

HARTING PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the Meeting of Harting Parish Council held on **Thursday 18 March 2021**
at 6.30 p.m.

The meeting was held via Zoom video link in accordance with the Coronavirus Act 2020

Present: Mr Shaxson (Chair), Mr Bonner, Mrs Bramley, Mrs Bull, Mrs Curran, Mrs Dawson, Mrs Gaterell, Mr Johnson-Hill, Mrs Martin, Mr Miller and Mr Palmer.

In attendance: Mrs Walker (Parish Clerk).

There were no members of the public in attendance.

The Chair opened the meeting by paying tribute to Daphne Gammon who had passed away earlier that week. She had been a councillor from 2007-2019 and had been responsible for arranging much of the youth work in the village as well as the new play area in South Gardens.

213. Apologies for absence: None.

214. Declarations of Interest: None.

215. Minutes from Meeting held on 18 February 2021.

The minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 21 January 2021 were agreed as a true record and would be signed by the Chair when circumstances allow.

216. Questions from the Public:

There were no questions from the Public.

217. Matters of Urgent Public Importance:

A road maintenance issue was raised regarding the state of some of the roads in West Harting, there are a number of large potholes and some areas are particularly muddy and difficult to pass on foot following wet weather. Local residents had been asked to report any issues via the Love West Sussex reporting system.

It was agreed the Council would raise the matter with WSCC (West Sussex County Council) and the Highways and Byways Advisory Committee (HABAC) would set up a local system to monitor the roads and drains and bring to the Council for further discussion.

218. Reports from the County and District Councillor

Dr O'Kelly, the County and District Councillor had circulated a report prior to the meeting and the following points were discussed:

- Local fingerposts – the ownership of fingerposts had been queried and Dr O'Kelly was awaiting an answer
- Council tax - the increases were largely due to the Police Commission to provide more policing as well as the WSCC increase to cover young people and social care services

219. Highways and Byways Advisory Committee (HABAC)

The minutes from the HABAC meeting on 8 March 2021 were noted. It was reported that there was a consensus to not recommend the progression of the Speedwatch to the Council at this stage.

Mrs Bull joined the meeting

It was noted the Council owned phone boxes had not become the responsibility of any of the Council committees, it was agreed it was most allied with HABAC. The potential use for the newly refurbished phone box at West Harting was discussed and it was agreed that Mr Miller would work with the local community to gauge the preferred use. It was suggested that perhaps a defibrillator may be placed there, purchased via a grant, or a seed and plant exchange. John Miller would make further investigations and bring a report back to a future meeting of the Council. It was noted the phone boxes in Nyewood and East Harting were both looked after by the local communities. Sadly, both had suffered broken panes of glass, these were being replaced and the invoices will be sent to the Council for reimbursement.

The Council considered two quotes for the refurbishment of the fingerpost at the southern end of North Lane:

Contractor A £2100

Contractor B £1250

The councillors discussed the uncertainty about the ownership of the fingerposts and whether the works should be delayed until the situation was clarified. However, it was felt that WSCC, who appear to own the fingerposts, were unlikely to refurbish the posts and might replace them with modern, unsightly signage if they were to fail. After some discussion the councillors agreed to move ahead with the refurbishment of the North lane fingerpost and that Contractor B should be appointed to carry out the work. The work on the remaining posts will be considered once further clarification has been received from WSCC.

A survey had been carried out for the 14 fingerposts in the Parish, this had shown there were 6 in need of professional work with the remainder either in the process of refurbishment or just in the need of cleaning which could be carried out by local volunteers. The members agreed quotes should be sought for the refurbishment of the posts needing professional work.

The proposals were then considered. An amendment was proposed to replace the word 'in' with 'or any other use for' in proposal (ii) which read:

That Mr Miller should investigate the potential for the installation of a defibrillator in the West Harting phone box

The amendment was agreed.

The following proposals, including substantive proposal (ii), were then agreed:

The following proposals were agreed:

- i. That the maintenance of disused telephone boxes in the parish become the responsibility of HABAC*
- ii. That Mr Miller should investigate the potential for the installation of a defibrillator or any other use for the West Harting phone box*

- iii. *That the quote from contractor B is accepted for the restoration of the fingerpost at the southern end of North lane at a cost of £1250*
- iv. *That the Council requests quotes for the restoration of the six fingerposts identified as needing professional restoration over the next two financial years with an estimated budget of £5000 per annum to finish by March 2023.*
- v. *That the Council find volunteers to clean and maintain the seven fingerposts that do not need professional restoration.*

220. Finance Committee

The minutes from the Finance meeting on 10 March 2021 were noted.

Mr Bonner reported the budget for the year ending 31 March 2021 had been reviewed and no adjustments were necessary. The budget was underspent by about £15,000 and members were asked to suggest potential projects for consideration at future meetings. The Asset Register had been considered by the Committee and the levels of insurance cover had been discussed. The Committee suggested a full Asset Review should be undertaken to detail the following:

- identify the location and state of each asset and detail any necessary maintenance
- the valuation of the asset for insurance purposes
- review the Governance of the trustee led assets and assess if the Council can help to promote or improve facilities

The members agreed the Internal Control document for the year ending 31 March 2021.

The proposals were then considered. An amendment was proposed to add the words 'to include relevant risk assessments' to (iii) which read:

that the Council agree an Asset Review Working Group should be established to carry out a review of all the Council's assets, to feed into insurance renewal in June 2021.

The amendment was agreed.

The following proposals, including substantive proposal (iii), were then agreed:

The following proposals were agreed:

- i. *to note the Finance committee has reviewed the budget for the financial year ending 31 March 2021 and no budget adjustments are necessary*
- ii. *that the Council considers projects for the estimated underspend of £15,000.*
- iii. *that the Council agree an Asset Review Working Group should be established to carry out a review of all the Council's assets, to include relevant risk assessments, to feed into insurance renewal in June 2021.*
- iv. *that Mr Bonner, Mrs Gaterell, Mr Palmer and the clerk will form the membership of the Asset Review Working Group .*
- v. *to note the Finance Committee have reviewed the Internal Control Review*

221. Online banking

Mr Miller had carried out some research for options for both online banking and a deposit account, and the various options had been discussed at the Finance meeting on 10 March

2021. The benefits of having an online banking facility had become more evident during the pandemic when cheque signing had become more difficult.

The Finance Committee recommended the Council remain with current bank account arrangements held with HSBC and this should be extended to include online banking and an associated deposit account.

The initial set up will require a named primary user, it was agreed this should be the council chair. A robust system and procedure will be put in place to ensure two signatories are involved and recorded in payment validations.

The following proposals were agreed:

- i. That the Council agree to online banking being set up on the HSBC current account providing the necessary process can be put in place to satisfy the Financial Regulations*
- ii. That the Council agree that Mr A Shaxson will be authorised as the Primary user for the purposes of setting up the online banking.*
- iii. That the Responsible Finance Officer will be authorised as the Secondary user for the online banking.*
- iv. That subject to (i) above the Council agree to open a Business Money Manager deposit account*
- v. That the operation of these accounts would be reviewed after 6 months by the Finance Committee, and appropriate changes made in light of the experience and prevailing competitive opportunities to earn a higher rate of deposit interest.*

222. Grant request

A request for a grant had been received from the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air ambulance to help fund new Oxylog 3000+ ventilators for the rapid response vehicles which attend the missions that cannot be attended by the helicopters.

The grant was initially considered by the members of the finance committee at its meeting on 10 March 2021 and it was noted that other requests in recent years had been awarded a grant of £100. On this basis the Committee recommended the Council should award a grant of £100 to the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air ambulance.

The following proposal was agreed:

That the Council should award the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air ambulance a grant of £100

223. New Council laptop

The current council laptop had been purchased at the end of 2015 and was now in need of update. The stored power is non-existent, despite two new batteries, and several functions are no longer working effectively. The Finance Committee had considered the available funding at its meeting on 10 March 2021 and agreed to recommend to the full Council that a new laptop should be purchased through the Council's IT suppliers, JnR Computers who will be able to arrange a discount set up the laptop. It is believed the cost will be in the region of £600.

The following proposal was agreed:

That the Council agree to purchase a new Council laptop via JnR Computers for a sum in the region of £600.

234. Parish Council Emergency Group (PCEG)

The PCEG continues to meet on a weekly basis and is currently considering how to 'wind down' the group when the restrictions are lifted in June 2021. The Buddy system has been very successful and it is hoped a similar system can be carried into the future. A community 'gathering' is also being considered to bring help re-establish the community and help groups meet together again. Further details and any potential financial impact will be brought to a future Council meeting.

The following proposal was agreed:

To note the report

235. WSALC (West Sussex Association of Local Councils) update

The chair and vice-chair had attended several meetings of WSALC with the delegated responsibility to 'take whatever action they considered necessary to benefit Harting and other parish councils'.

On 23 February they had attended an EGM for Chichester District ALC (CDALC) where the chair and vice-chair were replaced, and two new delegates elected to represent CDALC as directors of WSALC. This was followed by the extremely well attended WSALC AGM on 25 February, where voting on special resolutions meant the chair and vice chair were replaced and the proposed contract with Hampshire ALC was stopped.

The new board of Directors has now been established and it is hoped the situation will improve greatly.

Trevor Leggo has been retained as CEO and County Officer for West Sussex. The services of Anna Beams and Anne Butt will also be retained, and it is most likely that the organisation will retain the legal services provided by Ian Davidson.

The annual subscription will be due in April and will be 10% less than previously invoiced.

Mr Shaxson and Mrs Bramley were thanked for the work they had put into resolving this situation.

The following proposal was agreed:

To note the report

236. Finance

It was agreed that the following payments should be made:

Trish Walker	Clerk and RFO salary	941.00
HMRC	NI contributions	108.39
Mrs A Harris	East Harting Telephone Box - panes	21.36
Trish Walker	Clerks expenses	89.61
Petra Billings Woodland Consultancy Ltd	Consultant fees for Warren restoration	262.50
Mill Farm Plants	Holly and crab apple saplings	140.40
Mill Farm Plants	Trees and saplings for replanting	4,441.50

Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air ambulance	Grant - S137	100.00
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236.1. The income for March 2021 was noted:

S106 balance £75.79

237. Bank Reconciliation for March 2021

It was noted that the bank reconciliations had been scrutinised and will be signed by the Chairman of the Finance Committee. The Chairman of the Council will sign the reconciliation in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations when circumstances allow.

238. Bank balance as of 28 February 2021 £75,889.65

Noted.

239. Budget statement for February 2021

Noted.

240. Planning Committee

The minutes of the Planning meeting held on 18 February 2021 were noted.

241. Correspondence

The clerk had received an email from a member of public concerning the removal of the broken footpath lights and whether this decision should be revisited with regard to the issues raised as a result of the death of Sarah Everard in London. The councillors considered the question and agreed the clerk should respond to say the decision had been given proper consideration and there had been no responses from the public following an article in the Parish News.

Further to this, questions were raised about the methods by which a councillor could raise an item for discussion if it was not on the agenda or if they did not want to raise it as a 'matter of urgent public importance'. A question was also raised about the potential for 'any other business' on the agenda.

The clerk explained that all councillors were able to supply items and reports for the agenda, they would need to be received 7 days before the meeting date. She also confirmed 'any other business' could not be included on a Council agenda as items for discussion must be publicised in the correct manner to ensure conformation with the Transparency Act.

The clerk agreed to contact Trevor Leggo for clarification on these issues.

242. Clerks report

The report was noted.

243. Items for future meetings

There were no items detailed.

244. Date of next meeting – The next meeting would be held on Thursday 15 April 2021 via video conferencing, the time will be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 20.53 pm.