Forest Row Parish Council

Clerk: Mr David O'Driscoll
Email: parishclerk@forestrow.gov.uk

(Office Hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

QUALITY PARISH COUNCIL

Community Centre
Hartfield Road
Forest Row
East Sussex
RH18 5DZ
Tel: 01342 822661
Fax: 01342 825739
Email: info@forestrow.gov.uk
Website: www.forestrow.gov.uk

To: All members of FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL:
Cllrs. Eichner (Chair), Christie, Evans, Gilbert, Jaffay, Killick, La Djoi, Lewis, Matthews, Rainbow, Scott, Summers, Volkers & A M Waters

Date: 4TH December 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,
Your attendance is required at a meeting of the FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL to be held on **TUESDAY 9th DECEMBER 2025** in the Garden Room at the Community Centre at **7.30 PM**.

Mr David O'Driscoll

THE FIRST FIFTEEN MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE FOR QUESTIONS AND REMARKS FROM THE PUBLIC. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO STAY AND ADD QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA ITEMS, AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING

AGENDA

1. PRELIMINARIES

1.1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
1.3 RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETING 18th NOVEMBER 2025
1.4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/DISPENSATION REQUESTS
1.5 DELEGATED DECISIONS
1.6 REVIEW OF ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

2. CO OPTION OF NEW MEMBER

3. BASIC REPORTS

3.1 CHAIR'S COMMENTS
3.2 CLERK'S REPORT ON MATTERS NOT REQUIRING A DECISION
3.3 SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORT

4. CONSIDERATION OF BUDGET 2026-27

5. BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION

5.1 TO FILL THE VACANCIES ON COMMITTEES
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GRANT POLICY TASK AND FINISH GROUP
5.3 GRANT APPLICATION: 'PODS'
5.4 REQUEST RE REFURBISHMENT OF BUS SHELTER
5.5 FESTIVAL CORNER & DIGITAL NOTICEBOARD

(Pursuant to Section (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the Council believes that the public and press should be excluded from the meeting on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted)

6. **USE OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

7. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY FULL COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE

FULL COUNCIL

BACKING PAPERS FOR MEETING 9th DECEMBER 2025

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COUNCILLORS' BRIEFING FOR THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
ON 9TH DECEMBER 2025

1. PRELIMINARIES

1.1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.3. RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 18th NOVEMBER 2025

1.4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/ DISPENSATIONS

1.5 DELEGATED DECISIONS – none since the last meeting

1.6 REVIEW OF ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING – list attached: all discharged

2. CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBER

Council will recall that we had two vacancies caused by the resignations of Kate Taylor-Smith and Portia Cocks. Requests for by-elections are dealt with on a ward basis. A by-election was requested in Forest Row ward, and Cllr Andrew Lewis was elected unopposed. No by-election was requested in Hammerwood ward and co-option was accordingly advertised on 17th November.

There have been three confirmed expressions of interest, in order of receipt:

Satyadasa David Waterston

Gabrielle Marshall

Scott Harrison.

Their personal statements are attached. Each will be called in in turn to respond to any supplementary questions and Council will then vote following Standing Order 9 procedure:

(*"Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chair of the meeting.*)

There was a fourth expression of interest, but at the date of this briefing note no personal statement has been submitted: it will be circulated separately if received before the meeting.

ACTION: to co-opt as appropriate

3. BASIC REPORTS TO NOTE

3.1 CHAIR'S COMMENTS

3.2 CLERK'S REPORT:

3.2.1 We had our interim internal audit on Monday 24th November . Apart from some deficiencies in our website, everything was in order. A copy of the audit report is attached, and I would ask please for a formal vote of acceptance, as this has been requested before.

3.2.2 We advertised for the additional help on Reception approved by Finance & Policy on 4th November and were almost overwhelmed by about 70 expression of interest! Six candidates were shortlisted and interviewed on 2nd December, and the successful candidate will be starting on 7th January.

3.2.3 Dr Josephson has agreed to remove her records from the storage area between the treatment waiting area and the Garden Room, and this will be used to store equipment for the new Garden Room hirer.

3.2.4 I am still waiting to hear from *Council HR & Governance Support*, with respect to our request for some HR intervention, and have chased them up.

3.3 SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORT

A summary financial report is attached. For the end of month 8, nominal performance against forecast should be approximately 67%. We have now received the bulk of our annual income, so that figure is unsurprisingly at 97.1%. However, expenditure across the budget holding committees is running at 67.5%. which is satisfactorily within target.

ACTION: to note (and in respect of 3.2.1 vote) accordingly

4. CONSIDERATION OF THE BUDGET FOR 2026-2027

The revenue budget has now been passed through each of the budget-holding committees, and the consolidated draft has also been scrutinised by 'Star Chamber'. That consolidated draft is now brought to Council for consideration by all Members. A full advice note will be issued and circulated separately from the meeting papers, and you are earnestly requested to read that note in detail. This is effectively the last opportunity Members will have to add to or amend the budget: the meeting for budget adoption and recent setting in January is in practice a formal vote only and, barring an emergency, not an occasion for further changes.

(**However, I would draw your attention to the request made by the low-cost counselling service for a separate and enhanced budget for next year . I attach their explanation of the request (which is already incorporated into the draft figures, so will not need a specific vote unless the figure is changed.)

ACTION: to consider and make any appropriate modifications

5. BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION

5.1 TO FILL COMMITTEE VACANCIES.

After Cllr Lewis' election, he specifically asked if he could 'sample' the Committees before committing himself to membership, and this was accepted. The same could apply to this evening's co-optee, but they might prefer to sign up immediately to one or more vacancies.

ACTION: to proceed as appropriate

5.2 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GRANT POLICY 'TASK & FINISH' GROUP

This group was set up by Finance & Policy at the meeting of 4th November "on a 'task and finish' basis to review the grant application process/policy." The group met on 24th November, when a full discussion took place incorporating the written submissions (attached for reference) of Cllr Jaffay who was unable to attend in person. The group made a recommendation to Council which is attached to the note of the meeting.

ACTION: to resolve as appropriate

5.3 RECONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION FOR 'PODS'

This application was submitted to Full Council on 18th November and after much discussion was deferred to this meeting for the applicant, Sarah Charlton, to produce further evidence in support. Council is now asked to adjudicate on the application.

ACTION: to resolve as appropriate

5.4 REQUEST FOR FUNDS TO RESTORE /ENHANCE BUS SHELTER

Edouard Hugo has offered to repair and restore the bus shelter on Foresters Green which was re-roofed with hand cut shingles over the previous months. I attach his request. For Council to decide: is this commensurate with other calls on our finances?

ACTION: to resolve as appropriate

5.5 THE 'FESTIVAL CORNER' PROJECT

A meeting was recently held involving the remaining members of the 'Festival Corner' group and the promoters of a proposed digital 'what's on' app. After discussion it appeared that there were significant points in common between the two ideas, with the potential of one being the physical version of the digital other and vice versa, and thus being available to all constituencies across the parish. However, all parties felt that this rather took the 'Noticeboard Plus' idea out of the strict realm of council-delivered services, and it would be better if the project became freestanding, but with stakeholder representation (and possible grant funding) from the Council. Council is requested to approve this change of status.

ACTION: to resolve as appropriate

6. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS : USE OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

(Pursuant to Section (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the Council believes that the public and press should be excluded from the meeting on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted) ***Note: this should be voted on***

A separate briefing note is supplied to Members on this point.

7. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY FULL COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
HELD ON 18TH November 2025

MIN. NO	DECISION	ACTION BY	PROGRESS *To go out with next agenda*
C112/25	Pay grant to Anderida	Carolyn	Done
C119/25	Change standing committee names	DoD/CC	Done
C120/25	Inform High Five Club of decision to go ahead	Office	Done
C121/25	Inform We Grow of decision re planters	Office	Done
C122/25	Send statement to South East Water re pipeline	Office	Done

COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION 9th DECEMBER 2025
PERSONAL STATEMENT OF SATYADASA DAVID WATERSTON

My name is Satyadasa, which is a Buddhist name. I moved to Forest Row with my family in the summer, following a one year sabbatical in Mexico. Forest Row was one of our favourite getaways when we lived in East London. We've been finding our feet since coming here. My wife Joanna has already become active in the Tablehurst community as well the group initiating the Soil Factory. Our eight year old son Thomas has started at Michael Hall. We are part of a We Grow co-op as well.

Undertaking work as a Councillor will help me get to know the local community more and provide a concrete way of helping out and using my skills. I'm a non-practicing solicitor. I trained in commercial law and for the last fourteen years I have run my own Wills business, though I have now sold that. I hope to take up some self-employment or part time work, but I am not anticipating a full time job such as would make volunteering as a Councillor untenable.

I'm 51 years old and have plenty of community organising experience. I worked in and around the London Buddhist Centre in Bethnal Green as an employee, volunteer and meditation teacher for twenty-five years. I was a Trustee for five years, as well as the Safeguarding Trustee. The Buddhist Centre is a large charity with 35 employees, multiple properties and a full program of classes and retreats, as well as health and arts events and several businesses. They turn over £2m per annum. I was also the Buddhist tutor at Eton College for ten years.

I'd like to carry on being involved in supporting community life in my new home. I'll be able to offer my legal skills in a range of areas - which is a way of thinking about things more than giving specific legal advice. I enjoy writing and communication and have worked a s journalist. I consider myself an all-rounder. I can deal with detail and finances as well as setting up tables and the practical end of things. I'm pretty familiar with committees and working groups and getting along with others. Although I'm new to the community, that should allow me to bring a fresh pair of eyes.

COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION 9th DECEMBER 2025
PERSONAL STATEMENT OF GABRIELLE MARSHALL

I would like to express my interest in supporting our community as a parish councillor.

I bring a lot of experience of working with young people as a teacher and I have excellent presentation and communication skills and experience of working within a team. I have lived in the area for over 16 years.

I have been very involved in organising groups and classes for home educating families in the area. I set up and ran Active minds for children based at Broadstone Warren and later the cricket pavilion. It included scout activities, science projects, art, creative writing and being in nature. It was a successful venture which was very popular with children and families in the area. It supported parents and the education, positive socialisation and mental health of their children. I have a lot of experience as a teacher having worked in the state sector and as a tutor.

I also have a previous career working in television as a news reporter, television presenter and director. I'm able to present ideas well and have good communication skills .

My teaching, television and voluntary work at second life, gives me an excellent understanding of how to work well with people in being able to initiate, organise and run projects as well as work within a team.

In detail:

- I have a PGCE in English with Media
- Teaching experience in London secondary schools.
- I have 15 years additional teaching experience which includes home educating my four children up to sixth form.
- Maths up to and including GCSE (working one to one or in small groups. Excellent skills in supporting dyslexic children in maths.
- English up to and including GCSE
- Qualified to teach Art (Diploma in Art and Design from the MET, Brighton plus working and selling work as an artist).
- Drama club for 8-14 year olds (introduction course with ACT Brighton and National Youth Theatre).
- Set up and ran Active Minds, providing a day a week of classes for home educated children (ages 6-14). including creative writing, Art, science and outdoor activities with scout leaders. (I taught science and Art).
- Active Minds (micro school) 3 days/ week offering classes in maths, creative writing, Art, Spanish and science. (I taught Art and physics KS3).
- Art teacher 6-16 year olds, including pottery classes, lino cut and printmaking plus collage, history of Art, jewellery making, painting, observational drawing.
- Prior to teaching I worked as a journalist/ producer/ director/ presenter for radio and television, including the BBC and LBC radio.
- Voluntary work:
  I have worked as a volunteer at Second Life since its inception.

COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION 9th DECEMBER 2025
PERSONAL STATEMENT OF SCOTT HARRISON

I am writing to express my interest in becoming a member of the Forest Row Parish Council.

As a long-term resident of Forest Row, I care deeply about our community and believe I can contribute meaningfully to its future.

For the past eight years, I have served as a director of the Swans Ghyll Management Committee, gaining valuable experience in governance, collaboration and community stewardship. Alongside this, my family is closely rooted in Forest Row: my youngest daughter currently attends the primary school nursery and will soon move into reception, while my older daughter has progressed from Forest Row Primary to Sackville. My eldest daughter recently completed her apprenticeship with a Forest Row-based business, which has further strengthened my appreciation for the importance of supporting both residents and local enterprises.

In addition to my local involvement, I serve as Chairman of two global transport organisations, working with rail providers around the world. I also hold non-executive director positions with other engineering organisations.

These roles have equipped me with executive skills that place me in an ideal position to advise on compliance, risk and fiscal issues, while also giving me a strong understanding of the wider political and economic impacts on community life.

I feel I can add value to the council by:

- Community focus: Listening to and advocating for the needs of local residents.
- Practical problem-solving: Helping to address challenges with a balanced, pragmatic approach.
- Collaboration: Working constructively with fellow councillors and stakeholders to achieve shared goals.
- Commitment to sustainability: Supporting initiatives that protect and enhance our local environment.
- Championing local businesses: Promoting opportunities for growth and resilience among Forest Row's varied and innovative enterprises.
- Governance expertise: Offering insight into compliance, risk management and fiscal responsibility.

I would be honoured to serve Forest Row in this capacity and contribute to maintaining and strengthening the unique character of our village. I would be happy to provide any further information required.

Thank you for considering my application.

MULBERRY
LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES LTD

Eastgate House
Dogflud Way, Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7UD

t: 07428 647069
e: office@mulberrylas.co.uk
w: www.mulberrylas.co.uk

Mr David O'Driscoll
Forest Row Parish Council
The Community Centre
Hartfield Road
Forest Row
East Sussex
RH18 5DZ

24 November 2025

Dear David,

Re: Forest Row Parish Council
Internal Audit for Financial Year Ended 31 March 2026 – Interim Audit report

Executive summary

Following completion of our interim internal audit on 24 November 2025 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines, and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of which is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not at this point in the year. **Recommendations for action are shown in bold text and are summarised in the table at the end of the report.**

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Forest Row Parish Council are well established and followed.

Regulation

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to "undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance."

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit's function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all Members to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement.

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Jackie Scarff of Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd, who has over 13 years's experience specialising in local government.

Your auditor is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

Engagement Letter and inherent risk assessment

An engagement letter was previously issued to the council covering the 2025/26 internal audit assignment, which includes the scope and plan of works and fee structure. Copies of this document are available on request from anna@mulberrylas.co.uk

In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR.

It is our opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be "walk through testing" on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

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A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Internal audit requirement

Appropriate accounting records have been kept properly during the year.

Audit findings

The audit was conducted on site with the Clerk, who also acts as the council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), the Deputy Clerk and Assistant Clerk (services). Other information was reviewed through discussion with the Clerk and a review of the council website **https://forestrow.gov.uk/**

The council uses the Rialtas Business Solutions (RBS) accounting package for recording the council's finances. This is an industry specific accounting package. The accounting package is updated regularly and used to produce management information reports for review at council meetings.

Every month, a "month end" close down is performed by the Deputy Clerk, various reports are run and are presented at Full Council and Finance meeting. These include but are not limited to, income and expenditure against budget, bank reconciliations and other reports as fit. The Deputy Clerk has a checklist which is ticked off every month. I was given access to the hard copy prints, and I can confirm this process does take place.

The system requires the population of key data fields to enable the user to record a transaction. This is a clear and easy to follow system and a review of the cashbook shows that all data fields are being entered, the reports are easy to read and logically filed.

I conducted a simple walk-through test on a supplier invoice drawn at random and a receipt drawn at random and can confirm the underlying documentation was easy to locate and agreed to the cashbook details. I make no recommendation to change in this system.

I tested the opening balances as at 1/4/25 by reviewing the balance brought forward on the receipts page on the Rialtas accounting package for cashbook two and confirmed it could be agreed back to the investment reconciliation for the audited accounts for 2024/25 with both documents showing £365,406.

I reviewed the nominal ledger entries for the period 1 April to 31 March to ensure items were posted to the correct heading and that there were no instances of netting off and the expenditure was correctly posted to the headings to which the line item related. This has confirmed that the accounting package is being properly used.

B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Check the publication and minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit
The External Auditor's Report noted that
'the risk management policy was approved by the authority as a whole during the year as part of standing policies but that the policies being approved were not listed in the minutes. We recommend that the policies being approved be listed in the minutes and that the risk management arrangements are specifically mentioned in the minutes when they are approved for clarity.'
and has been published on the council website along with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and was reported to the Finance and Policy meeting, noted in the clerks report, held on 4 November 2025 (minute ref 188/25).

I note the council received and considered the previous internal auditor report at the council meeting held on (minute ref 23/067).

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms
I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms together with a formal acceptance to receive information by electronic means in the form *"As per Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, I consent to the receipt of all council meeting papers by electronic methods. I understand I may withdraw this consent at any time"*

The council website includes a councillor page where the individual Register of Members' Interests forms are published.
The Council will need to publish the register of interests or a link to them published on the Wealden District Council website.

Confirm that the council is compliant with GDPR
The council is fully aware of GDPR and has undergone training. It was noted the council has established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's Guide (March 2025) contains updated guidance on the matter as below, including details of the new Governance Assertion to be included in the 2025/26 AGAR:

Assertion 10 - Digital and data compliance

To warrant a positive response to this assertion, the authority needs to have taken the following actions:

1.47 Email management - Every authority must have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain, for example clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abcparishcouncil.org.uk rather than abcparishclerk@gmail.com or abcparishclerk@outlook.com for example.

1.48 All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must meet legal requirements for all existing websites regardless of what domain is being used.

1.49 All websites must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (where applicable).

1.50 All websites must include published documentation as specified in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities (where applicable).

1.51 All smaller authorities, including parish meetings, must follow both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.

1.52 All smaller authorities, including parish meetings, must process personal data with care and in line with the principles of data protection.

1.53 The DPA 2018 supplements the GDPR and classifies an authority as both a Data Controller and a Data Processor.

1.54 All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must also have an IT policy. This explains how everyone - clerks, members and other staff - should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software. This relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment.

The council has a Privacy Notice and Accessibility Statement on the home page of its website and has an IT Policy and Publication scheme published on its website. It is clear the council has made every effort to comply with the website requirements.

Confirm that the council is compliant with the relevant transparency code
As the council's income and expenditure exceeds £25,000, it is not a statutory requirement to follow the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code, although it is recommended best practice to do so.

I note that the council has some transparency information on the website.

Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year
In addition to full council, the council has committees for Community Services, Facilities, Finance and Policy, Personnel as well as Planning working group.

Terms of reference for each committee are published on the council website, along with details of the main responsibilities of each of the working groups within the Scheme of Delegation.

A diary of future meeting dates is also published on the council website, along with historic agendas and minutes for council and committee meetings.

Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice
I was able to confirm that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. Whilst we have not tested every single committee and council meeting there was no evidence of non-compliance in giving three clear days' notice of the meeting.

I remind council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office (page 3 of this link) www.ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas

Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website
Some minutes are uploaded to the council website and clearly annotated as draft.
The Council is in the process of updating the website with agendas and minutes and I recommend it is made clear where minutes are draft.

Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months
The Standing Orders are based on the current NALC model and were most recently reviewed and adopted by council in May 2025 (minute ref 23/102).

Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations
Financial Regulations are based on the current NALC model and were last reviewed and adopted by council in May 2024 (minute ref 23/103). The regulations contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council. I note the council also has an adopted Scheme of Delegation to support the Financial Regulations.

Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed

The council has thresholds in place at which authorisations to spend must be obtained as below:

5.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined according to the annexed 'Authority to Spend' policy approved by Council. Such authority is to be evidenced by a Minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman.

The Authority to spend state:

THE OFFICE, UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE CLERK AND HIS/HER ABSENCE, THE ASSISTANT CLERK, HAS GENERAL AUTHORITY TO INCUR EXPENSE ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. Cleaning materials, stationery and consumables for the Community Centre/ VENUe
2. Catering supplies for Gages and the Youth Service
3. Utility bills, including gas, electricity, telephone & IT, and waste disposal.
4. Safety equipment for staff and volunteers
5. Routine repair of street furniture, and streetlights.
6. Staff salaries and expenses.
7. Councillors and staff expenses for attending meetings and agreed training
8. Activity costs for service users within the budgets for the relevant committee.
9. Legal, financial and statutory administration fees
10. Ongoing subscriptions to other bodies—unless otherwise directed

In addition to the above, the Clerk (and in his/her absence the Assistant Clerk) has authority to spend up to £1000 on any one item on something they perceive to be necessary to the running or the administration of the building or facilities. (This authority may be used up to three times in any one week).

THE STANDING COMMITTEES HAVE GENERAL AUTHORITY TO INCUR EXPENSE AS FOLLOWS:

- *All items under the cost codes applicable to the revenue budget for their committee*
- *To include: equipment, repairs, and supplies for immediate or reserve use*
- *All items outside the budget to be referred to the Finance Committee.*

In cases of urgency, the Clerk (and in his/her absence the Assistant Clerk), after consultation with the Chairman of the Finance Committee or the Vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee, and the Chairman of the relevant committee, or the Vice-Chairman of the relevant Committee, may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the council which in the clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, subject to a limit of £2,500. [The Clerk shall report such action to the chairman of the relevant Committee/Council as soon as possible and to the Committee/Council as soon as practicable thereafter.]

CAPITAL ITEMS – IN EXCESS OF COMMITTEE BUDGET LEVELS

To be discussed at Committee meetings for recommendation to the Finance Committee

I recommend that authority to spend is amended to clarify the level of spend that officers have for the items listed and the action required for spend above the levels specified.

I tested a sample of invoices and was able to confirm that amounts have been properly authorised in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations, and payment lists are appended to the minutes of relevant meetings with the minutes recording the approval of such.

The council has in place a system to segregate duties in terms of the setting up and subsequent release of payments made via online banking in accordance with the council's adopted Financial Regulations, and has sufficient individuals authorised to complete these steps, minimising the risk of being unable to make payments in a timely fashion.

Confirm the council has adopted the General Power of Competence (GPC) and met the eligibility criteria at the time of adoption, or if GPC not adopted, confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £11.10 per elector
The council confirmed its eligibility and adopted the General Power of Competence (GPC) at the annual council meeting in May 2024, and the section 137 threshold does not apply.

Check receipt of VAT refund matches last submitted VAT return
The council submits its VAT return on a quarterly basis. I reviewed the submission for the period ending 30 September 2025 which showed a refund amount due of £4,718.71 and was fully supported by the required details. I was able to confirm receipt of this amount to the council's bank account on 8 October 2025. The council is up to date with its VAT submissions.

Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor
The system noted above details internal review takes place and I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE
Internal audit requirement
This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

Audit findings
The council's adopted Financial Regulations include a section covering Risk Management and state:

FR 2.1 *The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.*

FR 2.2 *The Clerk/ RFO shall prepare, for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.*

FR 2.3 *When considering any new activity, the Clerk [with the RFO] shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.*

FR 2.4 *At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.*

The council has a risk assessment process in place, which was last reviewed and approved by council in May 2025 under Standing Policies (minute ref AM/14/25).

I recommend the minutes specify the policies being approved.

I reviewed the risk assessment record which identifies key risks, potential consequences and actions taken.

I recommend a risk matrix to assess the overall risk based on likelihood and consequences of an event occurring and then assesses the risks within each sector of the council's business operations including details of who is responsible for any actions.

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Zurich Insurance which covers the year under review. The policy includes Public Liability cover of £15 million, Employers Liability cover of £10 million and a Fraud & Dishonesty (Fidelity Guarantee) level of £1,000,000 which is sufficient for a council of this size, although the council is advised to keep this figure under review to ensure it covers the maximum balance held.

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

Audit findings

The council set a precept of £670,000 for 2025/26. With a tax base of 2260.30, this equates to a band D equivalent of £296.42 (compared to the average in England of £92.92).

The Clerk confirmed that the 2026/27 budget and precept is in progress and will be presented at the December full council meeting with the precept agreed in January 2026.

The council currently holds circa £165, 939 in earmarked reserves, spread across a range of clearly identifiable projects, including amounts received from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which are identified separately. I checked the purpose of these earmarked reserves with the Clerk and am satisfied they are all for legitimate future planned projects of the council.

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's guide provides updated guidance on the appropriate level of general reserves that councils should retain as below:

5.33 The general reserve of an authority comprises its cash flow and contingency funds to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances.

5.34 The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure.

5.35 The reason for the wide range is to cater for the large variation in activity level between individual authorities. The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards 3 months equivalent general reserve.

5.36 In all of this it is important that each authority adopt, as a general reserve policy, the level appropriate to their size, situation, risks and plan their budget so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained. Consideration of the minimum level of reserves requires not only consideration of level of income and expenditure but also the risks to that income.

5.37 Authorities with significant self-generated income (other than the precept or levy) should take into account situations that may lead to a loss in revenue as well as increased costs and adapt their general reserve accordingly.

The general reserve balance is currently circa £249,467, which is within the recommended range.

E. INCOME

Internal audit requirement

Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Apart from the precept, the council receives income from a range of sources including allotments, burial, community services, wayleaves and lettings.

From a review of the accounting records, income appears to be recorded with sufficient narrative detail to identify the source and allocated to the most appropriate nominal code. I tested a sample of invoices issued for each aspect of the council's operations and was able to confirm rates charged were consistent with the council's published charging schedule.

FR 13.2 states *'The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk. The Clerk shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.'*

Fees are reviewed as part of the budget setting process, and confirmation of the agreed fees for 2026/27 is in progress.

F. PETTY CASH

Internal audit requirement

Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts; all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

The council has no petty cash and the testing for this internal control objective does not apply.

G. PAYROLL

Internal audit requirement

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

Audit findings

The council has 19 employees on the payroll. All staff members have a signed contract of employment, based on the NALC template, and the council is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Performance reviews for staff members are completed annually by the Clerk, with their review conducted by a panel of councillors.

Payroll is processed is outsourced to a third party, who complete all the PAYE calculations and provide the information to the Clerk each month. I reviewed the payroll summary for the previous two months and the payroll deductions appear correct. I was able to confirm HMRC, and pensions payments are up to date and that the council is correctly not claiming the employment allowance for national insurance contributions.

Some councillors take their allowances as per the remuneration scheme, although the Clerk is aware if paid to eligible (elected) members, these must be processed through payroll and assessed for tax and national insurance.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Internal audit requirement

Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

Audit findings

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's guide provides updated guidance on assets and asset registers as below:

5.58 The asset register should contain in its most simple form the date of acquisition, cost of acquisition, useful life estimate and location along with value held for investments; however, it is desirable for the register to contain other such supplementary information to enable the user to better understand the nature and scope of the use of the fixed asset. It is therefore recommended to show insurance value, replacement value, custodian, date last physically vouched.

5.59 Each authority may choose an appropriate minimum value for deciding between fixed assets and general consumables. The limit chosen will relate to expected useful life, whether the item would be included on an insurance claim and whether it is included in the risk assessment of the authority in any way. This minimum level is to be minuted and reviewed at least annually. The rationale and methodology should be recorded in the minutes.

5.60 One item or group of similar items shall be regarded for inclusion in the fixed asset register.

5.61 Assets should be first recorded in the asset register at their actual purchase cost.

5.62 Assets that are either under construction or have not been brought into use should be included on the asset register only once complete and they benefit the community.

5.63 Obsolete assets that are no longer in use or are awaiting disposal should be clearly recorded as such.

5.64 Where an authority receives an asset as a gift at zero cost, for example by community asset transfer, it should be included with a nominal one pound (£1) value as a proxy for the zero cost.

5.65 Assets that do not have a functional purpose or any intrinsic resale value (for example, a village pond or war memorial) are often referred to as 'community assets'. Authorities should record community assets in the asset register in the same way as gifted assets.

5.66 The particular method of asset valuation is not specified in proper practices so authorities may use any reasonable approach to be applied consistently from year to year. The method of asset valuation adopted should be set out in a policy approved by the authority and recorded in the authority's minutes and in the asset register.

5.67 For authorities covered by this guide, the most appropriate and commonly used method of fixed asset valuation for first registration on the asset register is at acquisition cost. This means that the recorded value of the asset will not change from year to year, unless it is materially enhanced.

5.68 Commercial concepts of depreciation, impairment adjustments, and revaluation are not required nor appropriate for this method of asset valuation.

5.69 The total value of an authority's assets recorded on the asset register at 31 March each year is reported at Line 9 on the authority's AGAR. Authorities should be able to track and explain fully any changes in the asset register from year to year.

The council has a fixed asset register in place, maintained in an Excel format, which includes details of asset location, date of acquisition, original purchase price, replacement value and insurance value. Assets are correctly listed at cost/proxy cost, or where gifted/donated, given a nominal £1 value for the purpose of the asset register.

There has been nothing added this year so far and the clerk/RFO confirmed that he was aware any items should be added net of VAT.

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's guide provides updated guidance on investments, and defines a long-term investment as below:

2.23 Short-term investments, which mainly include deposit and savings accounts typically provided by banks, are those that display the following characteristics:

a. are denominated in pounds Sterling;

b. be realisable at full value on demand or have a maturity end date of not more than 12 months;

c. the whole of the original sum invested can, from the time that the investment is made, be accessed for use by the authority without any reduction; and

d. the authority has assessed the counterparty and is satisfied that the original sum invested is not subject to unreasonable risk.

2.26 A long-term investment arises where the authority invests money in anything other than a short-term investment.

1.11 Arrangements need to be in place to ensure that the authority's funds are managed properly and that any amounts surplus to requirements is invested appropriately, in accordance with an approved strategy which needs to have regard to the government's Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments. If total investments are to exceed the threshold specified in the statutory guidance at any time during a financial year, the authority needs to produce and approve an annual Investment Strategy in accordance with the guidance.

The council has no long-term investments.

The council has no borrowing through the PWLB.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.

Audit findings

Financial Regulation 2.6 states '*At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, the Chair or Vice-chair of the Finance Committee shall verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the Finance Committee.*

Bank reconciliations are completed monthly and presented to the Finance Committee for review. I reviewed the March 2025 bank reconciliation for all accounts and was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and found no errors.

I was able to confirm that the bank reconciliations have been verified in accordance with Financial Regulations, and evidence of this activity taking place is recorded within the minutes of meetings.

As the council's annual budget exceeds the €500,000 (£430,950 as of 3 July comparative date) threshold, it is not protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

The council holds accounts with CCLA, one with Unity Trust.

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement
Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

Audit findings
To be tested at the final internal audit.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW
Internal audit requirement
IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the previous year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.

Audit findings
The council did not certify itself exempt in 2024/25 due to exceeding the income and expenditure limits and this test does not apply.

L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION
Internal audit requirement
The authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage, up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with relevant legislation

Audit findings
The council is reminded that the following requirements apply.

For councils with a turnover over £25,000, it is recommended best practice to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, but not a statutory requirement and therefore not subject to verification during the internal audit.

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

13(1) An authority must publish (which must include publication on that authority's website)
- (a) the Statement of Accounts together with any certificate or opinion entered by the local auditor in accordance with section 20(2) of the Act; and
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(3)

13(2) Where documents are published under paragraph (1), the authority must
- (a) keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and

(b) ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

Testing for publication to meet this requirement will be completed at the final internal audit.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

The authority, during the previous year, correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2024/25 Actual
Date AGAR signed by council	13 May 2025
Date inspection notice issued	2 June 2025
Inspection period begins	3 June 2025
Inspection period ends	14 July 2025
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2024/25, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement can therefore be signed yes by the council.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Internal audit requirement

The authority complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Before 1 July 2025 authorities must publish:

- *Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited*
- *Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2024/25, approved and signed, page 4*
- *Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2024/25, approved and signed, page 5*

Not later than 30 September 2025 authorities must publish:

- *Notice of conclusion of audit*
- *Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate*
- *Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.*

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

Audit findings

I was able to confirm that the Notice of the Period of Public Rights and Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement) and Section 2 (Accounting Statement) were published on the council's website before 1 July 2025.

I was able to confirm that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and External Auditor Report and Certificate were published on the council's website before 30 September 2025.

The council has therefore met the publication requirements for 2024/25 have been met.

O. TRUSTEESHIP

Internal audit requirement

Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

Audit findings

The council has no trusts, and testing for this internal control objective is not applicable.

Achievement of control assertions at final internal audit date

Based on the tests conducted during the interim audit, our conclusions on the achievement of the internal control objectives to date are summarised in the table below.

	INTERNAL CONTROL OBJECTIVE	YES	NO	NOT COVERED
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year	✓		
B	This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for			✓The Council no longer has any petty cash.
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and			

	expenditure), supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	To be tested at final internal audit		
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the previous year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.			✓
L	The authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	To be tested at final internal audit		
M	The authority, during the previous year correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		
N	The authority complied with the publication requirements for prior year AGAR.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

Should you have any queries please contact me directly on jackie@mulberrylas.co.uk or 07515 861921

Yours sincerely

Jackie Scarff
Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd

Interim Internal Audit - Points Carried Forward

Audit Point	Interim Audit Findings	Council comments
B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	**The Council will need to publish the register of interests or a link to them published on the Wealden District Council website.**	
B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	**The Council is in the process of updating the website with agendas and minutes and I recommend it is made clear where minutes are draft.**	
B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	**I recommend that authority to spend is amended to clarify the level of spend that officers have for the items listed and the action required for spend above the levels specified.**	
C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE	**I recommend the minutes specify the policies being approved.**	

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE	**I recommend a risk matrix to assess the overall risk based on likelihood and consequences of an event occurring and then assesses the risks within each sector of the council's business operations including details of who is responsible for any actions.**	

Summary Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 03/12/2025

Committee Report

			Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
Finance & Policy								
401	Finance & Administration	Income	676,311	678,605	2,294			99.7%
		Expenditure	342,535	506,440	163,905		163,905	67.6%
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	333,776					
403	Other Grants	Expenditure	11,573	19,000	7,427		7,427	60.9%
		Finance & Policy Income	**676,311**	**678,605**	**2,294**			**99.7%**
		Expenditure	**354,108**	**525,440**	**171,332**	**0**	**171,332**	**67.4%**
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	**322,203**	**153,165**	**(169,038)**			

Continued over page

Amenities & Services

			Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
101	Allotments	Income	1,561	2,200	639			71.0%
		Expenditure	232	1,000	768		768	23.2%
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	1,329					
102	Village Greens	Income	1,735	1,000	(735)			173.5%
		Expenditure	7,958	13,000	5,042		5,042	61.2%
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(6,223)					
104	Amenities General	Income	12	1,000	988			1.2%
		Expenditure	1,974	13,500	11,526		11,526	14.6%
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(1,962)					
105	Outdoor Maintenance	Expenditure	945	2,500	1,555		1,555	37.8%
203	Street Lighting	Expenditure	26,582	26,000	(582)		(582)	102.2%
204	Road Safety	Expenditure	0	500	500		500	0.0%
601	Cemetery	Income	7,525	15,000	7,476			50.2%
		Expenditure	2,034	2,050	16		16	99.2%
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	5,491					
		Amenities & Services Income	**10,833**	**19,200**	**8,368**			**56.4%**
		Expenditure	**39,726**	**58,550**	**18,824**	**0**	**18,824**	**67.8%**
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	**(28,893)**	**(39,350)**	**(10,457)**			

Summary Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 03/12/2025

Month No: 8

Committee Report

Property & Assets

			Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
205	Miscellaneous Assets	Expenditure	481	0	(481)		(481)	0.0%
301	Community Centre	Income	32,335	38,800	6,465			83.3%
		Expenditure	63,081	91,400	28,319		28,319	69.0%
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(30,746)					
303	Venue on the Green	Income	2,459	2,000	(459)			122.9%
		Expenditure	3,282	3,500	218		218	93.8%
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(823)					
		Property & Assets Income	**34,793**	**40,800**	**6,007**			**85.3%**
		Expenditure	**66,844**	**94,900**	**28,056**	**0**	**28,056**	**70.4%**
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	**(32,051)**	**(54,100)**	**(22,049)**			

Continued over page

		Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
Localism & Community Projects							
206 Community Transport	Income	186	120	(66)			154.6%
	Expenditure	818	1,200	382		382	68.2%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(633)					
207 Market	Income	4,677	7,500	2,823			62.4%
	Expenditure	5,514	8,000	2,486		2,486	68.9%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(837)					
209 Localism & Community Proj Misc	Income	1,550	500	(1,050)			310.0%
	Expenditure	7,364	12,500	5,136		5,136	58.9%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(5,814)					
304 Cafe	Income	17,246	22,000	4,754			78.4%
	Expenditure	10,580	17,500	6,920		6,920	60.5%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	6,666					
306 Thursday Club	Income	95	200	105			47.5%
	Expenditure	108	750	642		642	14.4%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(13)					
406 Youth Provision	Income	1,746	1,000	(746)			174.6%
	Expenditure	2,330	3,500	1,170		1,170	66.6%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(585)					
	Localism & Community Projects Income	**25,500**	**31,320**	**5,820**			**81.4%**
	Expenditure	**26,714**	**43,450**	**16,736**	**0**	**16,736**	**61.5%**
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	**(1,215)**	**(12,130)**	**(10,915)**			
	Grand Totals:- Income	**747,436**	**769,925**	**22,489**			**97.1%**
	Expenditure	**487,392**	**722,340**	**234,948**	**0**	**234,948**	**67.5%**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**260,044**	**47,585**	**(212,459)**			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	**260,044**	**47,585**	**(212,459)**			

BUDGET 2026-27: CONSOLIDATED DRAFT : v.1 Committee adopts pre-Star Chamber

FINANCE & POLICY INCOME			notes
4176 Precept	TBC		
4180 Misc F&P income		0	none guaranteed
4181 Wayleaves		5	unchanged
4182 Devolved services income		1750	inflation uprate
4190 Interest received		7000	rate dependent
TOTAL F&P INCOME		**8755**	**excl.precept & ringfenced carryover**
			approx 102% of 2025-26 figure

FINANCE & POLICY EXPENDITURE		notes
4101 Salaries	465000	current year + 5%
4102 Payroll costs	1000	increased service
4103 Library salary	6500	unchanged
4108 Staff training & travel	1500	add in CILCA fee
4111 Forest rate	35	inflation uprate
4120 Postage	400	reduction in demand
4121 Telecommunications	9000	inflation uprate
4123 Stationery	650	inflation uprate
4124 Subscriptions	7000	inflation uprate
4125 Insurances	11500	inflation uprate
4126 Printer/copier	5000	offset inflation v public use
4130 Waste reduction projects	1000	projected allocaton
4133 Chairmans Fun+F16:J34d	0	voted out
4134 Parish meeting/ event	200	unchanged
4135 Cllr training & travel	1000	unchanged
4136 Security checks (DBS)	150	unchanged
4137 Cllr allowances	7500	inflation increase
4151 Bank charges	1800	unchanged
4156 Legal & professional fees	3500	unchanged
4157 Audit/financial mgt	5000	unchanged
4158 Van lease	300	unchanged
4160 Office equipment	500	unchanged
4161 Office maintenance	500	unchanged
4165 Elections	1000	poss by-election
4166 Wayleaves	10	unchanged
4169 Commmunity event	1000	unchanged
7101 Advertising	500	general PR+banners
7102 Website	250	servicing
7110 Newsletter	200	contingency
4360 Grants made (incl FRSGA)	20000	increased emphasis
4362 Local artists fund	1500	unchanged
TOTAL F&P	**553495**	
		(approx 105% of 2025-26 budget figure

PLACE': INCOME		
1180 Allotment rents	2500	as per 2025-26 forecast
1280 VG hire	1350	predicted decline on current receipts
1281 VG utilities	0	unchanged
6180 Burial fees	12000	to reflect plot availability
1400 Am'ts grants & donations	1500	guesstimate
3180 CC lettings	27500	increased hire rates
3181 CC equipment hire	850	as per 2025-26 forecast
3182 CC rents	25000	end of rent=free periods
3185 CC misc income	650	as per 2025-26 forecast
3187 CC drinks machine	500	as per 2025-26 forecast
3188 CC grants & donations	0	none predicted
3306 VotG income	3000	increased hire rates
TOTAL FACILITIES INCOME	**74850**	
		(approx 125% of 2025-26 budget)

PLACE': EXPENDITURE		notes
1135 Allotment upkeep	500	avge of previous 2 years
Village green utilities	0	obsolete code
1236 Outdoor maintenance	20000	to allow service expansion
1238 Street cleaning/litter	5000	to allow service expansion
1237 Outdoor planting	1250	to allow service expansion
1501 Outdoor equipment	2750	to allow service expansion
1436 Skate & play areas	5000	repairs & m'tce
1447 Dog waste	4000	inflation uprate
6123 Cemetery admin	500	inflation uprate
6151 Cemetery rates	1750	inflation uprate
2314 Streetlights - power	6000	unchanged
2336 Streetlights	24000	to allow service expansion
2136 Bus shelters	0	no budget allowance - to be
1439 Benches	0	financed through CIL monies
1442 Litter bins	0	see above new code
2551 Offsite car park	75	postponed this budget year
2553 Grit bins	0	no budget allowance - to be
6139 War memorial	0	financed through CIL monies
7108 Noticeboards	0	
3111 CC rates & services	80000	inflation uprate
3127 Drinks machine	1600	inflation uprate
3136 CC enhancement	20000	against decoration/repair
3304 VotG non-youth equipment	500	unchanged
3305 VotG running costs	4000	inflation uprate
TOTAL FACILITIES EXPENDITURE	**176925**	
		(approx 116% of 2025-26 figure)

PEOPLE': INCOME		
2678 Medical transport income	350	as per 2024-25 forecast
3184 Market income	7500	unchanged
2905 Service development income	500	nominal
3480 Gages sales	24000	price increases
3680 Th.Club subscriptions	200	unchanged
4676 Youth grants/subscriptions	1500	increased receipts
4180 Misc.income	0	not guaranteed
TOTAL C-S INCOME	**34050**	
		(= approx 109%% of 2025-26 figure)

PEOPLE' : EXPENDITURE		
2601 Medical car scheme	100	increased usage
2554 Wealdlink	1200	inflation uprate
3151 Market expenses	10000	incl. new equipment
3460 Gages food	16000	inflation uprate
3436 Gages equipment	2000	unchanged
3636 Thursday Club costs	1000	allowance for trips
4603 Youth expenses	4000	service expansion
new: Youth forum	0	no call on fund (dormant)
~~Emergency equipment~~	~~0~~	~~obsolete~~
2436 Road safety	500	for traffic survey
2710 Environmental support	1000	possible carbon audit
2715 Community consultation	6000	potential PWLB consutation
2700 New service support	4000	renamed from R/C & wellbeing
NEW Supported counselling	5500	service expansion
2720 Capital projcts R&D	500	unchanged
TOTAL C-S EXPENDITURE	**51800**	
		approx 123% of 2025-26 figure

TOTAL INCOME (pre-precept):	117655
TOTAL EXPENDITURE:	782220
SHORTFALL for precept:	664565

FRPC RESERVES 2025-2026 V.2

	2024-25 actual	reason	2025-26 actual	reason
General reserve	200,758	held at ± £200K	249,467	in line with budget
Nominated				
Playground	45,000	increase for interim works	45,000	held steady
By elections	1,000	held at £1k	2,000	increased fees
Cemetery	35,000	increased for prep works	60,000	increased for prep
CC refurb	31,000	restore to 2023-24 figure	25,000	back up to revenue
Devolved services	0	no longer required	10,000	possible devolution
PWLB repayment	10,000	allow 6 months worth	10,000	as before
CIL money	10,084	carried over unspent	10,084	carry over
FrowResource (escrow)	0		2,625	held on account
Shed project (escrow)	0		1,230	held on acount
				165,939
TOTAL	**332,842**	total from	**415,406**	total from
	282,377	yr-end plus	365,406	yr end/ plus
	50,465	precept top up	50,000	precept top up

Proposal for a Low-Cost Counselling Service in Forest Row

Background

Waiting times to access mental health support, including talking therapy, are at an all-time high. Even the waiting time for an assessment via the NHS can be up to 4-5 months, and then therapy can take a further 12 months. None of this has changed in the past two years.

There is also an increasing scrutiny over the link between mental health diagnoses and the impact this has on the UK's workforce. We believe better mental health for our clients means better lives, more likelihood to engage in studies or work and better family life which all has an impact on our whole community.

Of course, private counselling therapy is available, and Forest Row has several locally based therapists. However, the average fee for private therapy in Sussex is between £50-£60 a session and beyond the budget of many who need it. Whilst many counsellors offer pro bono or discounted fees, the cost-of-living crisis is putting pressure on the number of sessions they are able to offer.

Proposal

In 2024 local therapists, Owen Morgan and Diane Burnett set up a Low-Cost Counselling Service offering subsidised sessions to clients living in Forest Row, at a rate they can afford. With endorsement and financial support from FRPC, the Service has helped improve the well-being of the local community by reaching residents who might not otherwise sourced therapeutic support.

In the financial year 2024 we offered counselling to 18 different clients from the parish and a total of 155 sessions. So far since April 25 we have worked with 25 clients and held 135 sessions. We have seen the service gain traction in the community. We have seen clients aged from 16 to 77.

We also have had enquiries from local therapists offering their time. All those selected are members of the BACP, are fully insured and qualified. This now gives the service a range of experiences, specialisms and approaches to match with client needs.

It was proposed last year that to secure commitment, clients were asked to contribute what they could afford – at a minimum of £10 per session – with FRPC "topping up" the fee to a maximum of £40 per session from the awarded funds. The remaining discount will be offered by the therapist (on their private practice fee of £55). On average clients have contributed £14 towards their sessions and most have taken up the whole 10 sessions.

Administration of the Service – including undertaking initial assessments, booking sessions, onward referrals, financial tracking, networking with local Service providers and businesses and writing up policies to underpin the Service – will still be provided by the Diane and Owen, pro bono. Owen is also providing free supervision to therapists for work undertaken through the service.

It is proposed that promotion of the Service will be shared by the therapists and FRPC, see below.

Funding Request: £5,500

The budget we were granted last year has already nearly gone when we project forward costs for existing clients' allocation of sessions. We have also built relationships with the GP clinic, youth groups and expect referrals from ex-clients who have benefited from the service. Last year we received a total of £4500 from the council to support the service spending every penny of that on sessions for clients.

Funding Scenario: If 15 clients contribute £10 for each session up to a maximum of 10 sessions per person, the FRPC contribution would be £4,500 for approx. of 150 counselling sessions. The total discount offered by the therapists in this scenario would be equivalent to £2K – excluding the cost of administration.

As we have reported not all clients pay the same amount which is why we ended up with 155 sessions this year. We are not sure if this pattern will be repeated which is why we are approximating.

Over the course of the Service's life, additional funding will be sought to extend the reach and impact for the local community. We will be looking later this year at this and will ensure there is a separation from those who benefit from the parish council's support and any other financial support we receive. As yet we have not begun this process with our relationship with the parish council being our first priority.

How It Works

Clients will be directed to contact Owen or Diane, as Heads of Service, by phone or email – with details listed on a dedicated webpage on the FRPC website. This will be publicised on flyers and posters placed around the village. Promotion will be supplemented by building connections with other local services like the Youth Centre, Youth Forum, Health Centre and via Facebook on the community page and within the parish magazine.

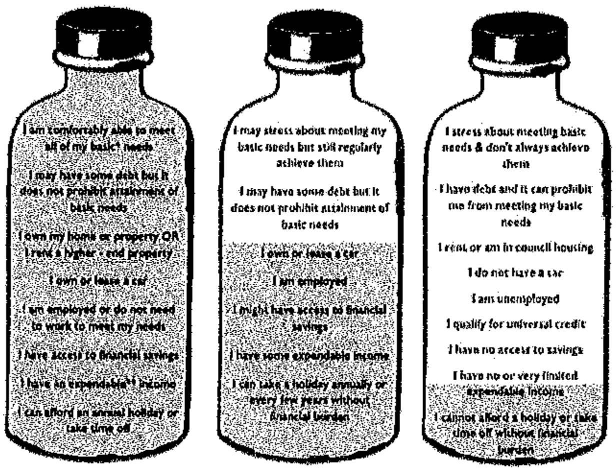
After an initial assessment, the Service then offers a choice of male or female counsellor, according to client preference and therapist availability. As outlined above, clients would be asked to pay what they can afford – at a minimum of £10 per session. Clients unable to meet this requirement will be signposted to free support offered by CAHMS and other NHS services or charitable organisations like The Lucy Rayner Foundation or YMCA - Heads Together.

The model below[1] shows how a sliding scale of client contribution works to offer a flexible payment range instead of fixed price for the Service.

[1] The Green Bottle Sliding Scale Method, developed by a Community Practitioner, Alexis J. Cunningfolk, as a fee structure designed to accommodate clients with different financial means.

Where do you fall on the Sliding Scale?

Tier 3 Tier 2 Tier 1



Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1
Refer client to private practice at £55/session	Client pays between £20-£40	Client pays between £10-£20

At present the proposal is to offer each client up to a maximum of 10 sessions. This will enable the Service to help as many people as possible, whilst offering optimal support. Clients will be eligible to re-engage with the Service after an agreed period of no less than three months unless there are extenuating circumstances which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Clients needing ongoing or alternative support will be signposted as relevant.

As necessary, a waiting list will be managed by the Heads of Service. Responsibility for client care and management will be undertaken by the individual therapists, including practice insurance and professional supervision.

Therapists will offer sessions online or in person in their private therapy rooms. However, if there is a possibility of using a room at FRPC for those in need of wheelchair access or with other additional needs, this would be welcomed.

The Services offers sessions for adults and young people from 14yrs+ Service would offer sessions for adults and young people from 14yrs.

Counselling contracts will be in place for each client, and therapists will practice within the BACP ethical framework.

Roles & Responsibilities

Heads of Service:

- First point of contact for FRPC and clients
- Initial client assessments
- Allocation of therapist and agreement of fee with client
- Collation of individual therapists' invoices, sending to the Parish Clerk monthly.
- Collating reporting data & testimonials
- Sending FRPC regular updates on allocation of funds
- Organising monthly supervision with therapists
- Taking on new therapists, as required

- Supervision if required offered free for all FRPC sponsored clients by Owen who is a qualified supervisor

All Therapists:

- Marketing and promotion of the Service
- Gathering impact data and testimonials
- Ongoing client relationships

FRPC:

- Creation of dedicated web page
- Making marketing material available in FRPC spaces
- Promoting Service to relevant stakeholders

Safeguarding and GDPR

Counselling will be offered within the BACP ethical framework. The Service will have safeguarding and GDPR policies in place and all therapists are fully insured and hold Enhanced DBS Certificates.

Reporting and Impact

To demonstrate impact, the Service will provide anonymised data about the clients supported in the funding period, including the number/times of sessions attended and outcomes of counselling. We have already received anonymous feedback from several clients, the key findings have been included within this proposal.

Promotion of the Service

The Service would continue to be promoted as "supported by FRPC" but run independently by the therapists offering counselling. The following activity is proposed to raise awareness of the Service in the first instance:

- Continue to maintain relationships with Youth Group
- Promotion via FRPC and Forest Row Community Facebook pages
- Maintain the dedicated page of the FRPC website to introduce the Service, outline therapist biographies and publish contact details for Head of Service
- Ensuring local Services i.e. Youth Centre, Library, Community Fridge are aware of the Service and are able to promote it, where appropriate
- Liaising with Ashdown Forest Health Centre to refer clients (we have had two referrals from the Centre and will get in touch to remind them of our presence)

Therapists' Biographies

Owen Morgan: As a counsellor my job is to provide a space where clients can learn how to make positive changes and support them to live a more fulfilled life. With experience working online on the telephone and from my therapy room at my home in Forest Row, I offer clients a supportive environment and work alongside them to facilitate growth and change.

Since qualifying in 2018, I have been a member of the BACP and adhere to their Ethical Framework. I am currently working towards accreditation, and am a qualified counselling supervisor, supporting other therapists in their client work.

I have worked for a leading youth service, a suicide bereavement charity and West Sussex County Council supporting young people and am eager to extend my community impact in partnership with FRPC. I work with all kinds of issues and clients from 14-82yrs old.

Diane Burnett: Hello, I am a person-centred counselling psychotherapist. I work from my peaceful garden room. I am excited to offer counselling through our new initiative, as I passionately believe that there should not be barriers to people's ability to access mental health interventions.

I know the sting of feeling "othered," and I aim to have a non-oppressive practice. This means acknowledging that everyone is unique and all experiences are valid and equal, but also understanding how the intersections of power can negatively affect one's life due to gender, socioeconomic status, colour, neurodiversity, etc.

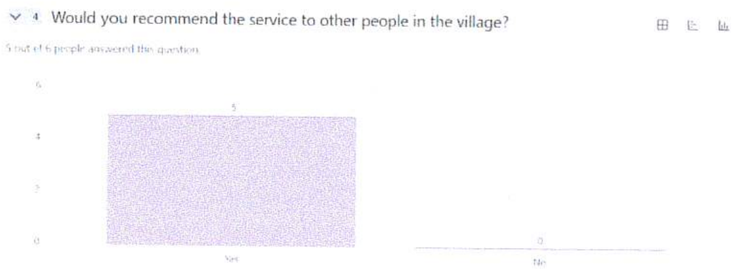
I have lots of experience working with people affected by cancer, previously volunteering for MacMillan, and I currently do some private work with a breast cancer charity. Being neurodivergent, I was diagnosed with ADHD two years ago, it has been a journey navigating what this means for me. This does not make me an expert, but I feel it has enhanced my empathy for what being "different" can feel like.

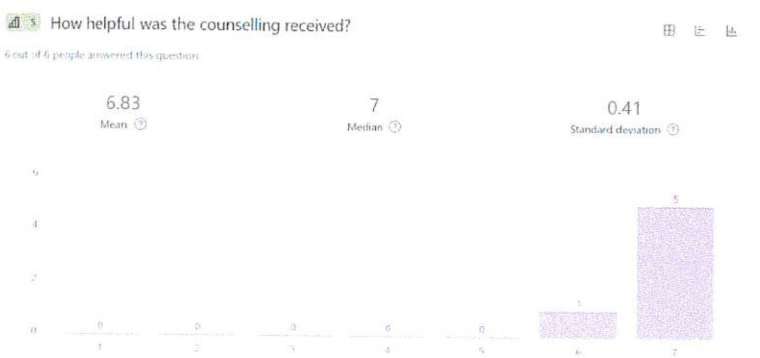
In Summary

The collated feedback data indicates that the FRPC-supported low-cost counselling service is making a positive impact on many local people. Continued support for this service could reach many more people in the village.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Below are some key findings.





1= Not very helpful, 7= very helpful

6 What do you think about how much the service cost?

5 out of 6 people answered this question

Search responses

Very fair and reasonable

3 months ago

Affordable and made cost effective for the Community

4 months ago

very helpful, made it possible for me for the first time

8 months ago

Exceptional pricing strategy when offering discounted rates to vulnerable people. I felt looked after and genuinely wanted to pay what I could at the ...

8 months ago

Very manageable

8 months ago

Other comments and suggestions made:

Perhaps an option to repeat the sessions sooner than three months

3 months ago

It was a very positive experience with a welcoming and positive Counsellor. I feel I got the benefit of space and quality time; felt understood in tha...

4 months ago

This is an incredible initiative. Please continue it so that more people like me can be helped when they need it most.

8 months ago

This cheaper access is/was most valuable to me... would appreciate more some time in the future, Thanks

8 months ago

FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

NAME	FINANCE & POLICY	PERSONNEL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Christie B				X
Eichner J **Chair**	X			
Evans A		X		
Gilbert G	X(C)		X (VC)	
Jaffay A **Vice Chair**	X			X
Killick A	X	X	X	X(VC)
La Djoi Z	X	X		X
Lewis A				
Matthews B			X (C)	
Rainbow R			X	X(C)
Scott A			X	X
Summers M			X	
Volkers A	X			X
Waters A	X(VC)	X(C)	X	
Co-opted			Allot Reps (1)	
TOTALS	8	4	8	8
Quorum	3		3	3

Revised 15th Oct 2025

Notes of a Grant Policy meeting
held in the Spring Room
on Monday 24th November 2025 at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs. Eichner, Killick, la Djoi & Waters. The Clerk and deputy clerk.

Apologies: Cllrs. Gilbert (unable to attend) & Jaffay (family)

The matter of an amended grants policy had been suggested by Cllr. Jaffay and she had supplied a list of her recommendations.

This was discussed along with the current grants policy.

The following points were made:

- The current policy meant it was open to all
- The Council did not want to limit the applicants/recipients
- A 'Grants are available' post could be put on social media
- A spreadsheet of grants made to be included in the backing papers of Finance & Policy agendas – this would show the 'spread' of grants awarded
- A list of grants made to be updated on the website
- A policy of proactive promotional grants could be best achieved by better publicity: and individual approach might prove too limiting.
- The grant application form be made available as is and also via online form.

The recommendation from this group to Full Council would be that the Grants Policy and application form would remain unaltered.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Suggested amendments to the FRPC Community Grants Application Form and process, *Andi Jaffay November 2025*

Introduction and Information

Thank you for your interest in FRPC Community Grants. We fund projects and work that benefits the communities of Forest Row, Weirwood and Hammerwood. We allocate small grants of up to £350 and medium grants of up to £1000. We also proactively fund projects once a year that reflect our annual strategy.

We make decisions in a democratic way. The Finance & Funding Committee is made up of Councillors (who are all elected or co-opted community members), and they are supported by FRPC Staff. They look through all applications, they discuss them, and then they vote to support or decline applications.

Examples of groups that have been funded before: Low-cost counselling service, Community food growing groups, Low-cost childrens' therapies, Compost club.

The criteria for funding for the FRPC small and medium grants is that they must benefit either the people who live in these local communities, or the infrastructure, wildlife or natural landscape in these areas.

For a small grant, constituted organisations, unconstituted groups or individuals may apply. For a medium grant, the organisations must be a CIC, a CIO or a CBS. Occasionally we may award funding to a company, but this will be dependent on whether the company works for community benefit.

The application process:

1. You fill out an application form and submit it to the FRPC office, together with any relevant documents. The FRPC office will acknowledge receipt of your application and let you know which F&F meeting the application will be discussed at, in case you wish to be present.
2. Once a decision has been made about your application, if you're successful the funding will be paid into your organization account. The turnaround time for this process is usually within a 2 month period.
3. If you're successful, we would expect that you would produce some monitoring and evaluation in the middle of your project, and again at the end. We would also expect that you would produce a breakdown of how the funding had been spent, and copies of receipts to prove what has been spent.

Organisation details

Name of Organisation:

Charity number or CIC number:

Do you have a governing document or a Constitution? If so, please attach this to your application:

Name of contact person:

Address for correspondence:

Tel:

Email:

Website:

Social media pages:

Finance details

Which funders have you successfully brought in money from before to the organisation?

Do you have audited accounts? If so, please attach the most recent to your application:

Please attach the budget for the project that you're applying for funding to your application:

Total amount of money that you are applying for:

Who the grant would be payable to, and the bank account details:

Are you asking for funding for this project from other sources? What stage are you in hearing back from other funders?

Project details

Please describe the work of your organisation:

Please describe your proposed project:

How will the project benefit the Forest Row, Weirwood, and Hammerwood communities?

Which types of groups of people would mostly benefit from this project?

How many people do you expect to benefit from this project?

How are you planning to promote this project within the FRPC area, so that people hear about it? Would you like support from us around this?

Community Grants Agreement and Monitoring & Evaluation

The funding for your project should be spent according to the budget that you sent to us with your application. We require a breakdown of bank statements and receipts at the end of your project, to show how the money has been spent.

The funding for your project should be fully spent within 12 months of receipt of this grant. If you find you don't need to spend all of the funds allocated, we would expect return of the remaining funds, so that these can be put back into the Community Grants pot for another local group or organisation to use.

Please email the FRPC office after 6 months and again after 12 months, sharing your monitoring and evaluation of the project.

You should include quantitative monitoring: numbers of beneficiaries and types of groups of people who have benefited.

You should also include qualitative monitoring: quotes from beneficiaries, photographs, written pieces by beneficiaries. Please ensure you have written consent from anyone in photographs or testimonials, stating that they consent to you sharing this with FRPC, and that they consent to us including this on our website or social media. Testimonials or written pieces can be anonymised.

Extra Suggestions:

- Shift to an online form for Community Grants applications.
- An Extraordinary Meeting for F&P for January 2026, which could follow a workshop of Cllrs creating a focused strategy for the coming year. Mapping out who we could approach to proactively fund projects that match our strategy.
- We could also proactively fund a handful of large charities every year, that benefit the community, but aren't necessarily within our annual strategy focus. Recognising their value in the community ie £500 per year to Air Ambulance, Hospice.
- Ask the organisations we approach for proactive funding, to create a project proposal and budget, then take it back to F&P for a decision/ vote.
- Use a certain % per year to proactively fund these projects. Organisations that we know and have seen their successful work for the community.
- Any funds not applied for by December go back into the January Proactive Grants pot.
- Small grants up to £350 – use a more basic form and simple Monitoring & Evaluation.

FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL

The Community Centre
Hartfield Road
Forest Row
East Sussex
RH18 5DZ

Tel: 01342 822661
Email: parishclerk@forestrow.gov.uk
Web: http://www.forestrow.gov.uk
Clerk: David O'Driscoll

REQUEST FOR GRANT AID

Please note that grants will only be considered by the submission of this form

NAME OF ORGANISATION: The Heart of Listening

NAME OF CONTACT PERSON: Sarah Charlton

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:
Silver Ridge, Card Hill
Forest Row

POST CODE: RH18 5BA

Tel: 07708 652948

Email: sarah@theheartoflistening.org.uk

Web (if any): www.theheartoflistening.org.uk

SUM REQUESTED: £2000

TO WHOM SHOULD ANY GRANT BE MADE PAYABLE? Please provide bank details for BACS payments

Ms S J Charlton
Account Number 21917000 Sort Code: 16-58-10

DO YOU HAVE AUDITED ACCOUNTS? ☐ Yes X No

IF YES, ARE THEY ATTACHED? ☐ Yes X No (Accounts)

IF APPLICABLE, DO YOU HAVE A BUDGET? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Yes ☐ No (Budget)

IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY

I am an individual applying for a grant for a start up project in service of my village community

ARE YOU ASKING FOR FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES? ☐ Yes X No

From	Amount	Purpose

PURPOSE OF REQUEST (please use second sheet if necessary

- Drawing inspiration from ancient cultures and tools from the world of personal development. PODS bring a new way for us all to benefit from our shared humanity and interconnectedness.
- Give and receive the type of support that holds us accountable to our dreams and helps us reach our potential - together!
- Learn the art of deep listening and effect the change you desire to see. Trauma informed, tried and tested tools ensure safety and sustainability for PODS groups.

HOW WILL IT BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY?

Please see the attached letter in support of my application for further information

My grant request is made for the setting up of a new local initiative called PODS
The aims of PODS are

- To reduce social isolation and loneliness
- To strengthen individual and community cohesion
- To create self -sustaining social support structures which can run independently of a 'service provider' after the initial eight week introductory period.
- Promote mutual support and decrease reliance on statutory services
- Inspire individual and collective creativity and engagement through encouragement and emotional, and practical support towards goals.

PODS are suitable for

- Parents
- Elders
- Young People
- General, mixed demographic groupings
- Community Leaders
- Entrepreneurs
- Everyone!

PODS
grow together

The PODS Vision

My grant request is made for the setting up of a new, local to Forest Row, initiative called PODS.

PODS stands for Point of Direct Support.

The aims of PODS are

- To reduce social isolation and loneliness
- To strengthen individual wellbeing and community cohesion
- To create self -sustaining, social support structures which can run independently of a 'service provider' after the initial eight week introductory period.
- Promote mutual support and decrease reliance on statutory services
- Inspire individual and collective creativity and engagement through encouragement and emotional, and practical support towards goals.
- To be inclusive, practically useful, self sustaining, solution focused and empathic.

PODS are suitable for

- Parents
- Elders
- Young People
- General, mixed demographic groupings
- Community Leaders
- Entrepreneurs
- Individuals

PODS are inspired in part by the Moai tradition of Okinawa. A 'Blue Zone' - so called because people live longer in these places than other parts of the world.

Moai are small groups of which form, often in early life, to provide mutual support for all participants, like a second family. In this way people have a safety net which combats loneliness and provides each person with a way to both give and receive practical, social and emotional support.

I have adapted this idea to meet the needs of modern, western communities where we may experience greater levels of disconnection and isolation.

At the heart of the model is a trauma informed listening model based on co-counselling. This tried and tested tool provides:

- a safe, clear framework for people to build mutual trust within strict rules of confidentiality
- a set structure of shared time so that the 'give and take' stays in balance.
- an opportunity to focus on what is going well.
- the potential for deepening trust, reciprocal support and accountability.

Additional elements which make PODS a unique and 'solution focused' model are

- The setting of SMART goals to help people move forward.
- The giving and receiving of support in a safe, sustainable way that doesn't leave anyone either overburdened or over taking from the group. Each group will receive initial coaching in how to keep this in balance during the eight-week training.

About Me

I am a Certified Parent Coach and Solution Focused Mentor currently working within a child & adolescent NHS funded charity in Surrey. I have over 12 years' experience of delivering Solution Focused, trauma informed group and individual sessions.

I have lived in Forest Row for 19 years and raised my family here, being an active part of the community over that time. This is the first time I have applied for a grant from the council.

My best hope is to establish PODS as a self-sustaining model which can run independently of any one individual once I have been able to embed the model, train others to keep facilitating it and seek further funding avenues that will allow me to continue developing the model using reflective evaluation tools and user feedback.

Details of costing for Forest Row PODS

Should I receive the full amount I am applying for, my aim would be to run two pilot PODS groups that would serve as case studies for further development and refinement of the PODS project and one training group which would other people to learn the skills and techniques needed to deliver their own PODS.

After these initial groups have run their course, the model would roll out using a low cost, monthly subscription model.

Training others to be able to deliver PODS - 8 weeks at £75 per 90 minute session = £600

8 week delivery of PODS sessions for Elders @ £50 per 90 minute session = £400

8 week delivery of PODS sessions for young people @£50 per 90 minute session = £400

Preparation and printing of course materials = 5 hours x £35 = £175

Administration Time = 5 hours x £35 = £175

Advertising Budget = £250

Total = £2000

Benefit

8 people per POD x 3 groups = 24 people receiving immediate benefit.

The benefits to Forest Row however would be far reaching and wide. These are just a few of the potential benefits.

- Supported parents become better resourced to parent well
- Young people develop listening skills, sustainable models of mutual support
- Isolation and loneliness are reduced amongst the elderly and less well-resourced sections of our community
- Cross generational connection would be encouraged and supported
- Individual projects would be supported to flourish through accountability and support
- Forest Row would be leading the way in a model which I intend to roll out in time as a national model of community and individual support.

Sustainability

Beyond the duration of the grant and once trained in delivering PODS, this system is self sustaining. After this initial period, I propose that PODS becomes a low-cost subscription model so that it can provide a small income for each facilitator.

Thank you for considering my application

Yours faithfully

Sarah Charlton

David O'Driscoll

From:	Edouard Hugo <doudou_hugo@yahoo.fr>
Sent:	01 December 2025 09:36
To:	David O'Driscoll
Subject:	Bus Stop painting: Vote for next Council meeting?

Hello David,

If at all possible, I would like to submit to a quick vote at the next Full Council Meeting (9/12?) a quote of £1000 in order to repair and repaint the whole interior and exterior of the bus stop (except the bench). In an ideal world, I would redo the walls before implementing the already decided pin board.

I estimate around £100 of paint. There may be another £50 for odd bits of wood. The rest would be for labour (@25/h equivalent, that is around 4 full days).

Note that I would need to pinch electricity from the maintenance shed or any nearest location (bottom of the green?) in order to run my sanders.
The colour also needs to be decided... I feel a dark colour would be more appropriate. Should it be leaning towards the green, the brown, the grey or the black?

Respectfully,
Edouard