

For PPC 29.6.22 meeting, public participation.

I would publicly like to try to correct and stop a number of rumours which appear to be turning into 'facts' about the PHSSG and the handling of the £25,000 Emergency Town Centre Recovery Fund. I have had people approach me, people I know well, and accuse me of taking money from the fund illegally – the word being used is 'misappropriating'. Or that being paid as the Administrator for the PHSSG was wrong or 'shameful'. Others have reported to me that people are saying that the accounts will somehow show this to be true.

I would like to point out that I only agreed to be the Administrator for the Fund after Deborah Stanyon resigned, albeit after only being paid for 8 hours work, and after I checked with the Clerk that she didn't want the job. SW&T advised that contracting people to help deliver the fund was perfectly acceptable and they had even set a budget for Admin, which, by the way, we kept well below. Plus, my hours worked far exceeded those paid for.

I also worked many voluntary, unpaid hours on behalf of the various projects, as did the other members of the PHSSG. Unfortunately, the misinformation circulating around the village about misappropriation of funds by these PHSSG members may well have a negative effect on their reputations, most of them Traders, which is a very poor way to thank them for all the time they gave up. The PHSSG was very robust in being open and transparent and following all the procedures and terms and conditions for delivering the Fund, as put in place by SW&T and PPC, which makes this unfair criticism ever harder to swallow.

In March 2021, Malcolm McCoy as the then PPC Chair, asked the PHSSG to draw up accounting procedures for the Fund. The Clerk and I discussed and devised a procedure for paying invoices and keeping accounts to minimise the extra workload for the Clerk and help reconcile the expenditure regularly. I had previously used the same Rialtas accounting software as used by PPC when I worked for Minehead Town Council doing their finances, so understood how the PPC cost centres could be cross referenced to the PHSSG project groups to ensure accurate budget monitoring was in place. I also understood what information was required when paying invoices and posting to the PPC accounts regarding VAT and a description of the purchase (so an appropriate a/c code could be allocated by the Clerk), and provided all this information on a shared 'PPC Invoice Analysis' spreadsheet for the Clerk. In total there were 155 transactions on the spreadsheet, with budgeting for each Project Group to reconcile against, plus a shared file of the invoices. The Clerk and I kept this shared spreadsheet up to date and I reported on the PHSSG accounts every month. I published the PHSSG final accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 in early April 2022 – these were checked, signed off by SW&T, and have been unanimously approved by PPC.

To summarise, the PHSSG accounts were correct, even if the PPC accounts were not.

There should be no suggestion, therefore, that any amendments to the approved PHSSG accounts are needed other than a 30p error recorded for one payment and a small unclaimed VAT amount. These subsequently came to light when I was sent a copy of the PPC Nominal Ledger for the PHSSG cost centres later in April 2022. This spreadsheet had been sent to me, on request, as the PHSSG Administrator for reconciliation purposes, but as I was also a PPC Councillor on the Finance Committee at the time, I returned the spreadsheet with observations about some coding, accounting and VAT errors – I reported on over 70 anomalies regarding the ETCRF and WBF postings on the PPC accounts in order to help PPC correct and reconcile their accounts with the already checked and approved PHSSG accounts. This was a positive action on my part, taking me many hours of cross checking with the PHSSG accounts. I was no longer being paid as the Administrator but wanted to try and help voluntarily, and the Clerk thanked me for this help.

BTW, I did not advise on the a/c codes used on the PPC accounts as these are primarily for PPC reporting and budgeting. However, if these have been applied incorrectly, then the PPC accounts would not reflect the correct expenditure for the ETCRF projects and this would adversely affect the accuracy of the PPC budgeting going forward. For instance, if the invoices paid to Deborah Stanyon and me for Administration, and to Louise Crabb for the floral maintenance contract, are coded to Clerks Salary a/c 4000, as they were on the Nominal Ledger report I was sent, this could overinflate the amount under Clerks Salary by nearly £3,800, which in turn could lead to a forward budgeting miscalculation.

I understand that more correction work of the PPC accounts is possibly being undertaken. If I can still be of help in checking and advising on a further Nominal Ledger report of the PHSSG projects, especially as the first one was only up to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 so not complete, I would be happy to do so.