

**HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL
HERTFORDSHIRE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held via Zoom, on Wednesday 5 May 2021 starting at 7.30pm

Present: Parish Councillors Barrett (Chairman), Ayres, Holder, Randall and Sheffield.

Also in attendance: Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk)

1. Appointment of Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Barrett be appointed Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing year.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Ayres be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing year.

3. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

4. Internal Audit Report 2020/21

The Internal audit report as prepared and signed by the Auditor, Alex Sage was received and it was noted that there were no issues of concern that had been raised during the audit of the 2020/21 financial statements. One question had been asked about the unspent £250 locality grant and whether the County Council had been advised of the decision not to purchase a third dog bin. Mr Sage had noted that the intention was to use the money to remove the piles of debris on the triangle of land once a quote had been received, subject to the County Council's agreement to reallocate the money.

The Parish Council felt that it would be better if the District council incurred the costs of dog waste collection, but recognised that it was the Parish Council that had decided to purchase and maintain two bins at some point in the past. The Chairman said, in reply to a question, that he would raise with Townsend Nursery the question of collecting and taking away grass cuttings.

It was noted that the audit work had been undertaken pro bono but as per the budget, a gift of wine had been made in lieu of payment. The audit report together with other financial information would be published on the Parish Council's website in the coming weeks.

5. Summary Receipt and Payments Accounts

The Clerk said that the summary Receipts and Payments Accounts showed a balance at 31 March 2021 of £7855.56 which was an increase of £850 on the previous year. This was mainly due to income being c £300 higher than budget and dog waste collection costs being lower than expected as a result of the decision not to purchase a third bin. The training, grass cutting and meeting room budgets had also been underspent.

It was RESOLVED that the Accounts of Harpenden Rural Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2021 be approved and that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Summary Receipts and Payments Accounts 2020/21.

6. Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

The Parish Council considered the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 contained in Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Each section of the Statement was considered and it was agreed that each point had been met apart from point 9 which was not applicable.

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 be approved and signed by the Chairman and Parish Clerk

7. Accounting Statements 2020/21

The Parish Council considered Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) - Accounting Statements 2020/21. It was noted that the amounts set out in this document had been extracted from the Receipts and Payments Accounts as discussed under Minute 5.

It was RESOLVED that the Accounting Statements 2020/21 be approved and that the Chairman be authorised to sign Section 2 of the 2020/21 AGAR.

8. Certificate of Exemption from Internal Audit

The Clerk said that it was not necessary for the Parish Council to undergo a limited assurance review by P K Littlejohn LLP, external auditors, as long as the Parish Council certified itself as exempt. There were a number of requirements for exemption, the main one being that both income and expenditure in year were less than £25,000. In addition, the Parish Council had to comply with the Transparency Code for Small Authorities by publishing certain financial information, including the Certificate of Exemption, on the Parish Council website by 1 July 2021.

It was RESOLVED that the Chairman and Parish Clerk sign a Certificate of Exemption, AGAR 2020/21 Part 2 for submission to P K Littlejohn LLP, the External auditors.

9. Fly tipping

Councillor Sheffield said that she had not heard any further from Sgt Ryan Hemmings, but would follow this up before the next meeting. Councillor Sheffield had drafted a poster setting out what actions to take and who to contact in the event of fly tipping being spotted and that the content had been checked for accuracy with the District Council. The poster also contained an email contact address for any resident who was interested in taking part in a future litter pick. Councillor Sheffield said that she would monitor the email address.

It was AGREED that the poster was excellent and that a copy should be put on the Parish noticeboard. The Clerk said he would also add it to the home page of the Parish Council website and Councillor Holder suggested looking at the Nextdoor website

10. Clerk's contract

The Chairman referred to an email he had circulated to the Parish Council proposing a change to the Clerk's contract of employment to take effect from 1 April 2021, and confirmed that his proposal had been supported. The Chairman said that the Clerk was currently on salary point 17 of the NALC/SLCC pay scale and was employed for 15 hours a month (around 13 hours a month after bank holidays/annual leave)

It was RESOLVED that

- (i) the Clerk be moved to from salary point 17 to salary point 18 with effect from 1 April 2021
- (ii) the Clerk's working from home allowance be increased for £100 to £120 a year from 1 April 2021
- (iii) the Clerk be paid two hours overtime to cover his recent attendance at a Parish Clerks conference. This would come from the training budget
- (iv) the Clerk's contract be amended accordingly

11. Online Banking

In reply to a question the Clerk said he had made contact with one Parish Clerk of a small Council about online banking and was due to speak to another one shortly. The intention was to report further to the next meeting.

12. Parish Council website

The Clerk said that it would be necessary to spend some money on website maintenance as one of the plugins was no longer supported. The Clerk suggested this would cost in the region of £100 to £150.

It was RESOLVED that up to £150 be spent on updating and maintaining the Parish Council website.

13. Bench on Kinsbourne Green Common

Councillor Randall suggested that installing another bench on the Common would be a worthwhile way for the Parish Council to spend some of its resources

14. Wildflower seeds

The Chairman said that he had obtained some wildflower seeds from Rothamsted and planned to put these on the triangle of common land.

15. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on Monday 21 June 2021 at 7.30pm. This would be a face-to-face meeting as virtual meetings would not be permitted after 6 May 2021.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.13 pm

Clerk to the Council

Chairman