

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on
Wednesday 27th April 2022 at 8.00pm in St John the Baptist Church

1. Introduction

Parish Council Chairman Eddie Powell opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and reminded all present that the Annual Meeting booklet was available containing the reports provided by the Parish Council and Harrietsham Groups. As things begin to return to some form of normality, after the Covid-19 pandemic, Cllr Powell thanked the volunteers who had supported vulnerable residents in the village for the past 2 years. He especially thanked Cllrs T & J Sams for assisting with setting up the volunteer group and to the Community Warden, Martin Sherwood, who had worked tirelessly, including being out in all weathers queuing to collect prescriptions before delivering them to patients. Cllr Powell then explained the work that members of the Parish Council are involved in on a day to day basis and thanked his fellow Councillors for their efforts. He also thanked the Clerk and RFO for their support.

2. Present

Cllr E Powell (Chair), Cllr G Dean, Cllr J Sams, Cllr T Sams, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr R Dayes, Cllr T Griffiths, Cllr C Roots, Cllr S Luck, RFO M Cuerden, Clerk A Broadhurst and Community Warden Martin Sherwood

Approximately 11 members of the public.

3. Apologies for absence

No apologies received.

4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24th April 2019

Audrey Joy proposed (from the floor) that the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on the 24th April 2019 be approved. This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with the majority in favour.

5. Guest Speaker - DC Mark Newman - Kent Police

DC Newman spoke to the meeting regarding fraud prevention and the various types of fraud which are now becoming increasingly common, especially in the older age group. It is very lucrative and £68 billion was lost to fraud last year. Kent Police set up a specialised Economics Crimes Team 5 years ago, which is extremely successful in identifying the risks of volume fraud. DC Newman spoke about the most common types of fraud, which can also target residents who are still listed in the phone book:

- **Romance Fraud**: People are targeted through social media sites by an unknown profile. These profiles will generally be of middle-aged men with profile pictures of them in uniform or of puppies. These will all be posed photos to lure in unsuspecting vulnerable people who think that they would never be scammed. This quickly moves from the social media platform to personal emails, as they cannot be monitored by the social media companies. These fraudsters operate off a script and form an emotional bond with the victim. They are generally organised crime groups who operate out of Nigeria or Indonesia, working shifts. They generally progress through 'bad luck' stories obtaining small sums of money (£100) and quickly work up to regularly requiring sums of £2,000+. If the Police become involved, but the victim does not feel that they are a victim of fraud, the CAD report will still be passed to the Team for them to investigate further. One of the main things that they first look out for is poor grammar in the emails.
- **Rogue Trading**: This is a huge issue, targeting people on their doorsteps. A typical scam would be that a roofer will knock to say that there is a loose/damaged roof tile and, if the resident gives them £1, they will mend it for them. The victim will hand over the money but will later be informed that further issues have been found - even possibly that a whole new roof is required. One particular victim had handed over £908k and, even if the work had really been required, the cost would have been in the region of £12k. Working with this particular victim, Kent Police had completed a vulnerable assessment and assisted them with contacting the bank. This had had some success as nearly £415k was reimbursed to the victim from the bank.
- **Employee Thefts**: Employees have been known to defraud companies for sums in the region of £200k and the team are involved with investigating these crimes.
- **Courier Fraud**: These are extremely sophisticated frauds whereby a victim will be contacted by someone pertaining to be from a Police Force (usually the Met, as this is well known) or HMRC. An issue, possibly a fraud scenario, will be explained and they will then ask the victim to contact the

bank/police. The victim hangs up the phone and dials out however, unbeknown to them, the fraudster is still on the line. The victim will generally be groomed for 24 hours, telling them to keep all lines clear, to ensure that they do not have any contact with family or friends (who could flag that there is something wrong). The fraudster will then get them to withdraw money from the bank and then, wearing gloves, get them to read out each serial number on the money to then inform the victim that the money is counterfeit. The criminal will then arrange for someone to collect the money to take to the Police lab for testing and the victim willingly hands over the cash. The fraudster will have arranged for a number of people in one area to be targeted and it has been known for £40k to be collected in one day from various victims.

DC Newman highlighted that the older generation trust people in authority and so will believe if a fraudster reports they are from the Police etc. It is important that they do not take this at face value and double check (preferable from a different phone) by calling 101. It is important to realise that the money gained from fraud can be used to fund terrorism, child prostitution and child slavery.

At the close of the talk, DC Newman kindly answered questions from those in attendance.

The formal meeting closed at 8.43pm

Cllr Powell invited all present to stay for refreshments.