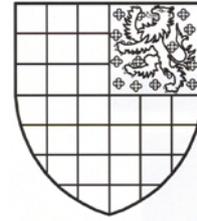


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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## *MINUTES*

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council** held on  
**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

*NB if a record of voting was requested, this is shown in a table appended to these Minutes.*

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors S Catlin (Wischhusen); M Chartier; A Dean; D Lamport; S Li (*Deputy Mayor*); G Mayhew; M Milner; R Murray; S Murray; R O’Keeffe; A Price; J Stockdale and M Turner (*Mayor*)

*In attendance:* S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); Mrs F Garth (*Civic Officer and Asst. Town Clerk*) M Larkin (*Mace Bearer*); Ms E. Martin (*C’tee Administration*) Canon Richard Moatt (*Council’s Chaplain*)

*Observing:* Mr B Courage (*Town Ranger*) and Ms V McLachlan (*Finance Administration Officer*)

Canon Moatt offered a few words reflecting on the priorities of public service.

**FC2014/14 QUESTION TIME:** No questions were asked.

**FC2014/15 MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none.

**FC2014/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllrs E Allsobrook, J Daly and J Lamb who were on holiday and Cllr J MacCleary who was working. No message had been received from Cllr I Eiloart.

### **FC2014/17 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

a) Members were informed that Jessie Geer, who had cleaned the Town Hall for 30 years, had lost her husband after a short illness. All present asked that their condolences be forwarded to Mrs Geer.

b) The Mayor read a letter from the Sussex Community Rail Partnership regarding the *Seaford Rail 150* commemoration on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June, thanking the Council for its support for those events.

c) Thanks had been received from the Sussex Archaeological Society regarding the Battle of Lewes commemorations. The Mayor read an extract which described several of the benefits arising from the Council’s general support and direct financial assistance, and offered evidence of the public’s welcome and enjoyment of many programmed events.

d) Thanks had also been received from Lewes Priory Trust for the contribution towards refurbishment of the Battle of Lewes sculpture. The amount needed had been less than the maximum sum agreed by Council.

e) An announcement had been made the previous day that the *Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere* initiative was accepted for designation as a World Biosphere site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Following six years of effort, this was the first new site in the UK in 40 years. There were 621 sites across 117 countries that made up the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, and the UK now had five sites. The Guardian newspaper had featured an article and there had been recognition on BBC South East television. Council had resolved in June 2012 to lobby for inclusion of the town within the designated area and was one of 40 partner organizations in the initiative.

*Continues...*

f) The Mayor informed members that on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June the *Coastal Communities 2150* Project would open its Climate Trail. Installation would begin on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June and would be completed on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June. The trail was part of the *Waking up to tomorrow* vision for the area produced by the local Coastal Futures Group. A copy of that document, and of the graphic information panels denoting the Climate Trail, could be obtained from TC. Although the project had concluded, the Coastal Futures Group continued, and membership of the Group for its new 2-year programme of meetings, supported by the University of Brighton was open to anyone. An introductory evening was scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> July at the Hillcrest Centre, Newhaven, between 6 and 8pm.

FC2014/18

#### **MINUTES:**

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014 were received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2014/19

#### **WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:**

*Members were reminded that anyone who may have attended a meeting of any recognized outside body which had covered issues that deserved attention by the Council, should ensure that TC was aware of this before the meeting, and preferably before the agenda deadline. Reports on all activities of the organization were not expected.*

a) *Building repairs Working Party 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014:* The Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*) were received, and **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/19.1** The Minutes of the Building repairs Working Party held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014 be noted.

b) *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 8<sup>th</sup> May & 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014:* Cllr S Murray reported that there would be a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) open day at the Town Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2014. A logo had been designed to promote the NP, carrying the slogan “Lewes for All”, and this would be used for advertising and promoting the day. The intention was to reinvigorate the community’s engagement with the plan process and attract more organizations to delegate members to join the Steering Group. The Plan continued to slowly develop, with significant research work on topic areas being carried-out in the background.

#### **It was resolved that:**

**FC2014/19.2** The reports of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> May & 2 June 2014 (*copies in Minute Book*) be noted.

c) *Grants Panel Recommendations 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014:* Members considered report FC001/2014 (*copy in minute book*) which contained the panellists’ recommendations and **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/19.3** The grant payments recommended in column E of report FC001/2014 be approved.

d) *Battle of Lewes Action Group (BLAG):* Cllr M Chartier reported that BLAG now ceased to exist but it was expected that there would be future opportunities to recognize the Battle of Lewes. The next Commemorations Working party would look into opportunities to capitalize on the initiative, and link to planned national commemorations of Magna Carta (2015) and the Battle of Hastings (2016).

#### **It was resolved:**

**FC2014/19.4** Lewes Town Council records thanks to Councillor Michael Chartier and to the Battle of Lewes Action Group, and a letter shall be sent to the Group offering thanks and congratulations on the success of the recent Battle of Lewes celebrations, which the Council was proud to support.

e) *White Ribbon initiative:* Cllr Price reminded colleagues that he was nominated as the Town Council's “Domestic Abuse Champion” (the title had since been changed to

“Anti-Domestic Abuse Ambassador”) to sit on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse (DA) and promote the White Ribbon Campaign. He reported that in 2013, Sussex Police were the first force in the country to receive White Ribbon status for their work dealing with reported DA. The publicity around this – including White Ribbon Day in November – had gone some way towards increasing awareness of abuse as well as increasing the number of reported incidences. The Lewes District Commander wished to do more for DA victims, and it was intended to produce a comprehensive information pack with details of whom to contact *etc* and, potentially, a ‘pop-up’ advice service. Domestic violence was expected to increase during major sporting events such as the football World Cup. Violence was not necessarily alcohol related and there was a need to raise awareness of this. A general debate took place, and thanks were recorded to Cllr Price, with recognition that all Members could share the burden of helping to deal with domestic abuse.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2014/19.5** Cllr Price’s report on his work as Anti-Domestic Abuse Ambassador be noted.

f] *Seaford Rail 150 commemoration:* Cllr Catlin reported on the success of the recent commemoration day on 7<sup>th</sup> June. The Mayor had unveiled a timeline feature at Lewes station and had travelled on the VIP train with Norman Baker MP and the Chairman of East Sussex County Council. All proceeds from the day would go to the Railway Children Charity who rescue runaway children found at rail stations around the Country.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2014/19.6** The oral report on the Seaford Rail 150 commemoration be noted.

**FC2014/20**

**ANNUAL RETURN & DRAFT ACCOUNTS Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014:**

Members considered report FC002/2014; the draft annual accounts statements; the statutory annual return to the Audit Commission; and the final report for the year by the internal auditor (*copies of these are included in the Minute book*). Various questions arose and were answered by TC. There was some misunderstanding as to the status of reserves and the mechanism of contribution to these from revenue received. It was noted that the internal auditor had been complimentary on the Council’s continued prudent and intelligent planning of reserves, and TC took the opportunity to outline current thinking within the Parish sector nationally, regarding potential future central government regulation. Investment of reserves *eg* while commencement of projects was awaited or until a planned amount was achieved, had the effect of reducing (by attracting interest) the requirement for precept to be raised from taxpayers. If projects were instead serviced by loans, the opposite would be true, in that even modest interest rates payable would be an additional charge upon the community. A recorded vote was requested (*copy appended to these minutes*). Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/20.1** Lewes Town Council approves the statutory annual return and supporting documentation as required for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, for submission to the Audit Commission’s appointed external auditor (*a copy is included in the Minute book*).

**FC2014/20.2** Lewes Town Council approves the financial accounts statements for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, as provided with report FC002/2014 and subject to audit (*a copy is included in the Minute book*).

**FC2014/21**

**CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT 2014/15:**

Members considered report FC003/2014, on the assessment of risks associated with

the operations and functions of the Council for the forthcoming municipal year (*a copy is included in the Minute book*). There followed a short discussion on the principles of the assessment and the concepts of tangible risk (*eg* physical risks associated with a swimming pool) and intangible risk (*eg* risks associated with publications) and consequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/21.1** Lewes Town Council notes the Corporate Risk Assessment report, reference FC003/2014 (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) and the summary table of assessed risks appended to it.

**FC2014/22**

#### **RETENTION of INTERNAL AUDITOR:**

Members considered report FC004/2014 (*copy in minute book*) that Mr Mark Mulberry, the present Internal Auditor, be retained for the 2014/15 financial year.

Following consideration **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/22.1** Mr Mark Mulberry, of Mulberry & Co, 62 Hurst Lane, East Molesey, Surrey, KT8 9DZ be retained as Internal Auditor to Lewes Town Council for the 2014/15 financial year.

**FC2014/23**

#### **PERIODIC REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE:**

Members considered report FC005/2014 (*copy in minute book*) that a Working Party be asked to review current Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other adopted governance policies, bringing to Council any recommendations for amendment. It was noted that in the last year of an administration it was helpful to review existing governance policies and to update them if required; to assist successors. Relevant current policies were defined as:

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Anti- fraud & corruption policy (*inc* ‘whistleblowers charter’)
- Investments and Reserves policy
- Freedom of Information Act publication scheme
- Code of Conduct for Members
- Communications policy
- Complaints policy
- Dignity at Work policy (staff discipline; grievance, *etc*)

It was suggested that operational policies (*eg* letting of premises) were best reviewed when necessary by Council or by relevant working groups and these were not listed in the report. TC explained that the role of the Audit & Governance Panel was primarily in a monitoring capacity, and he recommended that a separate group conduct any such policy review. Following some discussion **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/23.1** A working party comprising Cllrs M Chartier; Dr G Mayhew, S Murray, R O’Keeffe and Dr M Turner be asked to review current Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other adopted governance policies, bringing to Council any recommendations for amendment.

**FC2014/24**

#### **PAYMENTS SYSTEM:**

Members considered report FC006/2014 (*copy in minute book*) that recommended amendments to the Council’s process for authorization of payments, following the repeal of s150 Local Government Act 1972, which would enable internet functions of the Council’s current bank account to be operated. After many years of delay, the government had recently removed the requirement for every cheque or other order

for the payment of money by a parish council to be personally signed by two members. This was designed to facilitate the use of modern electronic means of payment. To take advantage of this relaxation, a Council must formally put in place effective systems and arrangements compliant with “proper practices” as they were outlined in the statutory practitioners’ guide. A straightforward amendment to existing regulations which satisfied that requirement was detailed in the report. It was noted that there was no imperative to abandon existing controls, or to cease the use of cheques for payment, and this was NOT proposed for Lewes Town Council. Cheques would continue to form a useful part of the payments system for the foreseeable future, and the existing system for countersignature would be retained. The amendments outlined extended this system, and would be used where internet banking facilities were most advantageous, *eg* regular monthly salary payments and payments to larger corporate entities; or where speed was important. It was envisaged that payments would be prepared and scrutinized by signatories in batches in exactly the same way as cheques; only the final form of transfer would be different.

Following due consideration **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/24.1** That amendments to Lewes Town Council’s system for authorization of payments, and formalities to enable internet function of the Council’s current bank account, as described in report FC006/2014 (*copy in minute book*), are approved.

**FC2014/25**

#### **FLOOD DEFENCE WORKS:**

Council considered a motion (*NOM006/2014 copy in minute book*) regarding improved flood defences adjacent to the Landport area. It was stated that: Landport flooded in 2000 to a depth of more than a metre, damaging many properties in Landport Road and other roads. Landport residents had been understandably apprehensive whenever they had heard flood warnings concerning the lower Ouse. Residents were greatly relieved when, in the Autumn of 2013 the Environment Agency and Lewes District Council built a very well-designed flood defence system in clay, which both fits into the landscape extremely well and has proved to be very effective. The defences had their official opening on 10 December 2013, and by Boxing Day the flood waters were at the top of the bund, demonstrating the timeliness of the operation.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2014/25.1** Lewes Town Council expresses its appreciation of the efforts of Lewes District Council and the Environment Agency in producing improved flood defences adjacent to the Landport area, and notes the leading role of Mr Tim Bartlett in this project.

**FC2014/26**

#### **ANNUAL PLAN:**

Members considered a statement showing the current status of elements of the Council’s annual plan for major works and initiatives, which were intended to be initiated and/or completed (where possible and practical), in the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. These were in addition to various projects and initiatives itemised in the Council’s budgets and accounts, and represented larger-scale activities deserving special attention. There were one or two questions, and subsequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/26.1** The status report on the Council Plan 2014/15, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014, be noted.

**FC2014/27**

#### **UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:**

a) *North Street Quarter/Pells* – TC updated Members on the latest position regarding

the Santon Group proposals for developments at North Street. Lewes District Council (LDC) had formally agreed a joint-venture with Santon for the area and would adhere as closely as possible to their published policies on the proportion of 'affordable' housing to be included. Santon aspired to a submission (to the SDNPA) of the outline plan for planning consent before the school holiday period, although this was likely to be affected by matters still awaiting agreement in-principle, such as some design concepts and the extent of 'shared-space' highway layouts. Recent public demands for creative workspace at low cost had not gone unnoticed, and discussions were ongoing between interested parties – it was acknowledged by the developers, who might accommodate such space but other aspects of the development would necessarily be sacrificed. The community would ultimately be able to comment upon such priorities through the formal planning application process. Santon and LDC were discussing options with adjoining landowners to investigate the potential for a unified approach to their respective plans.

b) *Devolution* - TC described the latest position with regard to Lewes District Council's contract for grounds maintenance, and the effects upon proposed devolution of some sites. Various technical aspects of the proposals were to be clarified as soon as LDC officers were available, and then a meeting of the Town Council's devolution group would be arranged. The process had been complicated by earlier delays in clarification by the government as to its policy on parish financing, and by LDC's decisions over the re-tendering for contracted services. Reference was made to a recent letter from Lewes Sports Club regarding Trusteeship of the Stanley Turner Recreation Ground, and more would be known following an imminent meeting of the District Council's joint advisory body for the site.

c) *Employment Tribunal Claim* - As previously reported: the preliminary hearing of the claim brought against the Council by Iana Jacobson had been held on 24<sup>th</sup> February and judgement reserved. Judgement had been announced on 31<sup>st</sup> March and was not in the complainant's favour. The main hearing had been scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> April, but as the essence of the claim had been destroyed with the preliminary judgement, it had been withdrawn. Whereas this would conventionally be accompanied by a formal agreement to end a dispute, the claimant had refused to sign such a statement. The formal record by the judge was, therefore, that it has been "dismissed upon withdrawal". The claim could not now be pursued through the Employment Tribunal system and, despite the refusal to formally end any dispute, would have a very remote chance of any success in a civil court due to the weight of evidence already submitted and the detail and context of the recorded judgement.

d) *Seating at Lewes bus station* – In answer to a question regarding progress on this item, it was noted that the bus station owner had suggested they were reluctant to accept siting of the four benches agreed by Council, if they were not accompanied by litter bins. This had formed the original proposal, with the bins representing a cost of approximately £500. Although these had not originally been agreed, Members briefly reconsidered the point before agreeing, without dissent, to extend their offer to include the installation (but not emptying) of bins.

FC2014/28

#### **NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:**

a) Members were advised that Stage 7 of the Cycle Tour of Britain would pass through Lewes on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September. There were 8 stages to the Tour and Sussex would host the penultimate stage before the final in London the following day. Stage 7 would also be the longest stage, covering 226 km, and potentially offer the most interest for audiences; also containing popular elements such as 'King of the Mountain' contests. TC reported on a recent meeting of stakeholders who were interested in the tour. East and West Sussex County Councils; and Brighton & Hove City Council were each contributing £30,000 to stage the Tour through parts of their areas, with support from the South Downs National Park Authority. There would be

3 hours live television coverage that day (understood to be ITV4, with international syndication) with highlights reaching a potential audience of over 200 million viewers; the majority of that covering the time in East Sussex, and Lewes District would probably benefit from much of this viewing time. Stage 7 would take the riders through Chailey; Piltdown; Uckfield; Framfield; Blackboys; Waldron; Horam; Horsebridge; Hailsham; Stone Cross; Langney; Eastbourne; Beachy Head (King of the Mountain stage); Birling Gap; East Dean; Seaford Esplanade; Bishopstone; Newhaven; and then, approaching via the C7, Lewes (Southover High St, Station St, High St); Offham; Plumpton; Westmeston (Underhill Lane); Ditchling Beacon (King of the Mountain stage) and Brighton, finishing on Madeira Drive. There would be rolling road closures of about 15-20 minutes as the Tour passed through the County. Seaford and Newhaven Town Councils were beginning to plan events to mark the passage of the Tour, and it was proposed and agreed that Lewes Town Council's Commemorations and Events Working party be delegated to consider the matter and bring forward any recommendations.

b) The next Members' surgery would be held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July in the Corn Exchange from 10am – 12noon. Cllrs A Price and R Murray volunteered to attend.

c) The next Planning Committee meeting would be on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July at 7pm in the Yarrow Room.

d) The next Commemorations Working Party would be held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July at 11am. This meeting would be asked to consider a request, received recently from the Sussex Archaeological Society, to engage with a project to conduct further scientific tests on human skeletal remains discovered during a routine excavation of the former Western Rd School site in 1994. 'Skeleton 180' was one of 103 buried together and, from all available archaeological and archive evidence, appeared to date from a time no earlier than the 13th century. Because of both the nature of the wounds the individual had suffered and the location of the cemetery, close to the epicentre of the fiercest fighting of the Battle of Lewes, the possibility existed that this man had fallen at that time. The bones had been sent for further analysis to battlefield experts at the University of York. The skeleton proved even more significant than previously imagined, in that it was dated to the time of the Norman Conquest. Carbon dating techniques indicated a date of 1064 ±26 years. There were no other known violently-killed individuals dating from this period. There had been enormous media interest - it had been covered internationally and there was interest from television production companies. It was noted that 2016 would be the 950th anniversary of the Norman Conquest.

e) The next deadline for Grants applications was Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August with the assessment Panel meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> August and recommendations being considered by Council on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

f) The next Council Meeting would be on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30pm with the deadline for submissions to the Town Clerk of proposed items for the agenda being 12 noon on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July.

g) Dates would be confirmed for meetings of other current working parties *etc.*

h) Newsletter articles would be gratefully received, as soon as possible.

FC2014/29

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed, and invited those present to join him in the Parlour for refreshments.

*The meeting ended at 9:30pm*

Signed: .....

Date: .....

