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Chairman:  
 Rev. Robert Tickle  
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**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 11th April 2018 at 7.30pm at Harrold Centre main hall**

**Present:** R Tickle (Chair), B Muller, B Page, G Lloyd, D Brough (Vice Chair), L Duggan, R Brough (Clerk), J Peverell, R Barrett, B Page, A Foster (Bedford Borough Council), L Hoad, P Pedersen,  
**Apologies:** S Reger, D Mercer

1. **Approval of Minutes** from the Annual Parish meeting held 12th April 2017  
 Minutes approved unanimously.
2. **Year-end Finance Report for 2017/18**

Cllr Brough talked through the 2017/2018 finances. Key points are that there is only a small overspend overall (ignoring projects), meaning our budgeting was accurate. The underspend on projects is due to projects being in progress. These will be rolled into the next year's finances.

**2017/18 P&L (Adjusted for VAT) - As at Mar 2018**

**Harrold Parish Council 2017/18**

<u>Income</u>		<u>YTD (Actual)</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
<b>Precept Income</b>	Precept Income	72,645	72,645	
<b>Bottle Bank Income</b>	Bottle Bank: Income	792	1,089	
	Grant Income: CTB reduction Grant	1,568	1,568	
	Grant Income: A Foster Ward Fund - Saxon House playground	1,000	0	
	Grant Income: A Foster Ward Fund - Scout hut redevelopment	479	0	
<b>Rural Grant Income</b>		1,568	1,568	
<b>Cemetery Income</b>		2,209	622	
	Section 106: Harewelle Way playground	149,000		
<b>Section 106 (Development)</b>		149,000		
<b>Bank Interest</b>		283	329	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>226,497</b>	<b>76,253</b>	

**Outgoings**

<b>Bottlebank</b>		<u>0</u>	<u>914</u>	<u>914</u>
	Clerk Salary: R Brough	11,319	12,116	
	Clerk Salary: R Brough Pension	88	0	
	Clerk Salary: R Brough Tax NI	<u>1,159</u>	<u>1,046</u>	
<b>Employment Costs</b>		<u>12,565</u>	<u>13,162</u>	<u>597</u>
	Clerk Expenses	0	268	
	Office: Phone & Broadband BT	553	689	
	Office: Rent	4,500	4,500	
	Office: Supplies	0	300	
	Office: Large Map printing	0	97	
	Office: Four Chairs	<u>0</u>	<u>102</u>	
<b>Office &amp; Admin</b>		<u>5,053</u>	<u>5,957</u>	<u>905</u>
<b>Training</b>		<u>354</u>	<u>492</u>	<u>138</u>
	Electricity: Buttermarket EON	501	254	
	Electricity: Street EON	1,288	1,223	
	Plants & Trees: Heritage Arboriculture	3,995	3,320	
	Plants & Trees: Tree Survey & Independent Advice	275	0	
	Plants & Trees: Memorial	0	0	
	Plants & Trees: Memorial Wreath	65	87	
	Playgrounds: ROSPA Inspection (Playsafety Ltd)	322	475	
	Brook: R Sinclair	3,000	3,000	
	Brook: Skip at Town Farm	467	253	
	Grass: In Trim	5,612	4,090	
	Maintenance: Outdoor Gym - Quarterly Maintenance	1,400	1,200	
	Village Maintenance: R Sinclair	2,230	2,459	
	Maintenance: Cemetery bench	280	0	
	Bin Collection: HC BBC	<u>482</u>	<u>472</u>	
<b>Parks and open spaces</b>		<u>19,917</u>	<u>16,832</u>	<u>-3,086</u>
	Grant Out: The Bridge magazine	500		
	Grant Out: Friends of HOCP (Country Park)	3,000		
	Grant Out: United Reformed Church - Cooker	1,500		
	Grant Out: Harrold Centre - Part 1	1,000		
	Grant Out: Harrold Snooker Club	<u>3,680</u>		
<b>Section 137 (Current Year)</b>		<u>9,680</u>	<u>9,532</u>	<u>-148</u>
	Other: BDO External Audit	720	756	
	Other: Internal Audit	0	100	
	Payroll: Cambridgeshire ACRE	249	36	
	Church Clock: Clock Repair	0	0	
	Church Clock: Clock Annual Maintenance	0	286	
	Membership: BATPC (Beds Assoc Town & Parish Councils) Annual	0	338	
	Membership: SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) Fees	0	149	
	Membership: CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) Annual	0	36	
	Other: Insurance	3,055	3,057	
	Other: New Parish Council Website	0	446	
	Other: BBC	49	27	
	Other: Buttermarket restoration (Prior year)	2,725	0	
	Other: Lamppost restoration	3,290	0	
	Other: Hydrant restoration	2,200	0	
	Other: Lower Green Bins	1,500	0	
	Other: Portable Speed Sign	2,449	0	
	Other: Various	<u>1,445</u>	<u>12,720</u>	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		<u>17,682</u>	<u>17,950</u>	<u>268</u>
<b>Total Outgoings without projects</b>		<u>65,252</u>	<u>64,839</u>	<u>-412</u>

Project: Harewelle Way playground	87,761	85,000	
Project: HPFA/Scouts Facilities	0	100,000	
Project: Harrold boundary signage and wall	350	20,000	
Project: Neighbourhood plan	7,674	5,000	
Project: Buttermarket and Lockup renovation	0	15,000	
Project: 2018 Memorial plans (inc peace garden)	0	10,000	
Project: Contingency	0	5,000	
<b>Project Expenditure (Budgeted)</b>	<b>95,786</b>	<b>240,000</b>	<b>144,214 U</b>
<b>Total Outgoings with projects</b>	<b>161,038</b>	<b>304,839</b>	<b>143,802 U</b>
<b>Harrold Centre Development</b>	<b>Harrold Centre Development payment</b>	<b>43,993</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Year To Date Net P&amp;L</b>	<b>21,466</b>	<b>-228,586</b>	

### 3. Chairman's end of year statement for 2017/18 by Robert Tickle

2017/2018 has been another busy year for Harrold Parish, and has seen a small change in councillors. Mike Johnston stood down after a long service as councillor due to constraints on his time. Andrew Jones also stood down as he moved away from the village and Lindsay Duggan and Lucie Hoad joined us as councillors. Robert Tickle remained as Chairman and David Brough became Vice Chair following an internal vote. Robbin Brough remained as clerk for her third year. At year end 31<sup>st</sup> March we were close to full capacity with 10 councillors. If there are no resignations then the current councillors will remain in place until the end of the four year term of office in May 2019, when elections will occur and the positions will be open for new candidates to apply.

For a fourth year running we made a tactical effort to bring down the level of cash reserves through a process of expediting projects and focusing on areas of the village that had previously been overlooked. These reserves had built up from "Section 106" payments from the developers of Roman Paddock and Harewelle Way.

#### Distribution of funding to local voluntary groups

One of the council's continued strategies is to distribute more funding to local voluntary groups through Section 137 Grants. These benefit parishioners by ensuring that voluntary organisations and services are able to keep functioning and to assist those that are newly formed. This year we granted the maximum allowance of £10k across the following groups:

1. £3k to The Friends of Harrold Odell Country Park. This money will be used towards constructing a new pond dipping platform. The platform will be used for school groups and others visiting the park to enable them to have a closer look at the wildlife living within the lake.
2. £3.7k to Harrold Snooker Club (based at the Harrold Centre) for new equipment and refurbishment of the snooker room
3. £500 to The Bridge magazine - an essential communication tool for the council
4. £1.5k to the United Reformed Church for a new cooker, to support their community group activities
5. £1k to the Harrold Centre (remaining £3k coming next month) to assist with their centre development loan repayments

#### Improving the look of the village

Another of the council's continued strategies has been to improve and smarten the look of the village. We have received quotes and chosen a contractor to build a **stone wall** to replace the unattractive metal railing on the North East riverbank by the main bridge. We would also like to landscape the area with smaller bushes and shrubs to allow the bridge and river to be more visible, but without opening up the riverbank completely for access. We are finalising contracts and the work should start imminently.

We have approved attractive **new village entrance signs**, which are currently being manufactured. They are expected to be installed at three entrance points to the village and replace the current metal "Harrold" signs (where they exist).

We completely replaced the **playground at Harewelle Way** and have taken over a lease for the land. Getting to the stage of redevelopment was a very long process and involved: Pursuing the developer to transfer the land (and monies) to the borough council. Setting up a lease agreement with the borough council to allow the PC to take long-term responsibility for the land; creating a business plan for mayoral approval to receive the monies that were transferred from the developer; going through a lengthy process of financial approvals with the borough council. The climbing frame/fort at **Saxon House End playground**, which

had reached end-of-life, has been replaced. This piece of equipment, and the soft surface underneath, was replaced with a similar style of apparatus.

**Miscellaneous maintenance** included: the missing bollards on the green (level with School Lane) have been replaced. We have approved the repair of the broken gate at the Harrold Centre playground and the repair of the fence next to Saxon House End playground which suffered wind damage. Two wooden bins were installed on the Lower Green in an effort to reduce the amount of littering that happens in that area, especially over the summer months.

**HPFA Sports Pavilion:** We are continuing to work with the playing field association (HPFA) to deliver a new (or extensively renovated) pavilion and refurbishments to the Scout hut. The council has set aside a substantial amount of funding for this project and we are hoping to continue to assist the HPFA in developing a plan and to gain further sources of grant funding.

#### **Developing the Neighbourhood Plan**

The steering group has spent the last few months evaluating the village survey results and met with all landowners who had put sites forward for development. The process can seem never-ending but it will all be worth it if we can get the plan approved by the borough council as it will mean we have control over future development. The next stage is to develop a number of potential development options. These options will be put to the village for consultation in the next few months. This is the crucial time for the village to think about where future development should take place. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is planning a series of drop-in sessions and presentations to village groups and clubs.

#### **SpeedWatch group**

The SpeedWatch group had another active year in a continued attempt to curb speeding in the village. We have purchased a portable speed sign for the village, which we hope to have in use during the coming year.

#### **Finances for 2017/2018**

**Cash Balance:** As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 the cash balance sits at £171k, up from £141k this time last year. Despite larger items of expenditure, including £88k on the Harewelle Way playground, and transferring the remaining £43k to the Harrold Centre for their redevelopment, we received the commuted sum of £149k from the developer in relation to the transfer of ownership of Harewelle Way playground. We estimate that the overall cash balance will drop to approximately £25k once all the projects in this year's budget have been completed.

**Spending:** For the current year we had an overall overspend against budget of £0.4k if you adjust for VAT (which we reclaim) and if you ignore projects (which are funded by reserves) and ignore funds transferred out to the Harrold Centre (which sits outside of the budget). This gives us confidence that the precept has been set at the correct level. We were £144k underspent on projects due to work still being in progress.

**Precept:** This has been retained at £72,645, despite an increase in the amount of Band D properties in the village. This is because we are satisfied with the budgeting process and that the current level allows us to cover costs. Projects will continue to be financed mainly from reserves.

As I'm sure you will agree, an extremely productive year for the council, and the coming year looks no different.

Robert Tickle      Chair - Harrold Parish Council

#### **4. Matters raised by parishioners**

A member of the public would like us to take a look at cleaning up the lamppost outside number 8 Dove Lane: Apparently it is not very bright due to the dirt/bugs on it. Clerk to work out if this is a Parish Council or borough lamppost and look to have it cleaned. **(Action Clerk)**

New flood sign considered to be too big by James and Nina Knight:

The Council confirmed that they supported the use of a technical solution to the issue of informing road users of flooding at the bridge. However, the council were not informed of the date of installation or the look of the signs. It is agreed that the sign is larger than expected, but the council would like to see what it looks like when it's working. The importance of the function of the signs (from a safety aspect and the well-running of the

village) is expected to outweigh the aesthetics, but the council will ask Highways if there is a smaller version of the sign. In the meantime, if parishioners have an issue with the size of the sign they can contact the borough council.

James Knight would like to know why the parish council no longer has area of responsibilities as he feels this has led to nobody knowing who the councillors are:

The council decided that they would like a single point of contact (the Clerk) for council issues rather than the confusion created by different councillors being responsible for different areas. It is also much harder to track the progress of issues when they are dispersed and the council would like there to be transparency over decision-making. Sub-committees are formed when needed, such as the Neighbourhood Plan. The council has, however, agreed to discuss this again and put it on the next agenda (**Action Clerk**).

James Knight would like the council to be more transparent over decisions being made, and to involve parishioners in discussions, specifically around large/structural projects:

The council confirmed that The Bridge magazine is being used to disperse information (in addition to the regular minutes being on the parish Council website) and that parishioners were recently asked for feedback during the questionnaire that went to every household. Parishioners are also free to attend and speak at any monthly council meeting if they have concerns, or to write to the Clerk. The Council also set up the Harrold Noticeboard Facebook group to capture issues/concerns in the village so that they could then be investigated – this now has 2000 members. The council is careful not to just react to those that shout the loudest on Facebook, but will investigate an issue and then take a considered group decision on matters. The Council has suggested the use of the dormant Harrold Parish Council Facebook page to inform people of issues.

James Knight would like the council to fix/improve the Church footpath that runs from the North door and is used for funerals. Also there are leaves on the other cemetery footpaths:

The council had previously decided that the cost of resurfacing the footpath would far outweigh the few times a year it was used. Further, the footpath covered with moss/grass is not unsightly and is in-keeping with the rest of the cemetery. The Chairman has instead asked that church use the west door for funerals and enter the cemetery through the lych gate (which is incidentally what lych gates were to be used for).

The council will monitor the state of the other paths and inform the maintenance contractor that additional sweeping of leaves is needed.

Nina Knight expressed concern over the cost of the proposed build of the stone wall by the bridge (approx £14k). She would like to know why stone is being used instead of railings and is also concerned that the wall might sink in the soft ground:

Cllr Barrett (wall sub-committee) responded that it was the most sympathetic material to the stone bridge and will be durable in all weathers, giving longevity. It will be a foundation stone wall which will be durable during wet weather.

Nina Knight asked about the £100k set aside for the HPFA sports pavilion refurbishment and Scout hut. She'd like to know when it will happen and when the village will be informed of the amount:

Cllr Brough stated that, as with the Harrold Centre, we are working alongside the HPFA who are developing their own plans. The timeline is therefore with the HPFA, but we will provide assistance where we can. The council have mentioned in The Bridge magazine that we were providing a substantial amount of money to the pavilion - he couldn't remember if the exact amount had been stated, but that if it wasn't he would add it next time it was written about.

A member of the public stated concern over the obstruction caused by parked cars along the High Street: particularly from the Green up past the Muntjac:

The council noted the issue, but pointed out that parishioners do need space to park near their houses. There is to be a time-zoned yellow lane put across the road from the bus stops to ease the congestion at school drop-off time. Currently buses are having to park on the corner by The Old Smithy (the Green), which is also a safety hazard.

**Date of next annual parish meeting**  
**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019**