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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## *MINUTES*

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council** held on  
**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012**, 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 (Wisconsin); M Chartier (*Mayor*); A Dean; I Eiloart; P Kingham; D Lamport; L F Li; J MacCleary; M. Milner; R Murray; S Murray; R O'Keefe (*Deputy Mayor*); A Price; R Rudkin; J Stockdale and Dr M Turner.

*In attendance:* S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); Mrs F Garth (*Civic Officer and Asst. Town Clerk*) M Larkin (*Mace Bearer*); Ms E. Martin (*C'ttee Administration*)

*Observing:* Ms J Dean (*Customer Services Officer*) and Ms V McLachlan (*Finance Administration Officer*)

**FC2012/94**

**QUESTION TIME:** There were none. There were no members of the press or public present.

**FC2012/95**

### **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Cllrs S Murray and R O'Keefe declared an interest in item 6d) as they were directors of the Lewes Town Partnership. Cllr J Stockdale declared that he was the District Council's delegate to the Partnership.

**FC2012/96**

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies were received from Cllr J Daly, who was on holiday, and Cllr M Kent who had a work commitment.

**FC2012/97**

### **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Cllr Chartier reminded Members that:

- a) The Mayor's Christmas Dinner would be on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December with drinks at 7.30 in the Mayor's Parlour.
- b) The Civic Parish Carol Service would be held on 18<sup>th</sup> December at St Anne's Church with carol singing by candlelight. Home-made mince pies would be served.
- c) Lewes Concert Orchestra would be performing in the Town Hall on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December; alongside part of the Lewes Old Grammar School choir. Drinks would be served in the Mayor's Parlour from 7.00pm.
- d) St Mary's Pantomime, "Cinderella", would be on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

**FC2012/98**

### **MINUTES:**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012 were received and signed as an accurate record, subject to correction: Cllr MacCleary was recorded as assisting with American presidential elections whereas he had merely been observing!

**FC2012/99**

### **SEQUENCE OF AGENDA ITEMS**

The Mayor noted that Cllr Stockdale would leave the meeting early as he was to travel to Dover the same evening. In consequence **it was agreed** that the items related to setting of Council tax precept and nominations of Mayor-elect and Deputy-Mayor-elect would be dealt-with immediately.

*Continues...*

*Finance Working Party 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012:* The minutes of this meeting were presented (*copy in the Minute Book*) and Cllr Dr Turner outlined the deliberations of the Working Party, and its evaluation of draft budgets for the Council's services for the coming year. Consideration had been given to the request for a budget to be identified for use in Public Participatory Budgeting (PPB); the desire to hold precept to the current year's level; and the review of grant to Lewes Town Partnership (LTP). The Partnership's Chairman had presented to the meeting regarding this point. This gave rise to the level of precept being proposed.

Before further consideration, the Town Clerk explained that recent legislative changes had removed an earlier "standing dispensation" regarding Members' disclosure of interests when considering Council Tax precept – an issue that would affect them individually. The Localism Act 2011 contained provisions that could be applied in this case, and TC proposed a measure that would allow the necessary business to proceed. Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2012/100.1** "Lewes Town Council Members are considered to have Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which would be affected by the setting of the Council Tax Precept – specifically: beneficial interests in land within the area of the Council. Having regard to the provisions contained in s33 of the Localism Act 2011 and all relevant circumstances the Council hereby resolves to grant all Members a dispensation from the restrictions imposed by s 31 (4) of that Act on participation and voting on this matter, as without such dispensation the transaction of Council business would be impeded; the matter is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area, and the interest is common to a significant proportion of the general public within the Council's area. This dispensation has effect until the Council's Annual Meeting 2015".

After a brief discussion, an amendment to the proposal was introduced, being described as a "symbolic" reduction in precept of 1%, equal to £7,820, to be funded by a reduction in the budgeted contribution to the allotment sites development reserve. Various opinions were offered on this; including expressions of disappointment over the "tokenism" – representing as it did a mere two pence per week/£1.19 per year saving to a typical Band 'D' taxpayer. It was remarked that this was, ironically, to be funded from a budget that supported self-sufficiency for many local people. It was suggested that any reduction in the Council's responsiveness or capacity to provide services should be avoided. There was also criticism of the timing of the proposal, and references to the Council's proud record of applying its funds for the benefit of the town and its community. Whilst acknowledged as a gesture, the proposal was supported by many Members and upon calls for a vote **it was resolved that:**

**FC2012/100.2** "Service budgets for 2013/14, as presented to Council at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012 (*copy in Minute Book*) and recommended by the Finance Working Party meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012 are agreed subject to reduction, by £7,820, of the proposed contribution to reserve funds earmarked for allotment site improvements (shown in the Council's accounts as Reserve P8)."

An ancillary matter was introduced in that; following recent discussions with the Friends of Lewes, it had been suggested that a project to improve the area known colloquially as "The Magic Circle" might go ahead despite earlier setbacks. There was a reminder that land adjoining this area had once been intended as a Peace Garden, and with the approach of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War this context had added poignancy. The Council had, the previous year, re-appropriated to its General Fund the sum that had originally been earmarked as a contribution to this project. It was proposed that this Reserve (still shown in the

accounts) should be re-established at the end of the current (2012/13) financial year in the sum of £5,000. This met with general agreement, and consequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2012/100.3** “When preparing final accounts at the end of the current (2012/13) financial year, the sum of £5,000 shall be appropriated to the fund reserved for contributions to improvements to the area known as The Magic Circle (shown in the Council’s accounts as project reserve P3)”

At this point Cllr Dean raised an objection to statements made in the minutes of the Working Party, claiming inaccuracies of reporting. She said that she had asked questions related to the job-description of the All Saints Caretaker/Venue assistant, and had been told her question was inappropriate – following which she had become “very frustrated... that, as [she] was not getting answers in one area, then whatever question [she] asked would be refused an answer” and that she had been “told to be quiet and sit in a corner while everyone else got on with the business”. She mooted the principle that qualitative judgements were not well-informed unless “as many questions as we choose to put” could be answered. With reference to the mention of her having “cast aspersions” she absolutely disputed this description and demanded that the minutes be altered. The Mayor stated that he had a clear recollection of proceedings at the meeting, and he asked others who had been present if they could see any inaccuracy in the minutes presented. None could do so. One member also claimed a very clear memory of a “very unpleasant meeting... ..the unpleasantness caused by Cllr Dean”. She considered the minutes to be “a very moderate account”. Reference was made to the audio recording of the meeting, and it was suggested that this would prove the point. There followed some discussion as to the semantics of the term “aspersions”. TC insisted that the minutes were accurate, and declined to make any alteration. Cllr Dean demanded a transcript of the audio record, which was agreed, and this would be provided at the following Council meeting.

The debate on budgets and precept resumed, and **it was resolved that:**

**FC2012/100.4** The Council Tax precept for the financial year 2013/14 be set at £774,180

**FC2012/100.5** The financial Reserve shown in the Council’s accounts as earmarked for Environmental Enhancements, with the reference R8, is identified for use with Public Participatory Budgeting

The Council’s previously-nominated Working Party on this subject were asked to meet and suggest a mechanism by which this could be achieved.

Cllrs O’Keeffe, S Murray, and Stockdale declared interests as members of Lewes Town Partnership, and remaining Members subsequently **resolved that:**

**FC2012/100.6** Lewes Town Council will make a grant of £7,000 to Lewes Town Partnership in 2013/14 to maintain support for employment of the administrative officer, with a further review in 2013.

## **FC2012/101**

**MAYOR ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR ELECT:** Proposals were received for the roles of Mayor and Deputy-Mayor for the 2013/2014 municipal year.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2012/101.1** Cllr O’Keeffe be nominated as Mayor-Elect for the year 2013/2014 municipal year.

There were two candidates for the Deputy-Mayoralty, and therefore a vote was taken, following which, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2012.101.2** Cllr Dr M Turner be nominated as Deputy Mayor Elect for the 2013/2014 municipal year.

Cllr Stockdale left the meeting at this point.

## **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) *Pells Pool Community Association liaison 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012*: Minutes of this meeting were presented (*copy in Minute Book*) and Council was asked to agree the next step in the joint development programme described in points 4, 5 and 6 in the minutes.

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

**FC2012/103.1** The Minutes of the Pells Pool Community Association Liaison Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012 be noted.

**FC2012/103.2** The next steps in the development of the Pells Pool are agreed as described at points 4, 5, and 6 of the minutes of the Pells Pool Community Association Liaison Working Party meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (*copy in Minute book*) as recommended to Council on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

b) *Friends of Lewes liaison Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012*: Members considered the notes of this meeting and received an oral update from Cllr Chartier. There was general support for research into the manufacture of a replica of the White Lion sign, currently undergoing restoration. This could be mounted in public, allowing the copper original to be committed to secure museum display.

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

**FC2012/103.3** The Minutes of the Friends of Lewes Liaison Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012 be noted.

c) *Audit Panel meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012*: Members considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in Minute book*), and **it was resolved that:**

**FC2012/103.4** The Minutes of the Audit Panel held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012 be noted.

d) *Planning Committee – Neighbourhood Planning update*: Cllr S Murray described the process followed by the Planning Committee in assessing the scale and scope of a prospective Neighbourhood Plan. Several meetings had been held with Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority, and informative seminars had been attended by some Members. In light of this research, and the recent publication of Lewes District Council's Local Plan core strategy in detail, it was considered that it was now appropriate for the Town Council to start the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan. It was proposed that a public meeting or "open day" should be held to introduce this decision and to gauge the level of community involvement. Following this, the scale of the likely Plan and nature of the body which might develop it (with co-option of public representatives from the widest possible base) would be reported back to Council

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

**FC2012/103.5** The report be noted, and the principles suggested be supported.

e) *Personnel Panel 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012*: Members considered the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (*copy in minute book*) which had reviewed options for policies, required by legislation, on the utilization of discretionary elements within the local government pension scheme. It was emphasized that financial implications only arose on the event of an individual retirement.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2012/103.6** The Minutes of the Personnel Panel held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012 be received and noted, and the policies recommended for discretionary elements within the Council's pension scheme be agreed.

f) *Grants Panel 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012*: Members considered Report FC011/2012 (*copy in Minute Book*) containing the recommendations for payment of grants for the third (of four) cycle of the year.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2012/103.7** Grant payments recommended in the appendix to Report FC011/2012 be approved.

g) *Newsletter copy group (Communications Working Party sub-group)*: Cllr S Murray reported on a productive recent meeting, and asked all Members to give thought to ideas for the next issue of the newsletter.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2012/103.8** The report be noted.

h) *Seaford –Brighton Community Rail Partnership*: Cllr S Catlin advised that he had attended a meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November and the discussion had covered problems caused by match-goers parking in Lewes on Brighton and Hove Albion match days. Incidentally, the matter of support for the Runaway Cafe on Lewes Station was raised, and it was generally held that support should be expressed for the principle of franchises being reserved to independent local businesses.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2012/103.9** The report be noted.

i) *Meeting with Lewes District Council re Devolution*: The Mayor explained that the Town Council's negotiating group had identified various open spaces and properties in which the Council may have a particular interest. Concern had been expressed to the District representatives over the matter of local Community Centres, and there had been engagement over other issues of community interest.

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

**FC2012/103.10** The report be noted.

**FC2012/104**

**“CLIMATE LOCAL” INITIATIVE:**

Members considered a proposal (*NOM016/2012, copy in Minute book*) that the Council should become a signatory to the Local Government Association's "Climate Local" initiative. This would, it was suggested, demonstrate the Council's continued commitment to reducing use of resources and adapting to climate change issues. This was unanimously supported.

After a general discussion **it was resolved that**

**FC2012/104.1** Lewes Town Council will become a signatory to the Local Government Association's "Climate Local" initiative.

**FC2012/105**

**OFFICE TECHNOLOGY:**

Members considered report FC012/2012 (*copy in Minute Book*) which described proposals for updating of ageing computer and telephone systems. It was noted that the systems were specified in 2002 to meet particular needs, the organization having effectively no modern office information technology ten years ago, and they had served their purpose very well. Today, however, the hardware was considered archaic and some software was no longer supported. Day-to-day, there was

increasing difficulty in several areas, and technical support was problematic. Systems management had been provided by the Town Clerk, who had some experience and knowledge in these areas, but this was very time consuming and no longer practical. Replacement had been planned for some time, and an earmarked reserve was established in the Council's accounts. Design of updated systems had been discussed with several technical experts and would still represent "simple and robust" solutions rather than sophisticated ones; this being in line with the organizations' present and foreseeable needs.

Due to the fundamental changes in telecommunications industry structure, and modern cost of hardware technologies, a completely new and modern telephone system could be paid-for within exiting budgets, and with new call charging structures (via official BT partners) real savings would accrue in future; adequate to both establish a renewals reserve and reduce revenue costs.

The preferred solution for an office computer network would meet IT requirements for the next 5 years, with a review suggested at 3 years and provide

- Up-to-date, high-quality branded hardware capable of running the latest Microsoft Office software;
- manufacturer's warranty on server and PCs; essential in the event of fault or major failings
- Microsoft Small Business Server 2011 software, which provides a secure and centralised platform for the network, with Microsoft Exchange for email management.
- A reliable backup and disaster recovery process.
- Central management of users, virus protection, data, backups etc.
- Remote management capability.
- The ability to relinquish support responsibility to a contractor.

After some discussion **it was resolved that:**

**FC2012/105.1** The computer and telephone systems described in Report FC012/2012, presented to Council on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012 (*copy in Minute Book*) be purchased and installed, funded by the balances existing in the financial reserve established for that purpose (shown in the Council's accounts as reserve P5).

#### **FC2012/106**

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

*Land adjacent to Malling Community Centre:* TC reported that the scrubland had been cleared and would be seeded with grass in the Spring.

*Malling Community Centre:* East Sussex County Council had found the draft lease to be acceptable although Malling Community Association had some questions over details of their proposed management agreement. While these issues were resolved, a formal licence would issued to the County Council in advance of the Lease, to enable work to start on conversion of the old Bridge View Social Club.

*All Saints Centre Caretaker/Venue Assistant Appointment:* TC advised members that this position had been filled, following interviews, and Miss Hannah Roxx would join the Council in early January.

#### **FC2012/107**

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

- a) Meetings of the Traffic Working Party; Bus Station Stakeholders; and Commemorations Working Party were to be arranged.
- b) The next Planning Committee would be on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

c) The next Council Meeting was scheduled for Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at 7.30pm with the deadline for submissions to the Town Clerk of proposed items for the agenda being 12 noon on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> January.

d) The office would be closed from 12 noon on December 21<sup>st</sup> until 9am on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013.

**FC2012/108**

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 9:25pm*

Signed: .....

Date: .....