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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council** held on
Thursday 28th August 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 E Allsobrook; S Catlin (Wischhusen); A Dean; I Eiloart; J Lamb; D Lamport; L F Li (*Deputy Mayor*); M Milner; R Murray; S Murray; R O'Keeffe; A Price; J Stockdale and Dr M Turner (*Mayor*)

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); Mrs F Garth (*Civic Officer and Asst. Town Clerk*) M Larkin (*Mace Bearer*)

Observing: Mrs J Dean (*Customer Services Officer*)

FC2014/43

QUESTION TIME: 6 members of the public were present. Two written questions had been received; one related to the promotion of cycling in Lewes and one regarding support for maintenance of bus services. These questions, together with the answers given, were distributed and are appended to these minutes.

East Sussex County Councillor Ros St Pierre enquired as to the Town Council's attitude toward proposed local bus service reductions. The Council's response to East Sussex County Council's current consultation on subsidised bus services was cited in reply. This was distributed and is similarly appended.

A petition was presented by Mr Jack Neil, the Chairman of the Lewes Branch of the Royal British Legion, containing 909 signatures supporting the addition of names to the town's War Memorial. It was noted that this matter was the subject of a recommendation to be considered during the meeting, arising from a recent Commemorations Working Party meeting. Mr Neil acknowledged this and offered the petition in the hope that it would inform Members' decision.

FC2014/44

MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Cllrs S & R Murray; O'Keeffe, and Turner declared interests in respect of Grants Panel recommendations as they were all members of the executive of recommended beneficiary Landport Youth Centre, and Cllr O'Keeffe was also a member of Pippa's Group.

FC2014/45

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllrs Chartier (*holiday*); Daly (*unwell*); and Dr Mayhew (*holiday*). There had been no word from Cllr MacCleary.

FC2014/46

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) The Mayor welcomed Mrs Paula Woolven and Mark Evans, from the charity Community Transport for the Lewes Area (CTLA), who would give a presentation in support of their request for financial support to provide local bus services.

b) Cllr Turner described the recent visit of the civic party to Waldshut-Tiengen for the annual *Chilbi* festival, at which the 40th anniversary of the Town Twinning agreement was celebrated. Lewes had been admirably represented; with sizeable groups attending from Lewes Operatic Society; Commercial Square Bonfire Society; LGB Brass; the Knots of May dancers; and Lewes Twinning Association. Many of these had participated in the featured open-air dramatic performance and been

Continues...

invited to join the traditional annual parade through Waldshut.

c) Monsieur Jean-Michel Gazeau who had until recent retirement been Cultural Services Director in Blois and curator of the town's chateau and museums, was seeking a pen-pal for his 16-year-old son. Members were asked if they could assist in that regard.

d) Cllr Price was seeking sponsorship for his imminent participation in the Ice-bucket Challenge" in aid of the charity Motor Neurone Disease Association.

FC2014/47

MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 17th July 2014 were received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2014/48

LEWES COMMUNITY BUS SERVICES:

Mrs Paula Woolven and Mark Evans, from the charity Community Transport for the Lewes Area (CTLA) gave a short presentation, supported by literature describing the services they offered. The bus routes serviced by CTLA were said to be very different from scheduled services operated by major providers. They were often the only mechanism for social contact for some customers. CTLA recorded more than 7,000 passenger journeys each month. They offered such initiatives as a travel club specializing in trips designed to foster social inclusion, which had over 100 members, and "dial-a-ride" services to cater for such things as hospital/surgery visits *etc.* Financial support (£4,000) was requested to support continuation of these services. Mr Evans described an experimental service that was initially funded by grants from the South Downs National Park Authority and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund; providing buses on Sundays and public holidays. This had been warmly received and catered for an identifiable demand; notably travellers from Lewes town estates, but was scheduled to end in September. CTLA had a plan to provide a modified version of this service during Winter months if funding could be found, preferably for two seasons. A sum of £3,645 would support one Winter, and £7,000 would extend that through 2015/16. Members posed a number of questions, and it was noted that there was significant local demand for these services, which also represented some mitigation of the proposed cuts in services by East Sussex County Council. Following debate **it was resolved that:**

FC2014/48.1 Lewes Town Council will grant to Community Transport in the Lewes Area (CTLA) [Reg Company No 04409570, Reg Charity No 1110215]: the sums of £4,000 to support the operation of its general local services during 2015, and £7,000 to provide modified 131/132 Sunday and holiday services during the Winter months of 2014/15 and 2015/16. These sums to be drawn from the General Fund.

FC2014/49

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] *Commemorations Working Party 5th August 2014:* The Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*) were received and noted, and the recommendations arising were agreed.

It was resolved that:

FC2014/49.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Commemorations Working Party held on 5th August 2014 are noted (*copy in Minute Book*)

FC2014/49.2 The recommendations (*copy in Minute Book*) arising from the meeting of

the Commemorations Working Party held on 5th August 2014 are agreed as:

- i) *ref CmemsWP2014/13 1e)* To support the project to research names omitted from Lewes War Memorial, undertaking to support reasonable costs of research and attempts to contact families, with a view to producing a suitably high-quality additional plaque for the memorial in 2018.
- ii) *ref CmemsWP2014/13 1f)* To support the Royal Sussex Regimental Association project to install a memorial stone at Priez, France, with a contribution of £500.
- iii) *ref CmemsWP2014/13 2)* To support reasonable transport and accommodation costs for an exhibition by Lewes artist Peter Messer in Tiengen, Germany, 15th–30th November 2014 (jointly with W-T administration) to a maximum of £1,000
- iv) *ref CmemsWP2014/13 3)* To support the *Cycle Lewes* event at Harvey's Depot on 13th September 2014 with a contribution of up to £400
- v) *ref CmemsWP2014/13 5)* To appoint Cllr Dr G Mayhew to serve on the Commemorations Working Party.
- vi) *ref CmemsWP2014/13 6)* To support Commonwealth Day by flying an official flag each year, and purchase of one flag at a cost of £58.

b] *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group open day 16th August 2014:* Cllr S Murray presented an oral report on this day, which had attracted around 180 visitors. This represented a significant amount of new interest and some interesting and useful information had been gathered, that would inform the Plan process. Cllr Murray extended thanks to Cllr Catlin for his invaluable assistance. The next meeting of the Steering Group would review the day and the information gathered would be scrutinized and incorporated into the work of topic groups preparing elements of the Plan.

FC2014/49.3 The oral report on the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is noted.

c] *Audit Panel 26th August 2014:* Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in Minute Book*), and Cllr Milner elaborated upon key points. The statutory national audit regime had been revised for 2014, and salient points and implications were briefly discussed. There were some new requirements for formal recording of oversight by Councils, to be satisfied by countersignature of such documents as routine bank reconciliations to ledgers and recommendations for write-off of bad debts. The panel had reviewed aspects of investment policy and scrutinized the background to a fund management organization that operated two schemes offering appropriate investment opportunities for the Council. After a number of questions and a brief debate **it was resolved that:**

FC2014/49.4 The Minutes of the Audit Panel meeting of 26th August 2014 (*copy in Minute Book*) are noted.

FC2014/49.5 The recommendations of the Audit Panel, arising from their meeting of 26th August 2014 (*copy in Minute Book*) are agreed as:

- i) Lewes Town Council delegates to the Audit Panel the authority to carry-out on its behalf those aspects of the updated national audit and governance regime that call-for member oversight of details (*eg* routine bank reconciliation to ledgers, and recommendations to write-off bad debt). Any items where it is necessary to record a Member's signature are to be delegated to the presiding Chairman of the Panel. All such reviews and signatures are to be detailed in Panel minutes, and thereby reported to Council at the next appropriate meeting.
- ii) The Responsible Finance Officer be asked to determine appropriate sums

from funds not expected to be needed within the next twelve months, for investment in the CCLA Local Authorities' Property Fund and Public Sector Deposit Fund.

Note: Cllrs O'Keeffe; R Murray, and S Murray abstained from this element of the decision as they considered they had insufficient background in the matter; and asked that this be recorded

d] *Grants Panel 27th August 2014*: Council considered Report FC007/2014 and the recommendations arising from it. Due to a number of factors, several members had been unable to attend, and there was an extended discussion as to any implications. It was not considered necessary to reconvene, and further discussions dealt with any queries regarding individual applications; at the conclusion of which **it was resolved that:**

FC2014/49. The payment of grants as detailed in column G of Report FC007/2014, (*copy in Minute Book*) is approved.

e] *Sussex Community Rail Partnership*: Cllr Catlin reported that Lewes had recently been awarded the accolade "Best Community Station" in Southern Rail's *Stars & Tsars* awards scheme. The award citation mentioned the "planters; colour, and sense of community" and recognized the support of the Town Council.

FC2014/50

UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:

a) *North Street Quarter/Pells* – There was no significant change to the position, insofar as Santon Group's planning application was unlikely to be submitted before Autumn as Santon and their partners, Lewes District Council, had paused to allow recently-emerged groups to discuss ideas for aspects such as cultural/creative work space and affordable housing. Detail work was progressing on calculation of the values for s106 agreements and design of buildings.

b) *Devolution* – LDC had recently produced more up-to-date financial data, and meetings would ensue in due course.

c) *Building repairs* – Specialist consultants had conducted detailed surveys of the Town Hall, involving close inspection of materials, window frames, and a digital scan of the façade. A site visit to Malling Community Centre would be arranged when various individuals returned from summer holidays.

d) *Pells lake eco-system improvements* – Floating planters had been installed recently, but further elements of the project had been deferred pending a specialist water-quality assessment report, as it was the contractor's professional opinion that the aquatic plants proposed would not establish in the lake if current water levels; oxygenation issues, and silting were not addressed.

e) *Pells play equipment* – a new swing unit had recently been installed, as replacement for one beyond economic repair due to age. The Working Party to consider designs for the anticipated redevelopment of facilities at the park would be convened after the summer holiday period.

f) *Malling Community Centre arson attack* – Sussex Police had recently advised that one suspect had been identified following DNA analysis of material gleaned from the site, and a second was being traced.

g) *Land adjoining Malling Community Centre* – Cllr Stockdale pressed for additional treatment of bramble regrowth on the bank to the North of this area. TC noted that the whole site would be affected by the proposed refurbishment of the Centre in the foreseeable future, and that the only effective treatment would be chemical, and cost a significant sum. Members supported the proposal for further treatment to a maximum cost of £1,000.

h) *Community Assets registration* – Cllr O'Keeffe reported that she had successfully registered public conveniences at Western Road as an asset of community value.

Members were asked to consider what assistance they might offer in the continuing project to identify details of the buildings previously listed by Council for similar registration. Lewes District Council required extensive detail as to ownership and history of all sites submitted, and much of this was unknown and difficult to identify.

i) Lewes Priory: exhumed human remains – Lewes Priory Trust (LPT) reported that research conducted on human bones exhumed from the Priory of St Pancras was effectively concluded. The bones had originally been removed from the site in the 1980's, and were sent to Edinburgh University in 2003 for study by a forensic anthropologist. During this period a facial reconstruction was made from the most complete skull and this was in the possession of Lewes Priory Trust. The bones were returned to LPT in 2011 and the university had no further interest in them. They were then loaned to a PhD student at Southampton University researching Cluniac funerary practices. They had now been returned to the Trust and a decision was needed on their future. Several interested parties had been asked for their opinion, and Councillors views were sought as, technically, the exhumed items belonged to the Council. It was proposed that the bones should be re-interred and agreement had been obtained from English Heritage that this could take place in a previously excavated area within the 'first church' on the site (where they were found). This would leave them accessible for future research should that ever be considered. Other proposals suggested interment in a local churchyard, or display in a museum context. There followed some discussion and it was generally agreed that the best option was to reinter on the Priory site. The Trust would be informed accordingly

FC2014/51

NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:

- a) The next Members surgery would be held on Tuesday 2nd September, in the Corn Exchange from 10am – 12noon. Cllrs Catlin and Allsobrook volunteered to attend.
- b) The next Planning Committee Meetings would be on Tuesday 2nd September and would be preceded by a meeting with officers and members from the South Downs National Park Authority.
- c) The deadline for Grant applications for the next cycle was Friday 14th November, with the assessment Panel meeting on 26th November and recommendations being considered by Council on 11th December.
- d) The next Council Meeting would be on Thursday 2nd October at 7.30pm with the deadline for submissions to the Town Clerk of proposed items for the agenda being 12 noon on Monday 22nd September.
- e) Dates would be confirmed for meetings of various Working Parties and liaison groups.
- f) House to house distribution of the current Newsletter was underway, and members were asked to report any areas missed which may come to their attention, by the end of the following week.

FC2014/52

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 9:50pm

Signed:

Date:

QUESTION RECEIVED:

From: Philippa Thompson

Sent: 27 August 2014 00:29

To: Customer Services

Subject: FAO: Town Clerk - Lewes Town Council meeting 28 August

Dear Sir, I would like to submit the following two questions to the Town Council at its meeting on 28th August:

1) Bikes: The Tour of Britain will pass through Lewes on the 13th September (as noted in the Minutes of the Working Party for Significant events). What are the Council's plans to ensure that the event supports the development of a long term strategy to promote cycling in Lewes?

2) Buses: There is a motion to support the community bus service and a resolution was passed at the last meeting to coordinate a response to the proposed bus cuts. Will the Town Council consider financial support for the stop the bus cuts campaign?

With best regards
Philippa Thompson

ANSWER:

1) Bikes: The Cycle Tour of Britain is organized by a private company and coordinated through the County Councils of East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council, for the parts of Stage 7 that pass through Sussex, and we have no control or influence over the event. East Sussex County Council has an established policy and publishes a local transport plan, and employs officers dedicated to promotion of cycling, which we support, and we will always consider specific initiatives on their merit. The Town Council has always supported projects such as cycle path development (*eg* Egret's Way [Lewes-Newhaven] and Lewes-Ringmer), and we contribute to the provision of cycle parking facilities and have both supported and grant-aided other things. Cycle Lewes is an invited member of our Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, and Transport and infrastructure is a working strand in the development of that Plan. We have a Transport Working Party which includes cycling-related issues in its remit, and all are welcome to attend its meetings or to introduce ideas. On the agenda for the meeting this evening, our Commemorations working party has recommended a contribution to the event being organized by Cycle Lewes at the old Harvey's Depot, and the Council will always consider support for such events.

2) Buses: Any organization that is working for the benefit of the town and its community can apply to us for support. This is usually done through our financial grants scheme, but organizations may also promote a partnership or project collaboration directly. This can be done in several ways, and we recommend that the matter is discussed first with the Town Clerk. Council can only make decisions on matters that have been itemised on the agenda in advance of a meeting, together with sufficient background information or material to allow councillors to brief themselves for any debate. Councils do not normally fund lobby groups; they are more likely to support services, and as a Parish Council we are allowed to do a number of things such as fund concessionary taxi fares; subsidise community bus services, and support car-sharing schemes. The specific request being promoted this evening by Community Transport for the Lewes Area is to support a local community service, and a formal proposal to support that may be moved by a Councillor after the presentation and any subsequent debate.

The Town Council's response to East Sussex County Council's latest consultation on subsidized bus services is appended, for information.



Lewes Town Council believes that we should have a proper public infrastructure of services including transport, health, education, social security *etc* paid for by a progressive taxation system. It therefore expresses its deep concern about proposed changes to bus services used by Lewes residents. It believes that the reduction in services and the proposed increase in prices will cause social, economic and environmental damage. Cuts to bus services inevitably lead to greater isolation for those who rely on them. Twenty percent of households in Lewes District do not have access to a car. Forcing those that have cars to use them will only lead to increased traffic and all that brings with it: pollution, traffic danger, travel delays and pressure on car parking. Local shops and services such as libraries are likely to suffer. In addition ESCC's questionable opinion that people can rely on the Internet instead is hardly supported by the evidence. Many blind and partially sighted people have insufficient IT skills to be able to use computers, and most websites are totally inaccessible to people using speech screen-readers. Coordinated bus/rail transport will be much weakened as will access to many places in the countryside for leisure activities for those who don't use cars for this. Clearly cutting hourly services to 2 hourly will also lead to a diminution of use as buses become a less convenient/practical option.

The Town Council accepts that the priorities given are sensible, as the first duty must be the statutory one of free home to school transport for eligible children, and enabling residents to get to work and to access essential services. However, the problems with these priorities lie in the details. The first priority does not take into account children who have an established place at a school and have previously had access to transport but may no longer have it because a previously open door bus which their parents can pay for them to be on may have become a closed door one or no longer exist. The problem with the second priority is that stating very specific key centres and peak times do not help someone whose work hours are not at peak times and whose destination is not designated a key centre. As for essential services only being accessible on 2-4 days a week this may be a tipping point as it becomes difficult to plan or to remember which days there is and is not a bus service. Then people are dis-incentivised to use it and the numbers drop rendering it even less economic to run - NB the buses in question are all supported because they are not economic in the usual monetary terms. However some things are not only measurable for their success in terms of money but also in terms of wellbeing and contributing towards the sustainability of a community. Buses weave communities together as well as simply transporting people. They combat loneliness and the problems associated with it. They enable people to access experiences and help redress basic inequalities between those who have their own transport and those who do not. Services in rural parts are a life-line enabling elderly/infirm can get to a pharmacy to have their prescriptions filled.

Frequent town services with easily memorable times are often the most used. Half-hourly services make it easy for people to use the bus to keep all kinds of appointments and not have to hang around too long to get home afterwards. A frequency of 1 per hour is at the outside limit of real usability for many people so cutting beyond this again tends to tip a service further from viability. The idea that non-educational and non work-related journeys (i.e. daytime after 9.30) only need to be provided for at 2 hourly intervals on 2 days a week according to the ESCC's general principles means in effect that for 5 of 7 days a week some poorer people without cars (nearly all elderly) will be confined to their homes. That doctors' or hospital appointments can be fitted to such a pattern is also ridiculous and will mean people having to fork out for taxis or standing around in winter months waiting a long time for transport if they can even get it. Town councillors note that local buses in their ward areas appear mainly used by older people without cars and they could be very heavily hit.

Bus services to Lewes town estates especially Malling and Nevill and Landport should be maintained and no cuts should be introduced without a survey of usage and consideration of alternatives. The 127 is even more vital to the 900 homes on Landport (housing many elderly and/or infirm people, as well as mothers with young children) now that the Post Office has been closed for some years. The extension of the 127 service to cover Malling although not regular enough, is welcome, particularly as it links families and the children's centre.

The Town Council is concerned about the proposed changes to the 28 and 29 service. The 28 service provides a service to Ringmer which will affect young people in the Malling area who are at school in Ringmer and will be attending evening activities in that area. Their opportunity to participate will be greatly affected. The 28 and 29 evening service also provides a link between different areas of the town at night (Malling to Nevill or Malling into town) which there is no alternative public transport for providing a service for social activities or evening/night workers. Out of hours doctor service is provided in Uckfield for calls from Lewes patients. People without access to private transport will not be able to use this service to access out of hours doctors service if the evening service is removed. Could not the routes the 28/29 north of Lewes be combined in the evenings and serve Ringer, Uckfield and Tunbridge Wells, in the interests of keeping a service?

The Town Council is especially concerned at the number of services being greatly reduced or cut which have a Lewes destination. Roads are already congested, parking space limited and expensive. Instead on encouraging people into the town and on to public transport many of these proposed cuts will force people onto the roads, into cars or to other destinations, which will affect the local economy and without any encouragement to get people on the buses.

Rather than cuts, surely commercial operators could be asked about taking on well-used buses, so that support could be concentrated better on services which were in no way viable without it. Imaginative solutions like the deployment of smaller cheaper to run vehicles including those which do not require a psv licence to drive and which are available through an organisation like CTLA should also be looked into more before services are cut altogether. It might be possible to have a dial a ride service for small numbers of passengers which would not be as expensive to run as the standard bus service and would prevent the service being lost altogether.

Also many of these services are poorly advertised, bus timetables only available away from the bus station which would already be limiting the number of people using these services. Better access to bus information at the place where people catch the bus would have encouraged more people to use the service and would perhaps mean some of these cuts would have proven unnecessary. Also more people would use services if the bus actually stopped at the bus stop as oppose to driving past people expecting to board. A town councillor has personally experienced this at least 8 times in the past month with 3 or more people waiting to board this service.

The fare increase is very short-sighted. Increasing fares beyond a very small percentage (which 30% certainly is not!) does not serve to increase revenue. It decreases revenue because people either find a cheaper way to make the journey or cease to travel altogether, neither a good option. Alternative transport is nearly always less environmentally friendly and ceasing to travel may involve giving up a job as the transport is no longer economic or becoming socially withdrawn and developing mental and/or physical problems because the life experiences of the person concerned are so reduced. This in turn results in more costs for health and care services so the saving is a false one.

Lewes Town Council

7th August 2014