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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council** held on
Thursday 12th December 2013, 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 E Allsobrook; S Catlin (Wischhusen); M Chartier; J Daly; I Eiloart; J Lamb; D Lamport; L F Li; J MacCleary; R Murray; S Murray; R O’Keeffe (*Mayor*); A Price; J Stockdale and M Turner (*Deputy 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*)

Observing: Ms J Dean (*Customer Services Officer*).

FC2013/72

QUESTION TIME: One member of the public was observing; there were no questions. Cllr Chartier raised a question on behalf of Cllr St Pierre (East Sussex County Council) asking if the Council was aware of proposals regarding the future of the Phoenix Centre, Lewes, and whether it would consider these issues in the New Year. It was agreed that this matter should be an agenda item at the next meeting of Full Council on Thursday 23rd January 2014.

FC2013/73

MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Cllr R O’Keeffe declared an interest *iro* item 6b (*Grants Panel*) in that she is a coordinator for Lewes Travel Club, an applicant organization.

FC2013/74

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Dean, M Milner and R Rudkin who had all cited work commitments.

FC2013/75

MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) Councillors wished Cllr Derek Lamport a happy 80th Birthday; which he had celebrated on 3rd December.

b) The Mayor reported that the Sussex Archaeological Society had sold 469 tickets for the ice rink and although the Society felt was a worthwhile experiment, they would not be keen to repeat it.

c) A Civic Parish Carol Concert would be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 17th December 2013 at St Anne’s Church with carols by candlelight followed by homemade mince pies and wine.

d) Lewes Concert Orchestra would be giving a Christmas Concert in the Assembly Room in the Town Hall on Friday 20th December at 7.30pm. The concert would feature Andrew Robinson, baritone, and the Schola Cantorum choir, and include Christmas music, carols with the audience, Venus and Jupiter from Holst’s *Planets* Suite and the second movement of the Cimarossa Concerto for two flutes, with Anne Hodgeson and Sue Green.

e) The Mayor thanked Cllr Catlin who sat in for the Members’ Surgery on 30th November. The principle of continuing Saturday surgeries would be considered in February when the annual calendar is drafted.

Continues...

- f) The next Members' Surgery would be held on Saturday 4th January from 10am – 2pm. Cllrs R and S Murray, and Cllr Chartier, volunteered
- g) Members had received a copy of a letter from CPRE Sussex Countryside Trust with a request for a small financial donation to assist in campaigning against a proposed new 10,000-home commuter town to be sited between Henfield and Sayers Common. It was agreed that this would be considered at the next Council meeting on 23rd January 2014.
- h) The Mayor reported on Lewes District Council's Zero Heroes campaign, that encourages households to “reduce and reuse” and recycle more to win a share of a scheme for local environment projects. A recent event at the All Saints Centre had been financially-supported by the Town Council, yet resulting benefits were to be awarded to Ringmer. Cllr O'Keeffe had discovered that this decision had been somewhat arbitrary, and had successfully interceded to have the benefits re-allocated to Lewes.

FC2013/76

MINUTES:

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 7th November 2013 were received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2013/77

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) *Town Hall Repairs Working Party 12th November 2013:* Council considered the minutes (*copy in minute book*) of this meeting. The Working Party members had considered several aspects of the repair and maintenance of the building that were not specifically within their original remit, but were connected and considered important. There was brief discussion and some questions were raised. Regarding an original schedule of dilapidations arising from surveys conducted when the Town Hall was purchased from Lewes District Council, it was acknowledged that this was superseded by subsequent works and more recent inspections and prioritization of repairs. After brief further discussion;

It was resolved that:

FC2013/77.1 The minutes of the Town Hall Repairs Working Party meeting on 12th November 2013 are noted, and the principles contained therein are approved. The Working party is asked to consider further issues related to general maintenance and refurbishment of the Town Hall, and bring recommendations to Council in due course.

b) *Grants Panel 20th November 2013:* Members considered Report FC009/2013 (*Copy in minute book*) containing the recommendations for payment of grants for the third (of four) cycle of the year. There were some questions; answered by Members of the Panel, and subsequently

It was resolved that:

FC2013/77.2 Grant payments recommended in Column G of the appendix to Report FC009/2013 be approved.

c) *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 26th November 2013* - Members considered the notes (*copy in minute book*) of this meeting. There was some discussion and questions; answered by Members who had attended: The Council had agreed a list of local organisations it felt should be represented on the Steering Group. The list was thought to represent a wide cross-section of the community. Seven Town

Councillors were also nominated to participate. This was not necessarily an exclusive group, and it was hoped that others would engage as the work progressed. The organisations had each been invited to nominate a representative to the steering group, which would make the important decisions on questions such as: How would the process operate? Was there a need to employ a consultant? What topics should be covered by a Lewes neighbourhood plan? This had been the first meeting in a process that was likely to develop over eighteen months to two years. It was hoped that the representatives would engage with this work and would have the time to commit to further meetings as the project developed. Officers of the South Downs National Park Authority had attended, and committed to ongoing support. The first, fundamental, decision was on the area to be encompassed. The intended area must be registered with the planning authority, who must then allow a period for public consultation. There was discussion as to the relative apparent merits of a plan for the whole Parish, as against any geographical sub-division. In the case of Lewes, it was decided, the most beneficial approach would be to produce a single plan for the whole Parish, and this was agreed. This inaugural meeting had not covered all items on its indicative agenda, due to the natural arising of questions and clarification of many aspects of the planning process, and a second meeting was scheduled for 13th January.

It was resolved that:

FC2013/77.3 The report on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 26th November 2013 (*copy in minute book*) is noted.

d] *Traffic Issues Working party 28th November 2013* – Members considered the minutes (*copy in minute book*) of this meeting. The meeting had welcomed representatives of several stakeholder bodies who were attending in response to invitation from Cllr Milner, to discuss opportunities offered by imminent projects such as improvements to the road bridge at the Railway station; developments at North Street, Waitrose, the Bus station site, *etc.* Several others had offered apologies as they were unable to attend, but had noted their interest in any future discussions. It had been generally agreed that these issues would all have wide-ranging implications as they impact upon Rail; Road; Parking; Bus; Cycle; and Pedestrian needs for Lewes, and could benefit from a coordinated approach insofar as practicable. Discussion had been lively and well-informed; many of those present representing the senior management perspectives of their organization.

It was resolved:

FC2013/77.4 The minutes of the Traffic Issues Working party 28th November 2013 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

e] *Commemorations Working Party 3rd December 2013* – Members considered the minutes (*copy in minute book*) of this meeting. Cllr Chartier reminded colleagues of his role with the town's Battle of Lewes Action Group (BLAG) and the work of the group in preparing for the celebrations. The South Downs National Park Authority had contributed £5,000 towards the projects being planned by BLAG. The commissioned choral music was progressing well, and the composer, Helen Glavin, had reported that she had written most of the text and was currently busy setting the words to music.

There was to be a national focus upon democracy in 2015, in commemoration of Magna Carta, and encouragement from the government to seek opportunities for the involvement of young people. Sussex Archaeological Society (SAS) was known to be planning events along these lines.

With regard to the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, Cllr Dr Turner was producing the play "*My Boy Jack*" at Lewes Little Theatre. The curator of Batemans (home of Rudyard Kipling) had asked for a performance and it was suggested that this could be repeated at the All Saints Centre. Lewes Operatic

Society was understood to be planning a performance of “*Oh! What a Lovely War!*”, and Sussex Archaeological Society would hold an academic conference in the Town Hall.

2014 would be the 40th year since the signing of the official Twinning Charter with Waldshut-Tiengen, and the German twinning association and local Council had already issued invitations to the Mayor of Lewes and others to attend various events planned during the year. The major annual *Schmyzertag* festival in Tiengen was to have England as its theme in 2014.

The local community rail partnership was organizing commemorative events in June 2014, to note the 150th anniversary of the Seaford-Lewes rail link. There was to be a vintage transport display in Lewes station car park, including vehicles provided by Harveys Brewery. A steam locomotive would run from London to Lewes, and it was hoped that permission would be given for it to continue to Seaford, although the line was not currently technically-approved for the anticipated weight. Lewes’ Mayor had been invited to travel on this train and/or officiate at the welcome/departure. Southern Rail was working on a “timeline” display for the station and was seeking support from interested parties. These projects were all considered to be ideal for the purpose, and Members felt that the Council should engage with the commemoration.

Cllr Allsobrook expressed her wish to join the Working Party; this was welcomed.

Following a discussion **it was resolved that:**

FC2013/77.5 The Minutes of the Commemoration Working Party held on 3rd December 2013 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

FC2013/77.6 The recommendations of the Commemorations Working Party of 3rd December described at minute CmemsWP2013/16 (*copy in minute book*) are agreed, as: That a programme of events to commemorate the outbreak of the First World War be presented at the All Saints Centre in August 2014.

That the Sussex Archaeological Society booking of the Town Hall for an academic conference be charged at 50% of the normal rate.

That the Working Party be authorized to expend up to £2,000, drawn from the financial reserve earmarked for the purpose, on the commemoration of 40 years of Town Twinning with Waldshut-Tiengen, during 2014.

That the Working Party be authorized to expend up to £1,500, drawn from the financial reserve earmarked for the purpose, on the commemoration of 150 years of the Lewes – Seaford railway link, in June 2014.

That Cllr Allsobrook’s request to be appointed to the Working Party be agreed.

f] *Audit Panel 3rd December 2013* – Members considered the minutes (*copy in minute book*) of this meeting. The Panel had reviewed detailed information following the end of the second quarter of the financial year 2013/14 which showed actual expenditure and income values as posted to the Council’s *Sage* accounting system and included all transactions processed to the end of the quarter. There was some discussion on salient points of detail. TC had responded with reference to the identified sources. Variations were related to known events, such as specific payments in respect of works and purchases, or stock-taking adjustments. There were no items of concern. TC took the opportunity to report that the interim (mid-year) report of the Council’s internal auditor had been received that day (all members had been furnished with a copy of the summary). The report was complimentary and noted that some systems were model examples for other councils.

Following some general questions **it was resolved that:**

FC2013/77.7 The Minutes of the Audit Panel held on 3rd December 2013 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

g] *Finance Working Party 10th December 2013* – Cllr Dr Turner gave an oral report on

this meeting, which had taken place only two days earlier. He noted that the meeting had recognized difficult circumstances, due to lack of clarity over the Government's intentions for capping Council Tax increases in 2014/15. Ministerial announcements had been promised, but not yet made. Further: Lewes District Council had passed-on the whole of the Government's new Council Tax Support Grant in 2013/14, but this was to be reduced in 2014 by £15,737 (to £73,534). The Town Council (LTC) therefore faced an increase to precept of 2.27% simply to maintain budgeted nett expenditure at the present level (£782,000). It was noted that grants were again being offered to principal councils to encourage "freezing" of Council Tax, yet similar support remained unavailable for parish councils

Further complication came with the current position on devolution of local assets from Lewes District Council (LDC). There was provisional agreement on a total package that would require LTC to add around £480,000 to precept. A first tranche of sites which could be transferred in 2014/15 carried a budget requirement of £276,000pa. That would equate to a precept increase of 42% and raise LTC's "band D equivalent" value to £170. There was an unresolved threat of an imposed referendum if any increase exceeded 2%. Ironically, adding the cost of a referendum in Lewes would be equivalent to a 2.3% increase in precept.

Even if not required to hold a referendum this year, it was recognized that the same situation may recur next December, with a General Election due in May 2015 – which raised a question over any commitment to the rest of the devolution package. The District Council had recently decided to deviate from a 40 year-old status quo, and to apportion Parks costs to individual parishes as Special Expenses in 2014/15. Lewes town constituents would therefore be paying the aforementioned £480,000 extra, although LDC's overall tax levy would not be increased

The Working Party addressed the work that *could* be completed despite this dilemma, and considered the service budget estimates for 2014/15. TC outlined the assumptions and basic principles applied in compiling the recommended budget. These were shown in the working notes, and the application to individual accounts and services was explained and discussed. Overheads had been re-apportioned, and a new cost-centre account designated, in respect of the direct management of Malling Community Centre.

It was acknowledged that there was a continuing need to address the proper maintenance of the Council's physical assets and to adequately fund continuing services. The recommended budget combined specific amounts for known costs and committed project items, with prudent allowances for reserves, and provided for a flexible response to any devolution proposals. This had, for a fifth consecutive year, been achieved without the need for an overall increase in nett expenditure. Reserves earmarked for the Council's significant service and project requirements were considered suitably robust and adequate to fulfil their purpose.

Cllr Turner explained that the service budgets had been agreed, but as the impact upon precept could not be confirmed they were not presented to this Council meeting for approval. He and TC elaborated on some of the background issues to the situation, and it was noted that there would be a full presentation from the Working Party once it had met again with the benefit of more clarity over the issues described. This might be to the Council meeting scheduled for January, but in any event the precept demand must be served on the District Council by March 1st, by statute, and additional meetings could be convened. Setting of precept was a function that fell to the full Council, by law, and could not be delegated.

After a short discussion **it was resolved that:**

FC2013/77.8 The report on the meeting of the Finance Working Party on 10th December 2013, and the prevailing situation with regard to external factors, be noted.

h] *NALC Larger Councils Committee Election* – Cllr Susan Murray reported that she had attended the NALC conference. 18 candidates were standing for 4 vacancies, and each had 90 seconds to present at hustings. Cllr Murray was not elected on this occasion. It had been indicated to her that her candidacy would be welcomed for the next tranche of vacancies, due in 2014/15, and she would welcome the Council's support in that regard.

It was resolved that:

FC2013/77.9 Cllr Susan Murray is nominated as a candidate for the next cycle of elections to the Larger Councils Committee of the National Association of Local Councils.

i] *Vacancy on Planning Committee:* Cllr Dean had stepped-down from the Planning Committee, leaving eight Members. Cllr Allsobrook expressed an interest in the seat, and this was welcomed.

It was resolved that:

FC2013/77.10 Cllr E Allsobrook is appointed to serve on the Planning Committee for the remainder of the 2013/14 municipal year.

FC2013/78

CONSULTATION “The Future of Local Audit”

Members had received a copy of the Consultation “The Future of Local Audit” and any comments members might wish to make should be submitted to the Town Clerk by Wednesday 18th December 2013.

FC2013/79

UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:

a) The Mayor announced that no Christmas dinner for Members and staff would be held this year, and she proposed that a donation of £250 be made to each of the 3 Lewes Food Banks instead. Cllr Stockdale declared an interest as a Malling Food Bank committee member; Cllr O’Keeffe declared her position as a member of the local Steering Group for the Foodbanks. The principle was welcomed, provided that this was considered as a single event and did not commit the Council to future action, and that the grants were made to the Foodbank and not to individuals. Consequently **it was resolved that:**

FC2013/77.11 Grants of £250 be made to the Food Banks operated in Malling; Landport, and DeMontfort to recognize Christmas, and funded from approved budgets (service A/c 20/6404)

b) Malling Community Centre refurbishment and Town Hall repair projects were moving ahead, albeit slowly. TC had met with representatives of companies, recommended by the District Engineer, which had been value-tested and accepted by District and County Councils onto approved lists as managers for building projects. They were able to conduct the whole process, as agents, from “mini-tender” schemes to site-management once works were underway. There were several strands to follow for each project before practical commencement, such as identification of funding, and further reports and requests for approval *etc* would be brought to Council as these developed.

c) The background to the hiatus in the devolution process had been described fully earlier, and was attributable to the pending decision by Government on capping of parish precept increases. There had been no progress on drafting a Memorandum of Understanding with LDC for these reasons.

d) A North Street Quarter/Pells urban realm group meeting was imminent, pending the availability of Santon Group’s technical advisers.

e) Regarding the previously-notified Employment Tribunal claim; a formal rebuttal had been registered with the Tribunal service through the legal advisers retained by the Council’s insurer, who considered the claim to have little chance of success.

NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:

- a) A further Town Hall Repairs Working Party meeting was to be arranged.
- b) Finance (budget) and Pells play equipment Working Parties were to be arranged, as soon as there was resolution of pending factors.
- c) A Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group Meeting would be held on Monday 13th January at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber.
- d) The deadline for Grant applications for the fourth (final) cycle of the year was Friday 24th January with the Panel meeting on 5th February. Recommendations would be considered by Council on 27th February.
- e) The next Planning Committee would be on Tuesday 14th January at 7pm in the Yarrow Room.
- f) Landport Bottom Joint Management Committee would be held on Wednesday 15th January at 11:00am.
- g) The next Council Meeting was scheduled for Thursday 23rd January at 7.30pm with the deadline for submissions to the Town Clerk of proposed items for the agenda being 12 noon on Monday 13th January. Prospective items included the 2014/15 Mayoralty; Budget, and Precept
- h) The next Members surgery would be held on Saturday 4th January in the Yarrow Room from 10am – 12pm.
- i) An advertisement for the Town Ranger vacancy would be advertised in the 20th December Sussex Express and Friday Ad, plus associated online entries, and the Council's own website and noticeboards.
- j) The Christmas office closure would run from 12.00pm Tuesday 24th December; reopening at 9.00am Thursday 2nd January 2014.
- k) Cllr Price reminded everyone that civic celebration of the Twinning Charter 40th anniversary in Waldshut-Tiengen was to take place during the annual "Chilbi" festival held over the third weekend in August.

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

The meeting ended at 8:35pm

Signed:

Date: