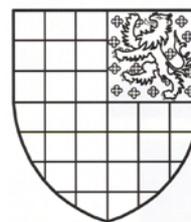


Town Hall
High Street
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2QS

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ info@lewes-tc.gov.uk

🌐 www.lewes-tc.gov.uk



**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the **meeting of Lewes Town Council**,

held on **Thursday 28th September 2017**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors A Ashby; J Baah (*Deputy Mayor*); R Burrows; S Catlin (*Wischhusen*); M Chartier (*Mayor*); W Elliott; H Jones; J Lamb; I Makepeace; R Murray; S Murray; R O’Keeffe; A 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*) and Mr L Symons (*Town Hall Manager*)

The Council’s Chaplain, Canon Richard Moatt, offered a few words before the meeting. He noted that it was still possible in the modern world to find places for uninterrupted, quiet, reflection and highlighted the need for this when addressing public duties.

FC2017/46 QUESTIONS: There were two members of the public present.

A question was asked regarding the Council’s decision to provide a commemorative tablet regarding the Royal Sussex Regiment. The question; together with the answer given, is appended to these minutes.

FC2017/47 DECLARATIONS of INTEREST: Cllr R O’Keeffe declared an interest *in* item 6c on the agenda (*re:* Grants Panel recommendations) in that she is affiliated to several of the applicant organisations (these had been individually declared and noted during the Panel’s deliberations).

FC2017/48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllrs A Barker and M Milner who had work commitments and Cllr G Mayhew who had a family commitment. No message had been received from Cllr Bolt.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/48.1 The reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2017/49 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) The Mayor thanked Cllrs Mayhew and Catlin for their help at Heritage Open Day which had been a great success, and also Cllr Baah for her interest and taking part in two tours. Thanks were also given to Phillip Pople and Ashley Price for their assistance on the day.

b) Thanks were given to Emma and all the staff who helped at the Allotments show which was a great success, with even more entries than last year.

c) The Mayor reported that the ‘Poems for Peace’ event on 21st September had proved popular.

d) Members were reminded to let Fiona know if they wished to join the Mayor for supper in the Council Chamber on Bonfire Night as numbers were limited.

e) **CONSULTATIONS:** Members were made aware of the following consultations:

Libraries (ESCC): *East Sussex Libraries – The Way Forward* was a complete review of the Library and Information Service and was the final part of a wider Libraries Transformation Programme, designed to deliver a modern and sustainable library service for the next five years. Proposals would reduce costs by having fewer libraries and prioritise resources to have a greater impact on supporting people in East Sussex.

The draft Strategy and all the evidence upon which the proposals were based was at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/librarystrategy.

The consultation at www.consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk would run for 12 weeks, from 21st September to 14th December 2017.

LDC Licensing Strategy: The Licencing Act 2013 required that Lewes District Council consult upon and prepare a Statement of Licensing Policy for a further 5 year period with effect from 7th December 2017.

LDC had not received any challenges to the existing Policy Statement or any adverse comment from the licensing trade, legal profession, other stake holders or the general public. Taking this into consideration, along with experience over the past 5 years, they had decided that there would be no material changes to the Policy other than minor and inconsequential amendments.

The revised Licensing Policy was available from TC or could be viewed in full on the Lewes District Council website www.lewes.gov.uk.

Comments on the Policy must be submitted in writing either to the Licensing Team, Lewes District Council, Southover House, Southover House, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2AB, or by e-mail to licensing@lewes-tc.gov.uk by 23rd October 2017.

South Downs National Park – Draft Local Plan consultation had opened on the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan for the Park, and would run until 11.59pm on Tuesday 21st November 2017. A corporate response would be made by the Town council's Planning Committee, but everyone was encouraged to contribute individually at www.southdowns.gov.uk/localplan. Paper copies were available from Lewes District Council at Southover House.

FC2017/50

MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th August 2017 were received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2017/51

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.

a) Buildings Repairs Working Party 13th September 2017: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*)

The Working Party had welcomed Ms Katie Winter, Project Architect, and Mr Sandy Scott, Associate, of LA Architects; together with Grant Crossley, Project Manager for BLB Chartered Surveyors.

Ms Winter presented three layout plans which she had drafted according to the comprehensive brief, which had included the Council's position; the history and current status of the project and the proposed execution plan; together with supporting information such as the aspirations of the current and prospective users of the Centre who had responded to consultation, ranked according to importance. These options had differing emphasis between sports changing facilities and areas such as multi-purpose rooms and café and terrace. Members acknowledged that a great deal of thought had obviously gone into production of these alternative layouts and were interested in the details. It was noted that each layout may offer significantly different attraction for prospective grant funding.

BLB had prepared a relevant Order of Costs for each design, which differed in estimated total cost by around £70,000 and all were initially indicated to exceed the originally-anticipated cost by a margin of over £130,000. It was acknowledged that BLB's Quantity Surveyor's assessment would routinely allow for the highest likely cost for each element, and that these estimates would almost certainly prove substantially higher than the eventual final cost. There was a concern expressed regarding additional Value Added Tax and professional fees, but noted that the VAT would be reclaimable by Council as the project fell into the 'non-business' category as defined in the special VAT regime available

to parish councils (*Value Added Tax Act 1994 s33*). Professional fees were already included in some elements of the scheme, and a significant component would be included within the tender prices ultimately submitted by building contractors.

Members noted that it had been accepted from the outset of the project that external funding would be required to complete it, and the Council's financial Reserve stood at £299,000. Third-party grants were likely to be available for particular elements of the design *eg* sports changing facilities; community rooms, or energy conservation measures. It was also noted that once operational management plans were developed for the Centre, some costs may be offset *eg* by contributions from catering franchisees. The Council always had the option to resort to borrowing at extremely favourable fixed rates of simple interest from the Public Works Loans Board, repayable over periods of two to fifty years.

Members considered salient points of these issues, and agreed that a meeting to consider the detail of the Quantity Surveyor's estimates, assisted by Mr Crossley, would be helpful. This would be scheduled as soon as possible, and following that the designs would be presented to the public at a following meeting to be held at the Centre.

It was reported that the re-roofing of the Corn Exchange was progressing well, although significant additional repairs needed had been identified in the course of this work, once slates and old covering materials were removed or exposed. This was acknowledged as inevitable, as pre-commencement assessment of the scope of work required had only been possible by remote inspection through binoculars or camera 'long-lens'. Items urgently needing attention included 18 timber window sub-frames; lead valley gutters and drip-trays; three substantial chimney structures, and iron rainwater goods (downpipes and gutters). The contractor had prepared a schedule of these items with an estimate of costs, which had been received as the meeting was about to commence. This meant that only cursory reading had been possible but Members were interested to hear the headings and summary cost elements. The comprehensive document identified some optional elements which could offer substantial savings, but it had appeared that the overall total would be between £40,000 and 55,000. Since the meeting, detailed assessment put this value significantly higher. It was understood that the costs were estimated on the presumption that they would be carried out concurrently with remaining re-covering work – utilizing existing scaffolding and with unfettered access to all damaged areas. Deferral would add cost *eg* replacement scaffolding and/or removal and replacement of recently-laid covering materials, and leave the building vulnerable. It was therefore recommended that the works be added to the schedule and completed without delay.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/51.1 The Minutes of the meeting of the Buildings Repair Working Party held on 13th September 2017 (*copy in minute book*) are noted; and Council supports the approach taken by the Working Party and its conclusions as described.

b) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 14th September 2017: Council considered the Notes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*). In the absence of Mr Linton (Chairman LNPSG), who had submitted apologies for absence as he was travelling abroad, TC gave a brief report. The sub-group who had been tasked with assessment of the 2281 individual responses received via the online survey were working through them steadily. The results of this would be incorporated into the draft Plan to produce a final version for adoption by Council and submission to the South Downs National Park (SDNPA). The group were also working through the responses from statutory consultees. It was hoped that revisions would be completed by Christmas.

The Council's retained consultant had described a desk study which he had seen elsewhere, using the local knowledge of a suitable chartered surveyor to construct an economic model which could establish the viability of proposals such as the Lewes Low Cost Housing (LLCH) concept. The Group had agreed that such an exercise should be conducted, to establish whether the concept could be included as a legitimate policy, or would be better treated as an aspiration.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/51.2 The notes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held on 14th September 2017 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

c) Grants Panel 20th September 2017: Members considered report FC008/2017 (*copy in minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the second cycle (of four) for the year 2017/18 and **it was resolved that:**

FC2017/51.3 The grant payments recommended in report FC008/2017 (as shown in column **G** of the appended table) be approved.

FC2017/52

LOCAL BUS SERVICE SUPPORT:

Members considered a proposal (*NOM 007/2017 copy in minute book*) that Lewes Town Council increase its contribution to Compass Travel (Sussex) Ltd in respect of support for local bus services. It was recognised that the additional funding to Compass was important in providing an acceptable level of bus service to residents of the town. It was also recognised that the cost of providing the desired service was considerable and could only increase. From several meetings with Compass' Managing Director it was clear that the Town Council's contribution was an important part of enabling Compass to break-even on its regular Lewes town services and that the present frequency would be reduced without this subsidy.

Compass very much appreciated the financial support and was keen to work with the Town Council to further improve the service provided for Lewes. It intended to introduce some newer buses onto the Lewes town routes and then in due course to route-brand them with "*Lewes Town Link*", and eventually also on bus stops and timetables *etc.* This would hopefully give the town services a higher profile and encourage more people to use them. The company was also working on improving bus service information for the public and in due course its intention was to introduce a Smartphone application, and also live service information on its website.

Such improvements were important to maintaining and increasing bus usage and an increase in subsidy to £15,000 per annum, with certainty for at least three years, was proposed. It was submitted that this would help Compass; help residents and help to reduce greenhouse gases by encouraging greater use of public transport and a concomitant reduction in cars on the streets.

A debate ensued, and **it was resolved that:**

FC2017/52.1 The proposal *NOM 007/2017* is referred to the Traffic Working Party for further consideration.

FC2017/53

PROVISION OF BENCH SEAT:

Members considered a proposal (*NOM 008/2017*) that the Council provide a bench seat at the service 123 bus stop a short distance South from Lewes Railway Station, subject to necessary permissions.

There were seats directly outside the railway station, but for those with mobility difficulties there was not enough time to walk from there to the bus stop once a bus came into view. The same people could not stand and wait at the bus stop for any length of time, especially if a bus was late; thus it was proposed that an additional bench would be of real benefit to many local residents struggling with access issues.

At the bus stop the pavement was wide with room for a bench and it was considered that the highways authority was unlikely to object. Permission would be required from the landowner (ESCC or Network Rail, to be confirmed). An 1800mm-long bench was proposed; similar to those provided by the Council at Lewes Bus Station.

There was some discussion on this matter and it was established that a bench with arms could be provided at only a slightly higher cost, although the additional depth would alter the final positioning slightly. This was considered a preferred option and

it was resolved that:

FC2017/53.1 Lewes Town Council will provide a bench seat at the service 123 bus stop

located a short distance South from Lewes Railway Station, subject to necessary permissions. The cost (estimated £500 in total) to be drawn from the Reserve shown in the accounts as R8 'Environmental Enhancement' (available balance 2017/18, £24,355).

FC2017/54 CONCLUSION of AUDIT for the YEAR ENDED 31st March 2017:

Members considered the External Auditor's certificate and their advice that the audit was complete with no comment being recorded.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/54.1 The External Auditor's certificate and notification of conclusion of audit without comment, for the year ended 31st March 2017, is acknowledged.

FC2017/55 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

a) *Annual Plan update:* An update on progress with the Annual Plan was distributed (*copy in minute book*). TC drew attention to one or two salient points that had changed since printing: The working group representing signatories to the s106 agreement *in* North Street Quarter play and recreation provision had been cancelled, but was to be rescheduled for mid-October. An additional meeting was planned for the Buildings Repairs Working Party to assess detail of estimated costs for the proposed refurbishment of Mallig Community Centre, before a public meeting to show prospective designs. Work by the contracted providers for a new website was progressing, although no final design was available yet.

Cllr O'Keeffe raised again the matter of land at the Pells recreation ground apparently being included in development plans for the North Street Quarter (NSQ), asking TC for clarification. This had been explained at the previous meeting (*minute reference FC2017/44*), although she remained concerned. TC repeated his advice that the design layouts seen in Santon/LDC's planning application for NSQ were unrelated to matters in the s106 agreement. Outline planning permission for that phase of planned NSQ development could not override the status of the land owned by the Town Brook Trust and could not confer rights of ownership. This advice had been given by several parties, and repeated recently by TC in correspondence, but once again it was confirmed that boundary lines drawn erroneously on plans submitted for planning consent did not bind the Council/Trust in any way. Land held by the Town Brooks Trust could not be disposed-of. TC elaborated upon the definition of a 'disposal', which included long-leases, rental arrangements, or substitutions. Cllr O'Keeffe professed herself reassured.

b) *Devolution of Mallig Recreation Ground and Landport Bottom:* LDC had recently provided final documents required for registration of the allotment site, as previously reported, and for the balance of the landholding. This was being processed. With regard to Mallig Recreation Ground, however, nothing had been forthcoming since May. TC reported that he had been preparing to once again ask LDC's Chief Executive to intercede when coincidentally he read a LDC report being submitted to the District Council's cabinet on 27th September describing progress on various matters. Report 124/17 stated that: "*Devolution of open spaces remains on schedule, with transfer of sites to Lewes Town Council and Newhaven Town Council progressing well*" and; in an appendix, the statement "...*Agreement reached with Leader to retain the Lewes Mallig Recreation Ground at present and for the site to be the last to be devolved*". It had been made clear from the outset of the process that the Town Council (LTC) had identified Mallig Recreation Ground for the first tranche of devolution (*all* Lewes parks and open spaces were, originally, mutually agreed for eventual transfer) to 'streamline' and assist in evolving plans for play and recreation improvements ancillary to the North Street Quarter development. The reasoning was to effectively offer the developer a single body to deal-with regarding the recreation space to both sides of the NSQ site; as LTC already own the Pells and a section of Mallig Rec including the Community Centre (which houses changing facilities for the sports pitches). TC proposed to write to the Chief Executive to seek an explanation and asked Members to indicate their preference for

the degree of robustness in that approach. Members spoke on this matter and expressed serious concerns over the present situation and the attitude of the District Council throughout the process; having incurred significant expense for the Town and yet being no further forward.

- c) 'Our Pictures' project update. Conservation work on three of the Council's paintings continued, and the paintings were expected to be returned in the New Year. Further academic interest had been previously reported with the interest of a group of specialists from York and Cambridge Universities, and the Heritage Lottery had now extended the timeframe of the project grant, given those circumstances. Work on the education material was progressing well, and was designed to produce a pack for teachers in secondary schools, integrated with the national curriculum and providing templates and ready-to-use teaching aids.

FC2017/56 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

- a) The next Members' Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 3rd October 10am – 12pm in the Town Hall foyer. Cllr Catlin volunteered to attend.
- b) Buildings Working Party would meet to assess Malling Community Centre cost estimates on Monday 9th October in the Corn Exchange.
- c) The next Planning Committees would take place on Tuesday 17th October and 7th November at 7.00pm.
- d) The next deadline for grants applications: (cycle 3 of 4 2017/18) is Friday 24th November 2017. The Assessment Panel will meet on 6th December 2017 with recommendations being considered by Council at its meeting on 14th December 2017.
- e) There would be a meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group at 7pm on Thursday 26th October.
- f) The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 9th November at 7.30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 30th October.
- g) Meetings to be arranged were Building Working Party; Audit Panel; Friends of Lewes liaison; Pells Pool Community Association liaison.
- h) Member training on law and finance was being arranged. Diversity training had also been requested. A 'Doodle' poll would be available once trainers had confirmed their availability. Members were asked to respond promptly.
- i) The Personnel Panel would next meet (with consultant) at 7pm on Thursday 23rd November.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting

The meeting ended at 8:45pm

Signed:

Date:



QUESTION RECEIVED:

E-mail received 26th September 2017:

“At it's meeting of 24 August 2017, the Council decided to support the provision of a tablet commemorating the Royal Sussex Regiment at a cost of £2,200.

At a time of austerity when services to the public are being cut, why does the Council feel this is a good use of taxpayers money?

Also, why did the Council not require the Royal Sussex Regiment to go through the same process as other organisations and apply for funding through the grants scheme?

I will be at the Town Council meeting on the 28th and I understand that I will be given the opportunity to ask this question of the council.”

Regards; John Somerville

ANSWER:

The process of consideration that led to the Council's decision is shown in the published Minutes of our Commemorations Working Party and subsequent Council meetings. To summarize*:

The Royal Sussex Regiment endured from 1881 - 1966, and was awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Lewes in 1953. The Regiment had taken part in virtually every major campaign of the British Army and in 2016 the Battle of Boar's Head - 'the day Sussex died' - (the story of 11th, 12th & 13th Battalions, "Lowther's Lambs") had been a prominent commemoration of action on the Somme in WW1.

The RSRA requested that some recognisable mark of respect and gratitude such as a plaque be displayed in the entrance hall of Lewes Town Hall, a focal point, to all Royal Sussex veterans and those who appreciate their service. Within one month of the outbreak of WW1, Lewes had volunteered more men (between 15 – 20% of the relevant population) to serve in the Royal Sussex Regiment than any other, and many families continue close connections today.

Working Party members were unanimous in their agreement that some form of plaque or other fixture should be agreed.

Estimates had subsequently been obtained, and Councillors had considered all aspects of the suggestions, which ranged in cost from £2,200 to £4,300. The Council established several years ago a financial Reserve earmarked for the purpose of commemorations, and the balance available was more than adequate.

Council considered the recommendations at some length and some members expressed unhappiness at a military commemoration, such as the proposed plaque, being sited within the Town Hall. It was remarked that the antecedents of the Regiment had formed part of an 'Imperial army', and this had unpalatable connotations. Others noted that such a plaque was an appropriate mark of respect for those with local connections who had died, and this should prevail over personal views on war. A vote was called on this particular item and by a large majority the plaque was agreed.

The Council often works in partnership with established organizations and such costs are not grants, but direct Council expenditure on a joint project. Our financial grants scheme is designed for different purposes, which are explained in the guidance notes included in the application pack.

* Relevant meeting Minutes are available at www.lewes-tc.gov.uk :

Commemorations Working Party meeting 21st October 2016

Council meeting 10th November 2016

Commemorations Working Party meeting 9th August 2017

Council meeting 24th August 2017