost of replacement at approximately £1450. Other sources of funding include player subs, car park donation and the club's lottery. **It was AGREED** to recommend that the grant be awarded.

- 6. Review clerk overtime and holiday tracker 2024/25 Quarter 1 and consider overtime payment requests (if any)** The Clerk had run a report of hours for the quarter, showing overtime of 66 hours in the quarter. Finance committee reviewed clerk's overtime and looked at the breakdown of the hours and the type of work they were associated with. It was noted that 54 hours of the clerk's time in the quarter were directly attributable to the Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan. This was considered high, however due to the expertise of the Clerk it was considered justified expense for the sake of supporting the completion of the plan, given the hours already spent by the Clerk and committee members.

**It was AGREED** to recommend to the Parish Council that the overtime of 66 hours, at a cost of £986.70 be paid to the Clerk in three instalments of £328.90 in July, August and September.

**It was AGREED** that overtime hours used in support of the Neighbourhood Plan should be logged against the 'Neighbourhood Plan Salary' budget line, rather than the 'overtime' budget line allowing this to run into overspend in the accounts in order to monitor spending transparently.

The Finance Committee will review hours and expenditure at the next quarterly meeting of the Finance Committee.

- 7. Confirmation of next meeting date** 7:30pm Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024.