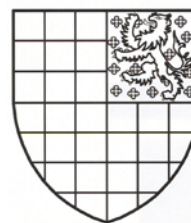


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the **meeting of Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 26th January 2017**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors A Ashby; J Baah; A Barker; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischhusen); M Chartier (*Deputy Mayor*); W Elliott; J Lamb; I Makepeace; Dr G Mayhew (*Mayor*); M Milner; R Murray; S Murray; R O'Keeffe; T Rowell and E Watts.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk*); Mrs F Garth (*Civic Officer & Asst. Town Clerk*) and Mrs E Tingley (*Committee Admin.*)

Observing: Ms V McLachlan (*Finance Officer*)

FC2016/82 QUESTIONS: There were none. 3 Members of the public were present.

FC2016/83 DECLARATIONS of INTEREST: Cllrs J Lamb and Cllr R O'Keeffe both declared an interest *iro* item no 7. (Lewes Neighbourhood Plan) in that Cllr Lamb rents a garage in the town and Cllr O'Keeffe lives in close proximity to a site to be considered for housing.

FC2016/84 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllr H Jones who was on holiday. There had been no message from Cllr Bolt **It was resolved that:**

FC2016/84.1 The reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are accepted.

FC2016/85 MAYOR's ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) Lewes Holocaust Memorial Day Group – How can life go on? An evening of stories from refugees of the past and of today would be held at 6.30pm at The All Saints Centre on Friday 27th January 2017.

b) A Screening of *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary film (1985) telling the story of the Holocaust would be held at the All Saints Centre on Sunday 29th January. Viewers would be taken across Eastern Europe through scenes in the documentary that includes interviews with people who witnessed and, in many cases, colluded in those terrible events.

c) The Mayor would hold two talks on Tuesday 31 January 2017 at 2.30pm and 4.30pm about the local men and women who did not return from the 1st World War.

d) The Mayor's event 'First World War Lewes Music Hall'; a patriotic evening of musical entertainment, would be on Saturday 25th February 2017. Tickets were available from Fiona priced at £20 or £10.

e) Members were asked to help publicize the next phase (the second) of public consultation on play and recreation improvements at Pells and Malling Recreation Grounds. All Members had been given a poster. These events would be held on Friday 3rd March 12.00 – 6.00pm at St John's Hall, Talbot Terrace and Saturday 4th March 10.00am – 2.00pm at Malling Community Centre.

f) Engineering Consultants would be working on a groundwater modelling study for the Environment Agency, with their activities concentrated around the Winterbourne stream. Local Members and their constituents would be interested to know that, in order to complete the study, a new survey of the watercourse was required and survey contractors Maltby Land Surveys Ltd would be on site from Monday 30th January to carry this out. Their operatives would be quite noticeable as they would wear high-visibility outfits and carry a variety of surveying equipment. They would carry letters of authority and may request access to various properties along the route.

g) Members were advised of the Launch of the "Every Sort of People" festival on 30th

Continues...

May, at Lewes football ground, which would involve people with disabilities. Attention was drawn to an internet video of the *Delta Seven* rock band; a group of seven musicians with learning difficulties who had been featured in a national newspaper having won a competition giving the right to have a video of their performance shown in every picture house in the UK.

FC2016/86

MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2016 were received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2016/87

WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:

Members were reminded that anyone who may have attended a meeting of any recognized outside body which has covered issues that deserve attention by the Council, should ensure that TC is aware of this before the Council's next meeting, and preferably before the agenda deadline. Reports on all activities of the organization are not expected.

The next two items were brought forward on the evening's agenda as most of the public attendees were present in connection with them.

a) *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 21st December 2016 and 25th January 2017:* The minutes of the meeting held on 21st December 2016 were presented by Mr Ian Linton (Chair LNPSG) who also gave an oral report on a meeting held the previous day, on 25th January 2017. The group had agreed a framework for moving forward including a two day open event at the Town Hall and the Public 'Regulation 14' stage consultation. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) were about to award a contract for the Sustainability Analysis which would contribute to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). There would be a lot of work involved, which had consequently had a 'knock-on effect' for the LNPSG. There was to be a two-week bidding period, then a compulsory five-week consultation with three statutory consultees; Heritage England, Natural England and the Environment Agency and then a period of two weeks when the consultants would assimilate these answers and mould them into a scoping report. This would unfortunately lead to a delay of around 6 – 8 weeks in the preferred timetable, but was unavoidable.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/87.1 The notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting held on 21st December 2016 (*copy in minute book*) and the oral report of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group meeting on 25th January 2017 are noted;

b) *Communications Working Party 19th December 2016:* Members considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*). TC had updated Members on progress with the project to introduce a new Council website. He had met two of the selected prospective service contractors, and was shortly to meet the third. These companies were asked to produce a proposal, and would then be invited to present to the Working Party.

There had been discussion on the principle of two-way communication using social media and it was proposed that, initially, only Twitter and Facebook should be adopted using outgoing post facilities only. Responsive use could be introduced at a later date. A suggestion that a part-time communications officer might be desirable and the implications of this were discussed. Practical issues were acknowledged and it was recognized that, to be effective, such an officer needs to be 'embedded' in the working functions of an organization and closely familiar with projects and their background in order to create accurate and meaningful content for publication. There was an established principle for alterations to the staff establishment and TC would make proposals for significant change to duties, or proposals for additional staff, for consideration by Council via the Personnel Panel whenever appropriate. An apprentice position, possibly a student placement, was suggested and briefly discussed. It was agreed that this would be revisited and researched for a future Working party meeting.

The Working Party had considered examples of modern social media policies from other

Councils. It had earlier been acknowledged that whilst the council had an adopted policy (as an appendix to the Communications Policy) this was modelled upon an “early” example and a review would be appropriate. It was unanimously agreed that one of these in particular (from Wokingham TC) was most suitable, and with appropriate amendments and the addition of some elements which should be retained from Lewes’s existing policy, should be recommended to Council for adoption.

The Council’s newsletter was discussed and a publishing schedule was considered and agreed:

MARCH Newsletter material to TC by end second week of February for publishing in March. (*4pp x 300 copies self-distributed for pickup at Town Hall; All Saints; Southover House; TIC; Library and misc shops.*)

JULY Newsletter material to TC by end second week of June for despatch to printer early July. (*8pp x 7,500 copies: 7,200 for Door-to-door distribution by contractor [includes annual report etc], and 300 copies self-distributed for pickup at Town Hall; All Saints; Southover House; TIC; Library and misc shops.*)

OCTOBER Newsletter material to TC by end second week of September for publishing in October. (*4pp x 300 copies self-distributed for pickup at Town Hall; All Saints; Southover House; TIC; Library and misc shops.*)

JANUARY Newsletter material to TC by end second week of December for publishing in January. (*4pp x 300 copies self-distributed for pickup at Town Hall; All Saints; Southover House; TIC; Library and misc shops.*)

It was resolved that:

FC2016/87.2 The Minutes of the Communications Working Party 19th December 2016 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

FC2016/87.3 The revised Social Media Policy appended to the agenda (*copy in Minute Book*) is adopted to replace the current Appendix A to the Council’s Communications Protocol.

c) *Finance Working Party 11th January 2017*: Cllr Chartier presented the minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*). In the year of introduction (2013/14) of the Government’s Council Tax Support Grant scheme, Lewes District Council had passed-on the whole amount which had been sufficient to maintain the Town Council’s “band ‘D’ equivalent” precept unchanged. However; this grant had reduced significantly each year since then and was to reduce from the current year amount by a further 15% for 2017/18, to £45,158. The Town Council (LTC) therefore faced an enforced increase to precept to simply maintain budgeted nett expenditure at the present level. Parish Councils had avoided the government’s threatened referendum (“capping”) regime for the coming year, but this would undoubtedly arise again in future.

The Working Party considered the service budget estimates for 2017/18 (*copies in the minute book*). Alongside the Council’s financial systems generally, the assumptions and basic principles and the process of compiling the recommended budget had again been commended by the Council’s independent Internal Auditor (IA) during a recent inspection, who had nonetheless drawn Council’s attention to the level of the General Fund; observing in his interim report: “*It is anticipated that...the general reserves at year-end will be circa £250,000, this equates to roughly four to six months of monetary cover, depending very much on additional spending required for maintenance. This is a little low for a council of this size and I draw Council’s attention to it.*”

With these issues in mind, Councillors had considered the draft forward plan (*copy in the Minute Book*); proposed contributions to reserves, and operational service requirements, in detail.

The draft budgets presented took account of:

- Provision for known/anticipated increases in public Utility supplies, NNDR *etc.*
- Adjustments for completed and imminent (previously-approved) projects.
- Provision for elements identified in the Council’s forward plan.

- Establishment of appropriate reserves for agreed/anticipated projects.
- Provision for anticipated increases in insurance and other overhead costs *etc.*
- Provision for known increase in employers' pension and NI contribution.
- Refinements of overhead allocation to services and base service cost estimates.
- Recognition of anticipated adjustment to salaries.
- Provision for known and anticipated increases in cost of contracted services.
- Re-establishment of exhausted reserves and continuation of prudent contributions.
- Provision for costs of assets or services accepted through devolution by Lewes District Council, and for necessary transitional costs.
- Fees & charges tariff increase of 3%, rounded to an appropriate value for the service concerned.

It was acknowledged that there was a continuing need to address the proper maintenance of the Council's physical assets and adequately fund continuing services.

The draft budget combined specific amounts for known costs and committed project items, with prudent allowances for reserves, and provided for a flexible response to unforeseen issues. The Council's forward plan was considered, and it was understood that this was as expansive as could be practically undertaken. Members recognized that some projects could exceed original "informed guess" estimates of cost, and earmarked reserves could be insufficient. Building and engineering works were of particular concern in this regard, as the Council's assets had all been taken-on with considerable historic dilapidation, and contexts such as heritage listing status. Projects could be "topped-up" by drawing from the General Fund which; although adequate, would then need to be restored in future years to the levels recommended by auditors. This was the prospect that had triggered the warning of the IA in his interim report, as it was possible that the Council's General Fund could drop below an acceptable minimum in the next year. Borrowing was also possible (from the Public Works Loans Board) at very favourable rates, but seen as a 'last-resort'.

Members of the working party were keen to make prudent estimates and maintain some flexibility in the budget, although concerned to keep increases within reasonable limits. The draft budget as originally presented had been updated to reflect the recently-published increase in the number of "Band 'D' equivalent households" for 2017/18, which reduced the individual impact of any increase in precept. Provision was made for all 'unavoidable' increases to give a base value, and 'live' modelling of various options was conducted throughout the meeting with the implications and overall impact carefully assessed at each point.

The budget* finally arrived-at for recommendation to Council was agreed unanimously, and resulted in a precept requirement of £944,758. This represents an increase on the current year of 9.85%, with the actual cost to a Band 'D' household rising to £154.26 per year. This equates to an extra 24 pence per week.

*Details of the underlying assumptions; calculations, and resulting budgets are available separately from these minutes.

A proposed amendment, to raise fees and charges by 4% (3% had been recommended) was accepted.

it was resolved that:

FC2016/87.4 The Minutes of the Finance Working Party 11th January 2017 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

FC2016/87.5 Fees and Charges for Council facilities and services be increased by 4% (rounded to an appropriate value for the service concerned) with effect from 1st April 2017

FC2016/87.6 Budgets for estimated operational service expenditure and income and contributions to financial Reserves for the 2017/18 financial year; as discussed and agreed by the Council at its meeting on 26th January 2017 (*Copies in minute book*), be approved.

FC2016/87.7 The total sum to be raised by precept on council tax for 2017/18 be set at £944,758 when anticipated Council Tax Support Grant of £45,158 is accounted-for.

FC2016/87.8 The Council Plan for major areas of work or projects in 2017/18 (*Copy in minute book*) proposed by the Finance Working Party following its meeting on 11th January 2017, is approved.

d) Audit Panel 19th January 2017: Cllr Milner presented the minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*). The Panel had considered routine financial monitoring, with detailed information (*copies in minute book*) following the end of the third quarter of the financial year 2016/17. This included:

Budget monitoring update – this 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, and TC responded with reference to the identified sources. Apparent variations were related to known events, such as specific payments in respect of works and purchases; stock-taking adjustments; errors in posting (*eg* to incorrect accounts) which had since been corrected, or perceived 'overspend' which will be attributable to Reserves when final accounts are prepared at year-end. There were no items of concern.

There had been extensive debate on the precision required to effectively address the Panel's role, and some Members were interested to see more detail and 'profiled' variances measured against patterns of expenditure through the year for individual budget elements, and assessment of expenditure and income compared with previous years. There followed a debate on the value of information versus the cost/effort expended to obtain it, and TC explained the background to the working practices and audit requirements that gave rise to the presentation format currently employed. He would consider some alternative presentations for future meetings.

Oversight as required by the Governance & Accountability Code of Practice: TC had introduced the file of periodic bank reconciliations, for review of the routine scrutiny already conducted. The Chairman had appended his signature to verify this in each instance. The nominal ledger report produced from the Council's SAGE accounting system records, being the source document reconciled to the budget monitoring report during the meeting, was verified in the same way.

Investment: The Council had referred the matter of investment back to the Panel for further consideration. Members were interested to see some scenario-testing figures which TC used to assess the CCLA Local Authorities Property Fund (LAPF). This had been considered a viable option for significant investment, but the 'Brexit' uncertainties had recently affected fund performance and this was discussed in some detail. Historic performance of the fund and the property sector generally, across several years, indicated how international economic events such as the global depression 2007-09 impacted upon values, which had returned to positive levels quite quickly. As the CCLA LAPF yielded a significant proportion of its overall performance from rental income; despite a downturn in total fund value and a slight drop in dividend yield, the fund remained interesting as an option for investment of funds which were not expected to be needed for three to five years. This would be discussed at a future meeting, with the benefit of a detailed cash-flow assessment of Council's reserves to assist in the consideration. No action was proposed at present, although TC would research a low-risk (*eg* building society) investment which gave better yield than the present Treasury Reserve option for the short-term, to be discussed at the next meeting.

Buildings Working Party decision: Cllr Rowell had asked for review of a decision of the Buildings Repairs Working Party (at its meeting on 27th September 2016). He had raised this with the Working Party at the subsequent meeting, and the matter had subsequently been reported to Council. Given time pressure on some members, it had been agreed to defer this item to the next meeting of the Panel. **It was resolved that:**

FC2016/87.9 The Minutes of the Audit Panel meeting held on 19th January 2017 (*copy in*

minute book) are noted.

FC2016/88 LEWES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

Members considered report FC0012/2016 (*copy in the Minute Book*), which recommended that the Council determined its position on proposed inclusion in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan draft (as a site identified for potential future housing) of land in the Council's ownership, adjoining Malling Community Centre.

In the process of drafting the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan (LNP), a suggestion had been made that land adjoining Malling Community Centre (MCC), immediately to the West of the building, should be identified as a prospective site for future building of new homes. The site and associated detail was shown in Appendix A to this report, extracted from the proposed draft LNP (which was not yet finalized for public consultation).

To be acceptable as an element of the LNP, land identified as a potential site for housing must be both "available" and "deliverable", *ie*:

Availability: Is the land for sale and/or does the landowner want it developed?

Deliverable: Can the site actually accommodate development? Does it have any technical issues such as major flooding, subsidence, contamination *etc* that would make delivery of development uneconomic or impractical?

Once a range of sites that are both available and deliverable are identified, they must then be ranked or tested against other criteria as required by the National Planning Policy Framework, and also local views and opinion. For example:

- Previously developed land ("brownfield" sites) will be seen as preferential to "greenfield" sites.
- Proximity to existing shops, services and facilities to encourage compact settlement that encourages walking and cycling will be preferred to sites that lie on the edge of settlements.
- Landscape visual impact.
- Other locally-based criteria, such as archaeology, may be a factor.
- Other aspects considered important to the local context.

The land in question had traditionally been considered as an integral part of the Malling Community Centre facilities, and was presently maintained as an open grass space. Consultation on the community's aspirations for a refurbished Centre had ranked "outside community space" as the 5th most important facility (the relevant extract from the questionnaire analysis was appended at Appendix B). A well-attended meeting held on-site, as part of the consultation, brought forward a wide range of ideas from local community representatives including a hard-landscaped "peace garden"; a Scout campsite, and a community barbeque area and soft fruit orchard. This information had been included in the brief to architects who were invited to tender for the MCC refurbishment design work – tenders were due for return by 3rd February 2017.

Members were reminded of circumstances regarding devolution by Lewes District Council of the rest of the Malling Recreation Ground to the Town Council, and that public consultation was in progress related to public play and recreation improvements at the Pells and Malling Recreation Grounds, to be funded from the developer contributions arising from the new North Street Quarter.

Following debate and voting on the proposal, **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/88.1 The proposed inclusion of land in the Council's ownership adjoining Malling Community Centre in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan draft, as a site identified for potential future housing, is NOT agreed.

FC2016/89 LOCAL BUS SERVICE SUPPORT:

Members considered report FC013/2016 advising Council of a request received from Compass Travel, for continued financial support.

Council had agreed (minute FC2015/39.4 of 30th July 2015 refers) the recommendation of the Transport Working party to grant £10,000 to support improved services to be provided from September 2015 by Compass Travel, on routes 127; 128; 129 as a one-year pilot scheme.

Compass had continued to operate the additional frequency and extended routes after September 2016, but had now confirmed that they could not continue to do so should the funding not be continued. Their Managing Director, Mr Chris Chatfield, had written to explain that if they were to continue with the current timetable then the same subsidy of £10,000 would be needed for 2017 – or else unfortunately they would have no option but to revert to the previous hourly timetable for the 127 & 128 town routes from April 2017.

A decision was needed by the end of January as 8 weeks' notice was required, to traffic regulators, if some of the town services were to be withdrawn from April.

Mr Chatfield went on to describe how Compass strove to provide a reliable service and when there had been problems it was normally something outside their control, such as

- Roadworks – there had been several sets of long-term roadworks affecting at different times Malling Hill, Station Street and Brooks Road. Each of these had caused serious disruption and delays to local buses.
- Badly parked cars – this regularly occurred in the Spences Lane section of the route and to a lesser extent on the Landport and Nevil Estates. This could sometimes prevent the bus getting through and badly delay the service.
- General traffic congestion – especially at busy times such as the run-up to Christmas.

Mr Chatfield stated that 20 mph limits had not helped service reliability and had slowed down all Compass Lewes town services and made it much harder to catch up time if there was a delay. He advised that if there were any additional 20 mph limits imposed in the future then it would make the current timetable “impossible to operate” and he stated that service frequency would then need to be reduced.

It was acknowledged that although passenger numbers are not high, there was demand for the present frequency of service and extended range, from passengers who would have very limited options should these buses not be available. Compass had provided passenger loading statistics; examples of which were appended to the report.

There was a general debate, in which members were concerned at the negative references to 20mph speed controls, which were generally believed to be beneficial and to have minimal effect on cross-town journey times. As the request was for an unchanged amount; Councillors were interested to know how the economics of the route was established, and asked if any values were available for marginal operating costs. After some debate **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/89.1 Lewes Town Council will grant £5,000 immediately to Compass Travel in respect of continued support for routes 127; 128 and 129, with a further £5,000 provisionally agreed subject to agreement following a presentation (to be arranged) by Compass Travel of operating strategy and cost.

FC2016/90 MAYORALTY 2017/2018:

The matter of nomination of a Mayor-elect and Deputy Mayor-elect for the 2017/18 municipal year was tabled, and the meeting considered nominations for the roles. Proposals were received and consequently **it was resolved that:**

FC2016.90.1 Cllr M Chartier is nominated Mayor-Elect for the 2017/18 municipal year.

FC2016.90.2 Cllr J Baah is nominated Deputy Mayor-Elect for the 2017/18 municipal year.

FC2016/91 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

a) *Assembly Room/Corn Exchange roof repairs:* The Assembly Room roof was almost complete with the works to the Corn Exchange roof scheduled to begin shortly

afterward.

b) Town Hall Boiler: following recent problems with the heating boilers, it had been discovered that a major factor in the mechanical breakdown was the internal collapse of the flue system, contained within the chimney stack on the North Eastern corner of the rear annexe. Work was in-hand to allow the insertion of a new flue and it was anticipated that this should resolve the current problems and that a new boiler would not be needed immediately. TC noted that the boilers were nearly twenty years old, and it should be expected that replacement would be needed within the few years, and that this was estimated to cost in excess of £25,000, at current prices. He referred to the Annual Plan which Members had agreed earlier in the meeting, which proposed an independent survey of the building to re-establish priorities for such works, once the current roof repairs were completed.

As an adjunct to this matter, it was remarked by members who had attended events in recent days that Town Hall staff had been extremely helpful in providing portable heaters and ensuring rooms were comfortable. Councillors recorded their thanks to staff, and applauded to note their appreciation of the team's stoic endurance of uncomfortable conditions.

c) Malling Community Centre refurbishment: Architects tenders for design work were due to be received on 3rd February. These would be technically assessed by the Council's retained managing surveyors, and then considered by the Buildings Working Party. The next step would be to hold a working party meeting at the community centre where the successful Architects will be asked to show design alternatives. Current and prospective users of the Centre would be invited to this meeting to give their contributions.

FC2016/92

NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

- a)* The next Planning Committee would take place on Tues 7th February at 7:00pm.
- b)* Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting would be held on Wednesday 1st March at 7.00pm.
- c)* The next Members' Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 7th February 2017 – 10:00am – 12:00pm in the Corn Exchange – Cllr Catlin volunteered to attend.
- d)* The Personnel Panel would meet on Thursday 16th February at 7.00pm in the Yarrow Room.
- e)* The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 2nd March 2017, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 20th February.
- h)* The next deadline for grant applications: (cycle 4 of 4 2016/17) was Fri 3rd February. The Assessment Panel would meet on Wed 15th February with recommendations being considered by Council at its meeting on 2nd March 2017.
- i)* Meetings to be arranged: Communication Working Party; Buildings Working Party; Admin Review Working Party and the All Saints Steering Group
- j)* *Future use of the old Turkish Baths :* Lewes District Council were understood to be discussing this matter further at their meeting in February, and when firm proposals were clear, the Town Council would be asked to form an opinion.
- k)* *Pesticides:* Lewes District Council were currently preparing a technical assessment of alternatives to pesticides, and would be bringing forward suggestions in the next few weeks. It was expected that this matter would be brought to the Town Council meeting on 6th April 2017 for consideration.
- l)* *Headstrong Club:* as a matter of possible interest, members were advised that a meeting of the club on Friday 19th May would receive a talk by the author of "Flat-pack democracy" who was a former Town Councillor in Frome, Somerset.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting

The meeting ended at 9:25pm

Signed:

Date: